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8/23/24 Friday

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Israel's Attacks Are Now Part of 'Day to Day'

In response to Israel's attacks, Hezbollah has reportedly fired rockets and drones into northern Israel with at least 180 rockets launched within 48 hours as reported on Wednesday, and reportedly struck a number of private homes in the Israel-annexed Golan Heights.

Khalil al-Maqdah, a senior official in the Palestinian Fatah Movement, was reportedly killed by an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanon city of Sidon on Wednesday in the first direct attack on a Fatah member since the Gaza conflict first broke out in October. The attack will undoubtedly worsen the tension between Hezbollah and Israel.

Israel made a claim that al-Maqdah had been working with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in helping to transfer weapons and funds to militants in the West Bank. But senior Fatah member Tawfiq Tirawy criticized the attack as "further proof that Israel wants to ignite a full scale war in the region", a US-based, anti-war outlet reported.

Esteban Carrillo, an Ecuadorian journalist and editor of The Cradle based in Beirut, spoke to Sputnik's The Backstory on Thursday. Carrillo explained that the situation in Lebanon has not seemed to have shaken the confidence of the people living there, but may be causing the foreign embassies there to be fearful.

"This attack on Wednesday, [...] something that I feel wasn't being reported is that where they hit, it was a high-traffic highway, not too far from Beirut. So, obviously, the significance of them killing this member of the Fatah party and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the armed wing of this Fatah party obviously rules the West Bank," Carrillo explained.

"So, here in Lebanon, what is happening is [...] these attacks are becoming part of almost everyday life, and this is something kind of horrible to say, honestly. But, everything's in a holding pattern and Israel just keeps trying to poke, right? To poke at Hezbollah, to poke at Hamas, to poke at Fatah, which is, Fatah are their allies, essentially," Carrillo explained. "The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, the armed wing of Fatah, do fight against Israeli occupation. But the political side of Fatah, led by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, is very close to Israel. They have been for years now."

"Even with the sonic booms that these Israeli warplanes do over the city on a daily basis, essentially trying to wage this type of psychological warfare. They just kind of become part of day to day. And I think this is one of the most honestly astonishing things about this country, about Lebanon that I've come to learn, is that the people are not afraid. You know, I wouldn't call anyone here in Lebanon afraid. And I'm sure people in the US embassy or the Canadian embassy, British embassy are kind of afraid," the journalist explained.

Hostage deal negotiations between Israel and Hamas have come to a standstill after the new US proposal that was submitted last week showed too much favorability towards Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's demands, a US-based, anti-war outlet reported. However US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Netanyahu had accepted the US proposal and the ball was now in Hamas' court to agree to.

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Two Arab officials from a mediating country and another official involved in the talks said that the talks have reached a standstill, and that negotiators likely won't convene in another meeting unless the US puts pressure on Israel to fall back on some of their demands. Israeli negotiators believe Netanyahu is trying to sabotage the ceasefire deal by refusing to back down from his demands, Israeli media reported.

"...let's remember, Hamas isn't even part of these talks. They said a couple of weeks ago, we are not going to return to ceasefire talks because they only provide cover for more massacres, for continued aggression against our people," he added. "So this is why Hamas comes out and says enough is enough. We are ready to accept the deal that Biden presented on the 2nd of July. It's on the US to press Israel to accept, right. They are very unequivocal in these terms."

"I don't see any hope for a [ceasefire] deal, honestly, because you need to take what both sides are saying, not what the US is trying to portray. Because for the US, this has really just become kind of a PR issue, right? A public relations thing. Just about optics. It's about the headlines,"

"Israel, for their part, is very clear in saying, 'we don't want the war to stop. We don't want to withdraw from Gaza. We don't want to give up control of the Philadelphi corridor,'" the journalist continued. "It's like a petulant child that gets dessert after doing something like this, after going and killing someone in another capital. And then the US, what do they do? They approve a 20 million arms deal. They give them $3.5 billion in military assistance. [...] there's no consequences for Israel."

"[Israel's] objective is to wipe out the Palestinian population in Gaza. And they've done a pretty good job at it. …although the official death toll continues to stand around 40,000, that doesn't account for everyone who's under the rubble," he added. "It doesn't account for the polio spreading in the street. That doesn't account for the famine, the malnourishment that these children are going to have to live with for the rest of their lives. So, I think they've done a really good job of making Gaza uninhabitable."

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'Only Hearing One Side of The Story': US Cracks Down on Its Own Journalist Due to Fear of Russia

The US government's investigation will present some challenges, because targeting Americans who work with news organizations, even those which are state run could clash with the US First Amendment's protection of rights to free speech, the newspaper admitted.

The US Department of Justice has begun a broad criminal investigation in US citizens who have worked with Russian state television networks, according to a report released this week from New York-based newspaper. This month, former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter, who is a critic of US foreign policy and Dimitri K. Simes, an advisor to former President Donald Trump's first presidential campaign, had their homes searched by FBI agents. Charges have not been made against either men.

However, electric equipment was seized from Ritter, while Simes said agents removed artwork from his home in Virginia and froze multiple bank accounts. The journalist and author Caleb

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Maupin joined The Critical Hour on Friday to discuss the hypocrisy of the US government's accusations of propaganda in foreign media.

"I mean, if we heard a leader around the world saying that, we would obviously consider that to be tyrannical, a repression of freedom of speech, a repression of freedom of expression. It's based on this premise that there couldn't possibly be anything good about Russia. So, the fact that anyone would do it must be some kind of conspiracy or foreign propaganda or something," Maupin explained. "I mean, the level of arrogance that goes into it."

"They're just kind of assuming that their perspective and their view on the world is very tainted and biased and written by the military industrial complex and the big monopolies that see Russia as a competitor. Their view is the only way to see things. And so, if people are seeing things another way, they must be part of a malign conspiracy," he added.

"...for years it's been known that the way mainstream media outlets function and the way they get the access they need is by being vehicles for the American government. That if you want to get the inside scoop and you want to get the quotes and you want to get what you need as a journalist and a mainstream outlet, you have to show that you can be useful for them in spreading the narrative that they want to promote," Maupin explained.

"...assuming that you only ever heard one side of the story. Assuming that only one side of the story could ever possibly have any truth in it. I mean, there's an element of just extreme arrogance here. And when they start speaking in these terms, that's when you can tell that they are blatantly lying," he added.

"When they can't even acknowledge the arguments of the other side, they can't even acknowledge there could be any validity, any critique or any pro-Russian statement or anything about the war in Ukraine that doesn't exactly match their view. That's because they know their arguments are not strong, that they don't really have truth on their side. They can't even acknowledge any critical view."

According to the New York paper, more government searches are expected to occur soon, according to officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity. They also said that criminal charges are possible. The Biden administration's intelligence has accused Russia's state news companies of the American favorite entertainment - interference in other countries' domestic affairs and distorting elections.

"...[Americans] who think that things might not be great with the inflation and the crumbling infrastructure while we spend billions on wars, they are denigrating the country and how dare they by questioning things. I mean, this is the level of discourse that we've got here. Just this kind of love it or leave it," said Maupin.

"You know, don't question authority. If you are thinking negative thoughts about the country, if you're questioning what the leaders are doing, it's probably because Putin hacked your brain, right? You've got communist brain worms that have infected your mind and you need to be deradicalized in a camp set up by our government authorities to help us think the right ways so we can carry out the mission of spreading freedom," he suggested.

"...this is the level of totalitarianism that the discourse is starting to take. It reminds you of, you know, the John Birch Society of the early 1960s or something. I mean, it's that level of do not question anything, march blindly behind our leaders, and if you don't, you're probably working for the enemy."

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The Czech Republic's Petr Pavel has said that the Nord Stream pipelines were a "legitimate target" for Ukraine in its conflict against Russia, RT reported on Thursday. Pavel, who is a former NATO general, did stress that he had no data to prove that Kiev was behind the attack which provided Russian gas to Germany and the rest of Western Europe. A US paper claimed that the explosion was first approved by Volodymyr Zelenksy who later tried to call it off under pressure from the CIA. But Ukraine's then-commander-in-chief, Valery Zaluzhny allowed the operation to continue.

"...the idea that it's completely legitimate for Ukraine to attack something that is the property not just of Russia, but of Germany, right, which is supposed to be their ally, as part of NATO and as part of the NATO alliance, the idea that that's somehow a legitimate thing to do is such an absurd double standard," Maupin said. "If a NATO country is attacked, all the countries in NATO are supposed to go to war with the attacker, according to the treaty."

"So, if Ukraine did indeed blow up the pipeline, which I don't think is the case, I think it was the US. But, regardless, if Ukraine did indeed blow up the pipeline, according to the NATO treaty, all the NATO countries should go to war not against Russia, but against Ukraine for attacking one of their NATO allies. So, the whole thing is absurd, and it shows how heavily political all this is," he added.

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New Research Suggests That US Treasuries Are Not a 'Safe Haven' - Report

Treasury Department officials have criticized the research as failing to account for the uncertainty that the pandemic caused, and that hundreds of billions of dollars of fiscal response was financed without issue to respond to the crisis.

New research presented at the Kansas City Fed's annual research conference in the US state of Wyoming has found cracks in US Treasuries once labeled as "safe haven" securities. The issue is connected to an unsurprising culprit: the COVID-19 pandemic.

The behavior of US Treasuries during and after the global outbreak has called into question the fitness of these Treasuries in terms of their security. The research suggests that these Treasuries are "little different from the debt issued by the likes of Germany, Britain, France, or even big corporations," a recent report from US News detailed.

The research found that the US government has enjoyed an "exorbitant privilege" to borrow broadly on the global market despite its own growing federal budget gaps.

"In response to COVID, U.S. Treasury investors seem to have shifted to the risky debt model when pricing Treasuries," wrote Roberto Gomez-Cram, Howard Kung and Hanno Lustig in the paper. "Policymakers, including central banks, should internalize this shift when assessing whether bond markets are functioning properly."

The researchers found that investors did not stock up on Treasuries which would have increased their volume but marked down Treasury securities as they did for bonds from other countries.

"In the risky debt regime, valuations will respond to government spending shocks, which may involve large yield changes in bond markets," the researchers explained.

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"In this environment, large-scale asset purchases by central banks in response to a large government spending increase have undesirable public finance implications," they wrote. "These purchases, which provide temporary price support, destroy value for taxpayers but subsidize bondholders."

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Police Detain Suspect in Connection to Explosion Outside of Synagogue in Southern France

According to officials, the suspect of the attack was "extremely determined" to cause harm.
On Saturday, two cars outside a synagogue in the French town of La Grande-Motte exploded, injuring a police officer and prompting an investigation into the event as a possible terrorist attack. Meanwhile French President Emmanuel Macron has labeled the event as a terrorist act and said the "fight against antisemitism is a constant fight".
The vehicles were lit on fire at around 8 am, a DC-based newspaper reported.
Police have reportedly detained the suspect of the attack following a raid in the nearby city of Nimes the same day as the attack. According to Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, the suspect opened fire on police.
"The alleged perpetrator of the arson attack on the synagogue has been detained. Thanks to the police, and mainly the RAID, who intervened with great professionalism despite his gunfire," Darmanin said on X.
"Once again, French Jews have been targeted and attacked because of their beliefs," said Prime Minister Gabriel Attal who visited the scene of the attack alongside Darmanin. Attal added that he and Darmanin were "outraged and repulsed" by the attack.
According to Attal, the suspect of the attack was "extremely determined" to cause harm.
Two other fires were also started outside the synagogue, the prosecutor's office said. Four people and a rabbi were present at the time of the attack but according to officials they were not injured. However, a police officer was injured after a propane gas tank inside one of the cars exploded.
"Our thoughts are with the congregation at the Grande-Motte synagogue and all the Jews of our country. Everything is being done to find the perpetrator of this terrorist act and to protect places of worship," Macron said. "The fight against antisemitism is a constant battle, that of a united nation."
France is home to the third-largest Jewish community in the world following Israel and the US.
The Interior Ministry recorded 1,676 antisemitic attacks last year which is up from 436 in 2022.
The attacks are most likely a response to the conflict between Israel and Hamas which began in October.

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Shroud of Turin Could be Jesus Christ's Genuine Burial Cloth Based on New Date - Study

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The Shroud of Turin is a piece of linen cloth that bears the faint image of a crucified man. The cloth, which first emerged in the 1350s, has been revered as the genuine burial shroud used to wrap the body of Jesus Christ.

Those who believe that the Shroud of Turin was the actual cloth that Jesus Christ was buried in may now have scientific evidence to back their belief. Based on their research, Italian scientists believe that the Shroud of Turin dates from the time of Jesus Christ.

The cloth is housed in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy and has been studied and scrutinized since its discovery. A study carried out in the 1980s labeled the shroud as medieval forgery after the researchers dated it between 1260 AD and 1390 AD. But a new study believes the cloth could be even older.

Using X-rays to inspect the linen threads from the shroud, the researchers have traced the cloth's origins to the time of Jesus of Nazareth. The study, published in the journal Heritage, did not say whether or not the shroud is Christ's genuine burial cloth.

Italian scientist Liberato De Caro, who began his research in 2019, used a wide-angle X-ray scattering to take a deeper look at the cloth. The flax cellulose in the fabric was aged to be 2,000 years old based on the conditions it was kept in. The flax is also believed to have originated in the western Levant, a part of land occupied by Israel, Lebanon and western parts of Jordan and Syria.

But further studies will have to take place before the cloth's age can be confirmed.

The shroud is a 4.3-by-1.2 meter (14-by-14 ft) linen cloth discovered in 1354 in medieval France. The cloth was presented to the dean of the church in Lirey in north-central France by a knight named Geoffroi de Charny who claimed it had belonged to Jesus Christ. However it remains unknown as to how the knight came to possess the cloth.

In 1389 it was denounced as a fake after a bishop in Troyes said an artist had admitted to its forgery, a Qatari news site said. Afterwards, it was displayed as a man-made icon rather than a true relic.

Previous studies have found that the image is not a painting because no dye or pigment remnants were found. Other researchers have suggested that in 2002 the image may have been formed as a result of a chemical reaction between the fabric and the crucified body. The blood on the cloth has also been confirmed as the AB blood type.

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Chinese Scientists Propose New Method to Produce Water on Lunar Surface

China's 2020 Chang'e 5 mission was the first to bring lunar soil samples to Earth in over four decades.

Chinese scientists have found a way to retrieve water from the surface of the Moon. The new method has only been tested on moon dirt samples brought back from China's 2020 Chang'e 5 mission, but the findings may suggest that Moon base settlers could potentially produce drinkable water from moon soil.

In the study, which was published in the journal The Innovation, the researchers found that the moon samples had high concentrations of hydrogen and oxygen and other elements. When it was heated to temperatures exceeding 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit (982 degrees Celsius), the elements within those samples produced water vapor according to Chinese state media.

Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) - who were involved in the study alongside those from the Ningbo Institute of Materials Technology and Engineering - have described the technique as "highly practical".

The South China Morning Post adds that this approach could potentially produce up to 76 milligrams of water from 1 gram of lunar soil. That means that one ton of soil could produce about 50 liters (13 gallons) which would be enough for 50 people to drink in a day. The oxide mineral ilmenite found in the soil, as well as some of the other minerals, are capable of storing large amounts of hydrogen thanks to billions of years of exposure to solar wind.

The finding is promising, however the researchers caution that further missions will have to be carried out to see how feasible this technique would be in real life. Melting lunar soil by focusing sunlight through concave mirrors is one technique, for instance, that the team is contemplating.

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'It's Time to Run': Flash Flooding in Grand Canyon National Park Kills 1, Over 100 Rescued

The Arizona monsoon season typically begins in June and lasts through September. As the atmosphere grows hotter due to climate change, the storms tend to produce a heavier downpour.

More than 100 hikers and Native Americans had to be rescued in the US state of Arizona during flash flooding in the Grand Canyon National Park. Monsoon rain storms on Thursday afternoon flooded the land of the Havasupai Tribe, a group of people who are indigenous to the area, near Havasupai Falls.

The Arizona National Guard conducted rescue operations on Saturday after Governor Katie Hobbs made the order to deploy them in response to the flooding there. Stranded hikers and tribal members were flown out of the area by UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters during rescue efforts that were supported by various officials.

"We know when to run, and it's time to run," said one eyewitness who was rescued from flash flooding.

Rescue efforts were made easier by tribe members who were assisting rescue efforts, said a spokesperson for the Guard.

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"There was not what some people might think of dropping lines (from a helicopter) to pull people up. They were in an orderly fashion and ready to get on the aircraft," said Major Erin Hannigan, a spokesperson for the Guard. "It was all very well organized by the tribe. They made our lives a lot easier."
A 33-year-old woman went missing on Thursday during the flash flooding event. She was hiking with her husband when she was reportedly swept up by the water. Her family confirmed on Sunday that she had died. Her body was reportedly found and transferred to a medical examiner.

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African Refugees in US Feel Left Behind as Ukraine & Israel Are Supplemented Billions of Dollars

A recent report from USA Today has detailed the disregard that African refugees experience in the US, particularly when compared to how the US spends its aid on other foreign affairs issues such as Ukraine.
The report from USA Today found that refugees and residents from the war-torn countries of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan feel “left behind by American sentiment and spending”, particularly when regarding Israel and Ukraine.
“Oh, stuff is always happening in Congo,” is the general sentiment that HanGa Ngandu, 27, who lives in Michigan, says she experiences.
According to the report, both countries face some of the worst humanitarian disasters in the world which is believed to be driven in part by global inaction and the greed of American businesses.
Some 72,000 Sudanese people live in the US, the report cites the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey as saying. Meanwhile, a smaller Congolese community is quickly growing with more than 18,000 refugees having been resettled in 2023, the report added citing the State Department.
Fighting first broke out in Khartoum, Sudan’s Capital, in April of 2023 between the Sudanese armed forces and the paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The war has since killed more than 15,000 people and created what the report says is the world’s largest child displacement crisis. More than 9.2 million people in Sudan have been driven from their homes from the wave of violence, and Sudan is now teetering on the brink of a famine.
Human rights groups and US officials have accused the RSF of trying to carry out an ethnic cleansing campaign.
But the US has failed to fund the war-torn countries of Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the same way it has assisted other countries. In fiscal year 2023, the US provided humanitarian aid to the Democratic Republic of Congo worth $677 million and provided nearly $596 million to Sudan through international organizations and NGO partners, a spokesperson for the US State Department told USA Today.

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However, in that same time period, the US supplied more than $16 billion to Ukraine. Israel has also been the largest cumulative recipient of US foreign aid since it was first founded and has received about $310 billion in total economic and military assistance.

And since Israel's war with Hamas first began in October of last year, the US has enacted legislation providing at least $12.5 billion in military aid to Israel, according to a report from the Council on Foreign Relations which was written in May. And this month, the US approved $20 billion in arms sales to Israel.

However, the West seems to act without caution when manipulating foreign countries, particularly in Africa, to benefit its own greed.

Many of those living in Congo do not have the same privileged access to smartphones that the West has, however, the country is home to important minerals that are responsible for powering millions of phones across the globe. The report notes that "over 70% of known cobalt comes out of Congo's mines".

In April, lawyers for Congo wrote to Apple CEO Tim Cook and demanded answers regarding allegations that the US tech company may be tainted by "blood minerals" taken from the country at a time of humanitarian crisis.

"International observers have documented numerous schemes that underpin and enable an extensive money laundering enterprise through the illegal trade in conflict minerals sourced from Congolese territory," a press releasefrom Amsterdam & Partners LLP reads. "These observers have demonstrated the dependent nature of relationships between perpetrators of this looting and some of the biggest producers of consumer electronics…"

The US State Department told USA Today that they regularly engage with Apple and other US companies regarding mineral issues. Meanwhile, spokespeople for the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and Apple declined to comment when the outlet reached out to them.

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Israel's attacks are now part of 'day to day'

"So, here in Lebanon, what is happening is [...] these attacks are becoming part of almost everyday life, and this is something kind of horrible to say, honestly. But, everything's in a holding pattern and Israel just keeps trying to poke, right? To poke at Hezbollah, to poke at Hamas, to poke at Fatah, which is, Fatah are their allies, essentially," said Esteban Carrillo, an Ecuadorian journalist and editor of The Cradle based in Beirut, who spoke to Sputnik's The Backstory. Khalil al-Maqdah, a senior official in the Palestinian Fatah Movement, was reportedly killed by an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanon city of Sidon on Wednesday in the first direct attack on a Fatah member since the Gaza conflict first broke out in October. "The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, the armed wing of Fatah, do fight against Israeli occupation. But the political side of Fatah, led by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, is very close to Israel. They have been for years now." Israel made a claim that Maqdah had been working with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in helping to transfer weapons and funds to militants in the West Bank. But senior Fatah member Tawfiq Tirawy criticized the attack as "further proof that Israel wants to ignite a full scale war in the region", a US-based, anti-war outlet reported. "Even with

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the sonic booms that these Israeli warplanes do over the city on a daily basis, essentially trying to wage this type of psychological warfare. They just kind of become part of day to day. And I think this is one of the most honestly astonishing things about this country, about Lebanon that I've come to learn, is that the people are not afraid. You know, I wouldn't call anyone here in Lebanon afraid. And I'm sure people in the US embassy or the Canadian embassy, British embassy are kind of afraid," the journalist explained.

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'Only hearing one side of the story': US cracks down on its own journalist due to fear of Russia

The US Department of Justice has begun a broad criminal investigation in US citizens who have worked with Russian state media companies, according to a report released this week from the New York Times. This month, former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter and Dimitri K. Simes, an advisor to former President Donald Trump's first presidential campaign, had their homes searched by FBI agents. Charges have not been made against either men.

"When they can't even acknowledge the arguments of the other side, they can't even acknowledge there could be any validity, any critique or any pro-Russian statement or anything about the war in Ukraine that doesn't exactly match their view. That's because they know their arguments are not strong, that they don't really have truth on their side. They can't even acknowledge any critical view," said the journalist and author Caleb Maupin who joined The Critical Hour.

According to the New York Times, more government searches are expected to occur soon. Officials reportedly said that criminal charges are possible. "...[Americans] who think that things might not be great with the inflation and the crumbling infrastructure while we spend billions on wars, they are denigrating the country and how dare they by questioning things. I mean, this is the level of discourse that we've got here. Just this kind of love it or leave it," Maupin added.

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Who is Pavel Durov, the Telegram CEO arrested in France?

Pavel Durov, the Russian-born founder of the Telegram encrypted messaging app, was arrested at a French airport Saturday evening. The billionaire co-founder of Telegram Group Inc., who is 39-years-old, had been traveling abroad on his private jet from Azerbaijan and was arrested at Paris's Bourget airport following a French warrant for his arrest issued while he was in flight. The entrepreneur lives in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, where Telegram is based, and holds citizenship in four countries: Russia, St. Kitts and Nevis (an island country in the Caribbean Sea), France, and the UAE, according to media reports. Durov left Russia in 2014. The 39-year-old is believed to have a net worth of $15.5 billion, according to Forbes. Durov

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co-founded Telegram, which has about 900 million active users, with his brother in 2013. The US government has pressured Durov to allow a "backdoor" in the app for Western intelligence, the CEO told US journalist Tucker Carlson earlier this year. However the entrepreneur has maintained that Telegram should remain a “neutral platform” that is not a “player in geopolitics.”

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Beyond McCarthyism: FBI promises continued crackdown on US journalists, dissidents Part 1 / Part 2

Attorney John Jackman joined Sputnik’s The Final Countdown program to discuss the FBI’s apparent attempts to intimidate American dissidents after recent raids on the homes of analyst Scott Ritter and former political advisor Dimitri K. Simes.

“The reach of the deep state – the FBI, CIA – they're looking at all of us right now,” said Jackman, an independent journalist. “They're really looking to just chill free speech… And they're using all of these different legal justifications – FARA, the Foreign Agents Registration Act – to justify coming after a dissident.”

An article in The New York Times revealed the US Department of Justice has planned a broad investigation of figures who have contributed to Russian media outlets, signaling that Russiagate will play a prominent role during a third consecutive US presidential election cycle.

“More searches are expected soon, some of the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss investigations,” the newspaper reported. “Criminal charges are also possible, they said.”

FARA has been enforced more frequently in recent years, chiefly against figures associated with Trump.

“The First Amendment should be being screamed from the rafters by the ACLU,” said host Steve Gill in response to the apparent acts of political intimidation. “When you've got the Democrats having their convention, why aren't they screaming, in addition to democracy, First Amendment?”

“These are politically motivated at the end of the day,” agreed Jackman. “It's just really what they are. And, they can give all of these different excuses for why they're targeting certain individuals, but it's facially obvious.”

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Beyond McCarthyism: FBI promises continued crackdown on US journalists, dissidents Part 2 / Part 1

“We're heading to another election cycle here in just a couple of months. And so we're going to start hearing ‘Russia, Russia, Russia.’ Russia is going to be in the paintings, they're in the walls. They're everywhere,” said independent journalist John Jackman on Sputnik’s The Final Countdown program.

The attorney responded to the FBI’s recent raids on the homes of analyst Scott Ritter and former political advisor Dimitri K. Simes.

“People… on their own accord are speaking what they feel is the truth, right?” said Jackman. “They're looking at the world, they're determining that our media is lying to us at every turn. Our government, especially on issues of foreign policy, has lied to us repeatedly, the Ukraine war [and] the conflicts between Israel and Palestine being some of the latest examples.”

The former UN weapons inspector’s career suffered after he rejected US officials’ claims of alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction during the runup to the United States’ catastrophic war on the country in the early 2000s. Ritter has offered his analysis to Russian programs along with other prominent dissidents like John Kiriakou, a former CIA officer who was imprisoned after revealing the agency’s torture program.

“It's ironic because they talk about media manipulation, they talk about false narratives, they talk about misinformation,” said Jackman. “It's not that they are scared of misinformation, it's that they're scared of the truth.”

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Ukrainian ecocide and the fall of Germany 'engineered by Western powers' — analyst

The United States must answer some day for the destruction of the Nord Stream pipeline and the resultant collapse of its German ally’s economy, says analyst George Szamuely.

“The more serious issue is that Germany is really losing its position as an economic giant, as an economic superpower,” said Szamuely on Sputnik’s The Final Countdown program this week. “German industries are being sidelined. They're moving out of Europe and they're being priced out of markets because there's just simply the energy costs. They're now really going through the roof.”

At some point Germans will seek to regain their sovereignty and oppose Washington’s influence over the country, Szamuely speculated.

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“No one in Germany is buying it,” Szamuely said of German officials’ latest explanation for the Nord Stream pipeline explosion. “It's a violation of common sense… Even if the German government is committed to this and saying, ‘oh, well Ukraine is behind this, which of course undercuts its position as to why you are assisting Ukraine since Ukraine is destroying your own infrastructure, Ukraine is creating ecocide.”

“And this is your great client? This is the one we're supposed to create sacrifices for?” he asked. “Then, of course, then you have the next argument, the common sense argument: ‘well, it was the Americans who were behind this.’ And it goes, ‘well, so that's your great ally? Your great friend? Your great elder brother? And this is what they do to you?’”

“‘They humiliate you, they destroy your infrastructure, they destroy your industry. This is what we're supposed to sacrifice ourselves for?’”

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Beyond McCarthyism: FBI Promises Continued Crackdown on US Journalists, Dissidents

Civil liberties are under assault in the United States as authorities target contributors to Russian media, suggesting Russiagate will play a prominent role during a third consecutive US presidential election cycle.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation reportedly plans to continue its “crackdown” on journalists and other dissidents connected to foreign news organizations, with criminal charges under consideration.

The agency’s plans were revealed by anonymous officials cited Wednesday in The New York Times.

“This month, F.B.I. agents searched the homes of two prominent figures with connections to Russian state media: Scott Ritter, a former United Nations weapons inspector and critic of American foreign policy, and Dimitri K. Simes, an adviser to former President Donald J. Trump’s first presidential campaign in 2016,” the controversial newspaper reported.

“More searches are expected soon, some of the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss investigations. Criminal charges are also possible, they said.”

Electronic equipment was reportedly seized from Ritter, while Simes claimed agents removed artwork from his home in Virginia and froze multiple bank accounts. Both men are American citizens.

Attorney and independent journalist John Jackman joined Sputnik’s The Final Countdown program Thursday to discuss the development.

“The reach of the deep state – the FBI, CIA – they're looking at all of us right now,” said Jackman. “They're really looking to just chill free speech. That's really what it is at the core of all of this.”

“And they're using all of these different legal justifications – FARA, the Foreign Agents Registration Act – to justify coming after a dissident,” he claimed. “That's really what it is.”

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Originally passed in 1938, the Foreign Agents Registration Act was initially conceived as a response to Nazi propaganda during the runup to World War II. The law was revised during the Cold War era to target people engaging in alleged political lobbying, but a handful of prosecutions under the act before 2015 resulted in no criminal convictions.

FARA has been enforced more frequently in recent years, however, chiefly against figures associated with Trump.

"The First Amendment should be being screamed from the rafters by the ACLU," said host Steve Gill in response to the apparent acts of political intimidation. "Why aren't they defending Scott Ritter? You know, when you've got the Democrats having their convention, why aren't they screaming, in addition to democracy, First Amendment?"

"These are politically motivated at the end of the day," agreed Jackman. "It's just really what they are. And, they can give all of these different excuses for why they're targeting certain individuals, but it's facially obvious."

"We're heading to another election cycle here in just a couple of months. And so we're going to start hearing 'Russia, Russia, Russia.' Russia is going to be in the paintings, they're in the walls. They're everywhere."

"What you're seeing is not people who are actually, in most cases, even in direct coordination with any legitimate institutions that are based in Russia," he added. "But it's people who, on their own accord, are speaking what they feel is the truth, right? … It's because they're looking at the world, they're determining that our media is lying to us at every turn. Our government, especially on issues of foreign policy, has lied to us repeatedly, the Ukraine war [and] the conflicts between Israel and Palestine being some of the latest examples."

Ritter has been paid small amounts of money for contributing articles to the website for the Russian television network RT, according to the former US Marine Corps intelligence officer, with Ritter retaining ultimate control over the content of his writing.

The former UN weapons inspector's career suffered after he prominently rejected US officials' claims of alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction during the runup to the United States' catastrophic war on the Middle Eastern country in the early 2000s. Ritter has offered his analysis to Russian radio and television programs along with other prominent dissidents such as John Kiriakou, a former CIA intelligence officer who was sentenced to prison after revealing the agency's secret torture program.

"There's some conflation; I think they're starting with Russia because if that works then they can move on to, you know, sort of the Martin Niemöller [dynamic]," said host Ted Rall, referring to the German pastor's famous poem. "First they came for RT, then they came for etcetera, etcetera, etcetera."

"We're in an environment, in a geopolitical environment that we haven't been in in a long time," Jackman observed. "This really does remind me quite a bit of McCarthyism, but I think that this might even be a level beyond that. Because today we're in a situation where the fundamental dynamics of the elites, the ruling class in this country, are shifting in such a way that their reality is kind of being pulled out from underneath them."

"It's ironic because they talk about media manipulation, they talk about false narratives, they talk about misinformation and so on and so forth… It's not that they are scared of misinformation, it's that they're scared of the truth."

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Nord Stream Ecocide & Fall of Germany 'Engineered by Western Powers' – Analyst

As the clock ticks down on Western hegemony, Germans will be confronted with a choice: declare their independence or go down with the sinking US ship.
The United States must answer some day for the destruction of the Nord Stream pipeline and the resultant collapse of its German ally's economy,says analyst George Szamuely.
The senior research fellow at London's Global Policy Institute joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour program this week to discuss the controversial incident, which some experts claim represented "the largest single methane gas" release ever recorded.
"It's always remarkable that the most belligerent actors in any drama are the ones who are the furthest away from the action," said Szamuely, responding to reports that the UK has taken a leading role in providing drones and other equipment for Ukraine's proxy war against Russia. "The British have been consistently the most belligerent on Ukraine."
"If the stakes are so high, why don't you get involved directly yourself?" the analyst wondered. "Why are you allowing Ukraine to do all the heavy lifting? … They [the United States] have been consistent in thwarting any possibility of any kind of negotiated outcome, any temporary ceasefires, temporary resolutions. And without doubt they are involved, and they have been involved in this incursion into Kursk.
"There is no way in the world it can be done, an invasion, without very accurate satellite intelligence. You can't do it. You can't just simply launch an invasion without knowing the terrain, the exact disposal of Russian forces. So clearly this was engineered by the Western powers, the British obviously – the British are now boasting about it – but above all, the Americans."
German authorities claimed they had wound a new lead in the case of 2022's Nord Stream pipeline explosion last week, pinning the blame on a small group led by a Ukrainian diving instructor. The whereabouts of the new suspect are conveniently unknown, the officials claimed.
Germany's economic growth has cratered in the wake of the country's loss of cheap Russian natural gas, with the European Commission estimating the country's GDP will only expand by .1% this year. Polling has shown most Germans remain concerned over the lack of clarity over the pipeline's explosion, which has widely been alleged by journalist Seymour Hersh and others to have been engineered by the United States.
"The more serious issue is that Germany is really losing its position as an economic giant, as an economic superpower," said Szamuely. "It's now steadily going from one quarter after another into recession. But even more seriously, the German industries are being sidelined. They're moving out of Europe and they're being priced out of markets because there's just simply the energy costs. They're now really going through the roof."
"It has been cheap Russian energy that has powered this German economic miracle," he noted. "So it doesn't have it anymore. Germany is ceasing to be competitive and that's why Germany is now invariably in a recession."
Host Garland Nixon agreed that the situation is "very dangerous,"speculating that the US and its allies are likely escalating their involvement in the Ukraine proxy war to attempt to negate the threat of a newly-reelected President Donald Trump seeking to end the conflict. Szamuely

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suggested that Republican allies such as notorious neoconservative Lindsay Graham would likely move to impeach Trump in such an event.

Szamuely also claimed Germany's right-wing Alternative for Deutschland party could stand to gain from the declining popularity of the NATO-backed war, with the German establishment seeking to "crackdown" on the controversial party.

At some point Germans will seek to regain their sovereignty and oppose Washington's influence over the country, Szamuely speculated.

"No one in Germany is buying it," Szamuely said of German officials' latest explanation for the Nord Stream pipeline explosion. "It's a violation of common sense… Even if the German government is committed to this and saying, 'oh, well Ukraine is behind this, which of course undercuts its position as to why you are assisting Ukraine since Ukraine is destroying your own infrastructure, Ukraine is creating ecocide."

"And this is your great client? This is the one we're supposed to create sacrifices for? For this Ukraine?" he asked. "So that argument doesn't work. And then, of course, then you have the next argument, the common sense argument: 'well, it was the Americans who were behind this.' And it goes, 'well, so that's your great ally? Your great friend? Your great elder brother? And this is what they do to you?'"

"'They humiliate you, they destroy your infrastructure, they destroy your industry. This is what we're supposed to sacrifice ourselves for?' So it's a huge problem. And the Germans are going to try and kick the can down the road, try not to address it. But… at some point they're going to have to really seriously look at this."

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Canadian Tariffs on Chinese Steel, Aluminum To Go Into Effect on October 15 – Ministry

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) – The tariffs imposed by Ottawa on the imports of Chinese steel and aluminum will be enforced starting October 15, Department of Finance Canada said on Monday.

Earlier, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada was imposing a 100% surtax on Chinese-made EV's as well as a 25% tariff on steel and aluminum imports from China.

"The federal government intends to apply a 25 per cent surtax on imports of steel and aluminum products from China, effective October 15, 2024," the department said in a statement.

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Canadian Tariffs on Chinese Electric Vehicles to Go Into Effect on October 1 - Ministry

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The tariffs imposed by Canada on Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs) will be enforced starting October 1, the Canadian Department of Finance said on Monday.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada was imposing a 100%

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surtax on Chinese-made EVs and a 25% tariff on steel and aluminum imports from China.
"The Government of Canada intends to implement a 100 per cent surtax on all Chinese-made EVs, effective October 1, 2024. This includes electric and certain hybrid passenger automobiles, trucks, buses, and delivery vans," the department said in a statement.

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Canada to Introduce 100% Tariff on Chinese-Made EVs, 25% Tariff on Chinese Steel, Aluminum

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) – Canada will introduce a 100% tariff on Chinese-made electric vehicles and a 25% tariff on steel and aluminum from China, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday.
"Shortly, we will be introducing a 100% tariff on Chinese-made electric vehicles and a 25% tariff on Chinese steel and aluminum," Trudeau told reporters.
Trudeau called it another step to ensure that Canada is the country of choice to make the things that will drive the new 21st century green economy.

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Harris on Kabul Airport Attack Says Won't Hesitate to Act to Counter Terrorist Threats

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - US Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris in a statement marking the third anniversary of the terrorist attack outside the Kabul airport said that she will never hesitate to act to counter terrorist threats and protect the American homeland.
On August 26, 2021, during the chaotic evacuation of foreign citizens and some vulnerable Afghan citizens via the airport in Kabul, a terrorist attack killed 13 US troops and 170 Afghans. The ISIS-Khorasan terrorist group (banned in Russia) claimed responsibility for the attack.
"As I have said, President Biden made the courageous and right decision to end America's longest war. Over the past three years, our Administration has demonstrated we can still eliminate terrorists, including the leaders of al-Qaeda and ISIS [both are terrorist groups, banned in Russia], without troops deployed into combat zones. I will never hesitate to take whatever action necessary to counter terrorist threats and protect the American people and the homeland," Harris said in a statement.
Harris promised to fulfill the "sacred obligation" to care for US troops and their families and always honor their service and sacrifice.
In a separate statement on the anniversary of the attack, President Joe Biden promised that the US will continue to "disrupt terrorist activity, wherever we find it" and "deliver justice to terrorists who plot against America."
"And we will do so without deploying thousands of American troops to ground wars overseas," Biden said.
In February 2020, former President Donald Trump, brokered a deal with the Taliban (under UN

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sanctions for terrorism) that paved the way for intra-Afghan negotiations on a political settlement and set May 1, 2021 as the date for US troop withdrawal.

In April 2021, Biden announced the drawdown of all 2,500 US troops in Afghanistan beginning May 1 and concluding by September 11, the 20th anniversary of the war.

In April 2021, Harris confirmed an interview with CNN that she was the last person in the room before President Biden made the decision to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan. In July 2021, Biden moved up the timeline for full troop withdrawal to August 31.

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban took over Kabul, ousting the US-backed government and triggering the hasty evacuation.

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Canada's government to introduce 100% tariff on Chinese made electric vehicles, 25% tariff on Chinese steel and aluminum - Trudeau

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RPT: ANALYSIS - NATO's Future, War Threat in Europe Hinge on US Election

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) - As NATO reaches its 75th anniversary this year, its evolution along with prospects for peace or war in Europe will be very much at stake in November, depending on who wins the US presidential election, leading Western military and diplomatic analysts told Sputnik.

This Saturday, August 24, marks 75 years since NATO's April 4 founding treaty entered into force after the deposition of the ratifications of all signatory states.

AT CROSSROADS

"What happens next hinges on whether Trump is elected," former UK ambassador to Syria and veteran diplomat Peter Ford said. "While the huge forces of the Atlanticist lobby will be mobilized against it, the irresistible force of Trump's determination to extract the US from the East European morass will likely prevail."

A victory in November by Democratic presidential candidate and current Vice President Kamala Harris would make the outlook "ominous," Ford warned.

However, some encouraging signs are beginning to emerge in mainland Europe, Ford observed.

These political forces are "angered by the dynamiting of the Nord Stream gas pipeline in 2022 and being perpetually put to tribute by Ukraine" and are "beginning to be tired of always being kept 'down' by being 'in'" the alliance, he said.

RELENTLESS EXPANSION TO THE EAST

NATO is essentially "a cover for the US military," University of Louvain professor of political philosophy Jean Bricmont said.

Under US leadership for more than 30 years, NATO has consistently implemented its own "Drang Nach Osten" by incorporating all the countries of Eastern Europe in clear violation to the

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verbal promises made to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at the time of German reunification, Bricmont recalled.

"The worst step however was the attempt to incorporate Ukraine into NATO which, together with Maidan [a West-backed coup toppling Ukraine's democratically elected government in 2014] and the refusal to implement the Minsk accords, led to the Russian reaction and the ongoing conflict," he said.

According to Ret. US Air Force Lt. Col. and veteran Pentagon analyst Karen Kwiatkowski, "the stupidity of seeking a war of choice against Russia, through political and military manipulation in a variety of places in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, is at this point, NATO groupthink."

Kwiatkowski called NATO's actions and decisions "increasingly counterproductive, unpopular and costly," as seen with the Ukraine conflict and "re-establishing nuclear targets throughout Western Europe."

"Ukraine has become the very Nazi, religiously intolerant, corrupt dictatorship NATO was formed to prevent from rising again on the European continent," Kwiatkowski said.

The country is actually less transparent and more corrupt than before 2014, while the proxy war in Ukraine has failed to generate NATO unity or reenergize and modernize NATO's military industrial sector, according to Kwiatkowski.

TOWARD THE PACIFIC

NATO strategists meanwhile are looking to an even bolder, globe-spanning expansion of the alliance's mission, former UK ambassador to Syria Ford observed.

"Based on past history, might we not be forgiven for expecting yet another repurposing of this organization, perhaps an accentuated tilt (it is already incipient in the recently minted AUKAZ alliance of Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and also New Zealand towards the Pacific and ginning up conflict with China?" he asked.

Bricmont agreed with Ford that NATO leaders are trying to expand their power to East Asia.

"Now, it seems that NATO wants to get involved in the conflicts in the South China Sea which, last time I looked at a map, was not exactly part of the North Atlantic," he noted.

NO FAITH IN NATO

Ret. US Marine Corps Maj. Donald Vandergriff believes that Trump has "the right attitude on NATO."

"I worked with them [NATO] in Afghanistan. There were several great soldiers, but we think the US military is bad with bureaucracy and PC [political correctness]," Vandergriff said.

Vandergriff said he has "no faith" in NATO fighting and winning.

"The focus on Russia is a strategic mistake. But the Ukrainian-Russo War is at the feet of Biden and NATO," he said.

NATO leaders and the Biden administration have willfully refused to make any efforts to end the conflict in Ukraine "because they think they are bleeding the Russians, and they are also laundering money through one of the most corrupt governments in the world," Vandergriff said.

"I would love to see us pull out of NATO," Vandergriff stated.

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Ottawa Refuses Extraditing Nazi Veteran Hunka Under 'Flimsy' Pretext - Stepanov

(Adds details. quotes in paras 2, 7-9, background in paras 10-12)

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Moscow has provided comprehensive materials to Ottawa regarding the case of Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka, however, Canada has already refused to extradite him twice to Russia, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

Stepanov pointed out that since the fall of 2023, the embassy has been in continuous contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and law enforcement agencies of Canada regarding the case of Hunka.

"The Canadian side was provided with exhaustive materials containing the facts of the crimes Hunka committed," Stepanov said on Friday. "However, Ottawa has already twice refused extradition to Russia under the flimsy pretext of insufficient evidence for the crimes committed by Hunka."

Stepanov emphasized that Moscow will continue to seek the extradition of the Nazi henchman to Russia.

"The truth cannot be hidden," Stepanov said. "[Prime Minister Justin] Trudeau's cabinet is disingenuous when it says that he is clean. The authorities are well aware of his dark past as well as of the shameful biographies of thousands of other Hitler collaborators who found shelter in Canada after 1945."

On Thursday, Russia's Prosecutor General's Office announced that it had achieved a positive decision on including Hunka in the Interpol database despite the reluctance of several countries. If Hunka is located on the territory of other foreign states, the Russian supervisory authority will send a request for extradition, the office said.

The ambassador said all facts are recorded in the final report of the so-called Deschenes Commission of 1986.

"However, some of the documents remain classified to this day, so as not to further disturb Canadian society," he said. "According to the practice established by the local ruling class, it is believed that all fugitives are refugees from communism, respectable citizens who have not committed anything illegal in Canada. And they turn a blind eye to what happened before they came here. As if it didn't happen."

"Moreover, as the cases of other war criminals previously publicly identified in Canada (for example, of Helmut Oberlander) show, they are allowed to die in peace so that the matter resolves itself," he added. "No person - no problem."

In September 2023, Hunka, a 98-year-old Ukrainian Canadian, was invited to attend Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address at the Parliament of Canada. Hunka was introduced as a hero who fought against the Russians during World War II and received two standing ovations from the entire Canadian legislature.

In October, Hunka was charged in absentia with genocide of civilians during World War II by the Russian Investigative Committee. He is accused of participating in large-scale executions of at least 500 civilians in the Lviv region of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1943-1944. In December, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office told Sputnik that it had requested that Hunka be extradited to Russia to face criminal charges of genocide against Soviet citizens.

Canada has had a long and controversial history of granting safe haven to former Nazi

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veterans, oftentimes including those convicted of crimes in the Soviet Union. In the mid-1980s, the Canadian government launched the Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals, also known as the Deschenes Commission, to investigate the immigration of individuals with a Nazi background into the country.

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Russian Diplomats in Constant Contact With Ottawa on Nazi Veteran Hunka Case - Stepanov

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Russian diplomats in Canada remain in constant contact with the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with law enforcement agencies after the Canadian parliament welcomed with a standing ovation Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"Since the fall of 2023, the [Russian] Embassy has been in continuous contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and law enforcement agencies of Canada regarding the case of Yaroslav Hunka (Gunka), a member of the SS 'Galicia' division, who fled here from justice after the Second World War," Stepanov said on Friday.

On Thursday, Russia's Prosecutor General's Office announced that it had achieved a positive decision on including Hunka in the Interpol database despite the reluctance of several countries.

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US, NATO Never Told Truth on Nord Stream Pipelines Bombs Plot - Ex-US Army Lt. Colonel

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) - Western investigations into the explosive destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines in 2022 have been carried out in secret and the actual perpetrators have never been exposed, retired US Army Lt. Col. Earl Rasmussen told Sputnik.

The bombings made a mockery of NATO's endlessly quoted pledge to protect all its members from aggression and terrorist attacks of every kind, Rasmussen said.

"So it appears that NATO does not seek to protect its member states, at least not from itself," he said. "Where was the infamous Article 5 implementation when Nord Stream was destroyed?"

The attack on Russia's export gas pipelines to Europe took place on September 26, 2022. Germany, Denmark and Sweden did not rule out deliberate sabotage and Russia's Prosecutor General's Office initiated a case of international terrorism.

Russia has repeatedly requested data on the explosions but has never received it, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said earlier this month.

Rasmussen said the governments and security forces of NATO member states appear to have been heavily implicated in the attacks.

"It appears that NATO members and perhaps assistance from Ukraine, based on the ever changing narrative, were behind the destruction of European energy infrastructure and caused the worst ecological contamination in history," Rasmussen said.

Despite the seriousness of the attacks, the United States and NATO appeared strangely complacent about letting their investigations peter out, he said.

"Yet, we see investigations done in secret and never are the actual perpetrators exposed," Rasmussen said.

NATO is now obsolete, at best irrelevant and a real danger to world peace, and it would be better for the world if a true independent inclusive defensive alliance was established, he said.

Far from promoting peace and security in Europe, NATO was relentlessly destroying it, including by disregarding Russia's "red lines" and valid security concerns, leading to the foolish venture to provoke Moscow into taking protective measures, Rasmussen said.

Far from protecting the European member states against Russia, NATO's ongoing support for the Kiev regime had drained them of their own weapons and ability to protect themselves, Rasmussen noted.

"The alliance continues to drain their own defensive posture to bolster Ukraine in an unwinnable conflict," Rasmussen said.

Meanwhile, through such rabid support for Ukraine, NATO was only accelerating its own decline, he said.

"The path that we are currently on and the refusal of Ukraine and its NATO sponsors from seeking a true peace will only worsen the situation," Rasmussen said.

The US and NATO's determination to propel Ukraine into a ruinous, unwinnable war with

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Russia had only destroyed the country instead, he said.

"I doubt if there will be a Ukraine, at least as we know it. Hence, whatever rump state remains, I am not sure that Russia would really care. Let the West deal with the ultranationalist, neo-Nazi extremists in Western Ukraine - good luck," Rasmussen said.

Those extremists would most likely only create more problems for the alliance, and they will soon regret allowing them to develop, Rasmussen added.

Pipeline operator Nord Stream AG has said that the destruction of the gas pipelines was unprecedented and it was impossible to estimate the repair time.

Pulitzer Prize-winning US investigative journalist Seymour Hersh published a report in February 2023, alleging that the explosions had been organized by the United States with the support of Norway. The United States has denied any involvement in the incident.

Sunday marks the 75th anniversary when the North Atlantic Treaty came into force in 1949 after the signatory states deposited their ratifications of the accord.

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Many NATO States Question Crazed Policies Against Russia, China - Ex-US Army Officer

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) - Fissures are cracking NATO apart as many alliance leaders increasingly question the crazed US-led policies that continue to provoke ever more dangerous confrontations with Russia and China, retired US Army Lt. Colonel and former vice president of the Eurasia Foundation Earl Rasmussen told Sputnik.

"The stability of NATO is not what is being told to us," Rasmussen said. "There are fractures developing. Hungary, Slovakia, Turkey are very vocal in countering NATO and EU demands in favor of the needs of their own people and in my view seeking more of a true security for their people."

Rasmussen noted that the aggressive policies demanded by the Biden administration in the United States and by NATO's leaders in Brussels have alarmed many more responsible leaders in Europe.

"The hatred of Russia, the push to decouple from China, the ever continuing expansion and the clear shift from a 'defensive' posture to one that is offensive, the addicted support for Ukraine with its bottomless money pit and ultra-corruption has many members questioning what are we about?" Rasmussen said.

NATO has essentially been an extension of the US military and the armed wing of US foreign policy for some time, if not since its inception, he said.

Lord Hastings Ismay of the United Kingdom, the first NATO secretary-general, was credited with stating that the purpose of the alliance was "to keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in and the Germans down," and that focus can be seen throughout NATO's history, Rasmussen said.

The Soviet Union and then Russia actually sought membership in NATO but each time any attempts at building a strong alliance together were rebuffed by NATO, dictated to by the United States, Rasmussen said.

While the story was that the collective West was defending democracy from the threat of the

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communist Soviet Union, one needs to question, was there actually any real threat, he said.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, there was no threat, and NATO excursions were all offensive in nature: Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and in other countries, Rasmussen said.

"If NATO was ever a true 'defensive' organization, in the past 20 plus years it has been all 'offensive,'" he said.

Such activities carried out by NATO allies as Operation Paperclip, the recruiting of many hundreds of Nazi scientists and war criminals after World War II to build new weapons for the United States, showed the extent that the United States would go to supporting and growing ultra-nationalist, fascist elements within Eastern Europe to counter and disrupt Soviet internal affairs, Rasmussen noted.

Former Under Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz had even developed a doctrine that sought to maintain US supremacy at any cost and to prevent a resurgence of Russia and the rise of regional powers that may compete with the United States, Rasmussen said.

Wolfowitz "essentially stated that the United States is the one and only superpower and advocated continual US supremacy," Rasmussen said.

All of NATO's most aggressive, irresponsible and dangerous policies in recent years had conformed to Wolfowitz's strategic road map, he said.

"Many of the actions, such as the encroachment or expansion of NATO, the rejection of overtures made by Russia and ultimately the rising tensions with China aim to isolate Russia, China and any power that seeks to challenge US supremacy," Rasmussen said.

However, the world has been changing and the situation today is not what it was 30 years ago, he said.

"Unfortunately, our foreign policy leaders have not awakened from their dreams," Rasmussen added.

Sunday marks the 75th anniversary when the North Atlantic Treaty came into force in 1949 after the signatory states deposited their ratifications of the accord.

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Gold Shines 4th Week In Row, Nears Record High On US Rate Cut Signal

NEW YORK, August 24 (Sputnik) - Gold prices ended up for a fourth week in a row, nearing a record high in Friday's trade after Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell signaled that the central bank was ready to execute its first interest rate cut in four years.

US gold futures for delivery in December settled at $2,546.30 an ounce — up $29.60, or 1.2%, on the day. The session high was $2,554.50 — just about $15 higher than the record high of $2,570.40 seen thus far for US gold futures.

For the week, December gold rose 0.3%. Over the three prior weeks, it gained 2.6%, 0.2%, and 2.7%.

Gold's latest run-up came after Powell told an audience of global bankers, economists, and other financial professionals gathered at the Fed's annual symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming that the central bank was ready for a directional change after keeping rates at two-decade highs for more than a year.

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Money market traders took that to mean that the first US rate cut since March 2020 will happen at the conclusion of the Fed's next policy meeting on September 18.

But they also gave a narrow one-in-three chance that the Fed will agree to a sizable cut as large as 50 basis points, or a half-percentage point by next month. The Fed, on the contrary, had hiked rates by 525 basis points, or 5.25%, over the past two years.

The low odds for a large cut in September was partly due to a lack of specifics on how the Fed would move ahead. Powell said the timing and pace of rate reductions will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks.

Still, gold rose as the dollar and the yield on US bonds' benchmark 10-year note tumbled on Powell's remarks, making commodities priced in the greenback more attractive to buyers using other currencies.

Gold is in play because the Fed has been "very data dependent and it looks like the data is very clearly coming through now: inflation is trending down, labor is softening, the economy remains resilient," said Joy Yang, head of marketing and product management at MarketVector Indexes, in comments carried by MarketWatch.

Year-to-date, gold is up more than 20%, making it the year's best-performing commodity after fellow precious metal silver, which is up 22%. Other major outperformers in the natural resources space are cocoa, which is up 85% on the year, orange juice (54%) and coffee (50%).

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US Army Orders $52Mln More Black Hawk HH-60M Military Helicopters - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) - Sikorsky has received a more than $52 million contract extension to build more HH-60M Black Hawk military utility helicopters for the US Army, the Defense Department announced.

"Sikorsky ...was awarded a $52,192,314 modification ... contract for HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters," the defense Department said in a press release on Friday.

Work on the extended contract will be performed in Stratford, Connecticut, over the next three years with an estimated completion date of June 30, 2027, the release said.

The US Army Contracting Command, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama will oversee work on the project, the release added.

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US Buys 2.5Mln Barrels More for Strategic Oil Reserve at Over $180Mln - Energy Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is keeping to its pace in refilling the heavily-drawn US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), with the Department of Energy announcing on Friday the purchase of another 2.5 million barrels of crude for the facility at more than $180 million.

"As of August 23, 2024, the following contract for the purchase of 2.475MMB [million barrels],

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totaling $180,312,000.00, has been awarded," the Department of Energy said on its Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) website on Friday.

The crude, purchased from Macquarie Commodities Trading, will be delivered to the SPR storage site at Bryan Mound in Freeport, Texas, between January 1 and March 31, 2025, in three monthly installments of about 800,000 barrels each, the Department of Energy said.

The SPR saw an outflow of more than 200 million barrels under the Biden-Harris administration, which came to office in January 2021. The administration had relied heavily on the reserve to offset a global squeeze in oil supply that led to high domestic fuel prices.

President Joe Biden's use of the facility was, however, criticized by his rivals, who accused him of turning the SPR into a political tool to subdue fuel prices in order to boost his standing with US voters. Their contention is that the reserve was created for emergency needs to make oil available in times of critically-short supply.

Biden has said he used the SPR precisely in times of emergency, when prices at the pump hit record highs above $5 per gallon, sending inflation soaring for Americans. Oil released from the SPR has succeeded in keeping gasoline at the pump at below $3.50 per gallon for more than two years.

The 2.5 million barrel purchase announced for the SPR comes after the acquisition of another six million barrels reported by the Department of Energy on August 12. Prior to that, the department had bought back some 40 million barrels or a fifth of what it had used up.

The Department of Energy said on Friday that it has directly purchased over 47 million barrels of oil for the SPR at an average price of $76.89 per barrel.

That purchase price roughly translated to about $18 per barrel lower than the $95 average that SPR oil was sold for in 2022, constituting "a good deal for taxpayers," it added.

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Multiple People Killed in Stabbing Attack at City Festival in Solingen, Germany - Reports

HANNOVER, August 23 (Sputnik) - At least three people have been killed and several others injured in a stabbing attack during a city festival in the German city of Solingen, local media reported.

According to reports, the suspect randomly stabbed people at a festival celebrating the city's 650th anniversary.

The suspect is on the run and the festival has been canceled, reports said.

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Biden Discusses With Qatar, Egypt Leaders Gaza Ceasefire Deal - White House

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke with the leaders of Qatar and Egypt to try and close a ceasefire deal for Gaza and for the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas, the White House announced.

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"President Biden spoke with Amir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani of Qatar and separately spoke with President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi of Egypt to discuss diplomatic efforts to bring the ceasefire and hostage release deal to a conclusion," the White House said in a statement on Friday.

News of the discussion came after US media reported that Biden had asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to pull Israeli forces from Gaza's border with Egypt so that negotiations on the hostage release and ceasefire deal could move forward.

Israeli officials cited in the report said Biden asked for Israeli forces to be removed from a small part of the Philadelphi corridor during the first phase of the deal.

The requested area comprises a 1-2 kilometer strip along the Egypt-Gaza border near where large numbers of displaced Palestinians are sheltering. Netanyahu partially agreed with Biden's request, according to the report.

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ANALYSIS -Kamala Harris' Neoconservative Rhetoric at Democratic Convention May Have Repercussions

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) - Newly announced Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris' assertive rhetoric against Russia, China, and Iran at her party's nominating convention in Chicago is receiving significant attention from mainstream media, however, this approach may have implications as the two-month election campaign progresses, US analysts told Sputnik.

In her nationally broadcast acceptance speech carried by all major networks and public television, Harris vowed that under her leadership the United States would win a global race with China for world leadership through the 21st century and claimed to have stood up to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

BELLICOSE LANGUAGE

The speech will heavily appeal to chickenhawk armchair militarists across the Republican Party as well as to Harris's own Democrats, US constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare acknowledged.

"Harris also pandered to the neocons by cheering on NATO and denouncing Iran, Russia, North Korea, and China," Lazare noted.

However, such bellicose language was not going to help Harris later in the campaign due to general war weariness and the deteriorating situation in the Ukraine, Lazare judged.

Lazare acknowledged that Harris delivered an impactful acceptance speech to her national audience.

"I have been arguing ever since Biden withdrew that she'd do much better in a general election -- and last night's performance is certainly proof," he said.

Nevertheless, Harris's speech was filled with misstatements and empty promises that could be easily exposed, Lazare cautioned.

"A good speech can't cover up for a broad array of political holes. She promised to build a strong and growing middle class. Yet under her and Joe [Biden], real family income has fallen

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4.7% from the 2019 peak. She vowed "to lower the cost of everyday needs like health care and housing and groceries, yet it was on her watch that all three categories surged," he said.

The Democrats were heading for disaster under Biden and have now gotten a new lease on life now that he has pulled out, Lazare agreed.

"But I still think that [Republican presidential candidate Donald] Trump has the edge, particularly in the swing states where it counts," he said.

UNDEFINED POLICIES

Former merchant banker, financial analyst, and columnist Martin Hutchinson agreed with Lazare that Trump still had a chance, despite Harris's widening lead over him in national opinion polls.

Harris also has yet to define her policies, if only in the two debates she has agreed to, Hutchinson maintained.

The outcome of the contest was still by no means certain, Hutchinson conceded.

"But I still put Trump as a 60%-40% favorite, maybe up a little on a week ago," he said.

NATIONAL CONCERNS MAY FAVOR HARRIS

However, former Hedge Fund Manager and Trends Journal Publisher Gerald Celente held fast to his assessment going back more than two years that Harris could and would clearly defeat Trump.

"In the May 2022 edition of The Trends Journal, we had forecast that Joe Biden would step down and Kamala Harris would run for President in 2024. On 25 July of this year, we sent out a Special Trend Alert in which we had forecast that minus a wild card such as a stock market crash, Harris will beat Trump in the race for the White House," he said.

Harris would benefit mightily from national outrage about the overturn of the 1973 Roe Vs Wade Supreme Court decision that repealed the constitutional right to abortion across the United States, Celente declared.

"Many voters go to the polls for single issues and abortion is a major issue, especially for women as proven by the mid-term election results. Kamala Harris is going to attack Donald Trump for [supporting the Court overturn]," he said.

Trends Journal was also forecasting that Harris would get a very high percentage of Black, Latino, and Asian votes, Celente said.

Trump faces Democrat Kamala Harris, incumbent President Joe Biden's vice president, in the November 5 election.

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ANALYSIS - NATO's Future, War Threat in Europe Hinge on US Election

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) - As NATO reaches its 75th anniversary this year, its evolution along with prospects for peace or war in Europe will be very much at stake in November, depending on who wins the US presidential election, leading Western military and diplomatic analysts told Sputnik.

This Saturday, August 24, marks 75 years since NATO's April 4 founding treaty entered into force after the deposition of the ratifications of all signatory states.

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AT CROSSROADS

"What happens next hinges on whether Trump is elected," former UK ambassador to Syria and veteran diplomat Peter Ford said. "While the huge forces of the Atlanticist lobby will be mobilized against it, the irresistible force of Trump's determination to extract the US from the East European morass will likely prevail."

A victory in November by Democratic presidential candidate and current Vice President Kamala Harris would make the outlook "ominous," Ford warned.

However, some encouraging signs are beginning to emerge in mainland Europe, Ford observed.

These political forces are "angered by the dynamiting of the Nord Stream gas pipeline in 2022 and being perpetually put to tribute by Ukraine" and are "beginning to be tired of always being kept 'down' by being 'in'" the alliance, he said.

RELENTLESS EXPANSION TO THE EAST

NATO is essentially "a cover for the US military," University of Louvain professor of political philosophy Jean Bricmont said.

Under US leadership for more than 30 years, NATO has consistently implemented its own "Drang Nach Osten" by incorporating all the countries of Eastern Europe in clear violation to the verbal promises made to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at the time of German reunification, Bricmont recalled.

"The worst step however was the attempt to incorporate Ukraine into NATO which, together with Maidan [a West-backed coup toppling Ukraine's democratically elected government in 2014] and the refusal to implement the Minsk accords, led to the Russian reaction and the ongoing conflict," he said.

According to Ret. US Air Force Lt. Col. and veteran Pentagon analyst Karen Kwiatkowski, "the stupidity of seeking a war of choice against Russia, through political and military manipulation in a variety of places in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, is at this point, NATO groupthink."

Kwiatkowski called NATO's actions and decisions "increasingly counterproductive, unpopular and costly," as seen with the Ukraine conflict and "re-establishing nuclear targets throughout Western Europe."

"Ukraine has become the very Nazi, religiously intolerant, corrupt dictatorship NATO was formed to prevent from rising again on the European continent," Kwiatkowski said.

The country is actually less transparent and more corrupt than before 2014, while the proxy war in Ukraine has failed to generate NATO unity or reenergize and modernize NATO's military industrial sector, according to Kwiatkowski.

TOWARD THE PACIFIC

NATO strategists meanwhile are looking to an even bolder, globe-spanning expansion of the alliance's mission, former UK ambassador to Syria Ford observed.

"Based on past history, might we not be forgiven for expecting yet another repurposing of this organization, perhaps an accentuated tilt (it is already incipient in the recently minted AUKAZ alliance of Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and also New Zealand towards the Pacific and ginning up conflict with China?" he asked.

Bricmont agreed with Ford that NATO leaders are trying to expand their power to East Asia.

"Now, it seems that NATO wants to get involved in the conflicts in the South China Sea which, last time I looked at a map, was not exactly part of the North Atlantic," he noted.

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NO FAITH IN NATO

Ret. US Marine Corps Maj. Donald Vandergriff believes that Trump has "the right attitude on NATO."

"I worked with them [NATO] in Afghanistan. There were several great soldiers, but we think the US military is bad with bureaucracy and PC [political correctness]," Vandergriff said.

Vandergriff said he has "no faith" in NATO fighting and winning.

"The focus on Russia is a strategic mistake. But the Ukrainian-Russo War is at the feet of Biden and NATO," he said.

NATO leaders and the Biden administration have willfully refused to make any efforts to end the conflict in Ukraine "because they think they are bleeding the Russians, and they are also laundering money through one of the most corrupt governments in the world," Vandergriff said.

"I would love to see us pull out of NATO," Vandergriff stated.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, August 24 (Sputnik) -

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

* Press reports that the Gaza ceasefire talks are nearing collapse are "not accurate," White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby told reporters on Friday.
* Israeli Air Force jets struck targets in central Syria, injuring seven people, the Syrian Defense Ministry said.
* A new round of negotiations on a deal between Israel and the Palestinian movement Hamas on a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and the release of hostages may take place on August 25 in Cairo, US media reported.

NEW US SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

* The United States is imposing new Russia-related sanctions on nearly 400 individuals and entities, including onthe airlines Volga Dnepr, AirBridgeCargo and Norilsk Avia and on Russia's two main artificial intelligence (AI) research institutes hat provide technical solutions for the country's financial sector, the US Treasury Department said on Friday.
* The United States has also targeted a number of Russian mining and metals companies as well as Russia's Nornikel Technical Services in its latest round of sanctions over the Ukraine conflict, the Treasury Department said.
* The United States sanctioned the son and the daughter-in-law of Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov, the Treasury Department said.

US PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

* Independent Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Friday that he is suspending his campaign and not terminating it.
* Kennedy Jr. said that Donald Trump's pledge to bring peace to Ukraine by reopening

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negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin alone would suffice to justify his support for the Trump campaign.
* Trump thanked Kennedy Jr. for his "very nice" endorsement in the 2024 presidential campaign.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* The United States will unveil a new military package for Ukraine later today, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby told reporters on Friday.
* EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Friday that the European Union is a part of the Ukraine conflict, adding that the result of the conflict would determine the bloc's geopolitical future.
* Russia's Yug (South) group of forces has repelled two counterattacks and eliminated up to 4,530 Ukrainian servicepeople over the past week, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* Russia's special military operation in Ukraine is a predictable response to NATO's encirclement of Russia, independent US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said.
* US President Joe Biden said in a statement that the United States would soon announce a new military aid package for Ukraine, which includes air defense missiles, counter-drone equipment, and anti-armor missiles and ammunition.

PUTIN-PASHINYAN TALKS
* Russian President Vladimir Putin and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan discussed the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan during a phone conversation, the Kremlin said on Friday.
* Putin and Pashinyan noted the positive dynamics of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries, the Kremlin said.
* Pashinyan and Putin agreed to hold a meeting to discuss bilateral agenda during a phone conversation, the Armenian government said.

HOSTAGE-TAKING INCIDENT IN VOLGOGRAD
* Several inmates in Russia's Volgograd region prison No. 19 took hostages at a meeting of the disciplinary commission and several people were injured in the incident, Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service told Sputnik on Friday.
* Eight prison employees were taken hostage by the prisoners, three died during the incident but a fourth one, who was previously pronounced dead, survived, the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service said.
* Snipers of the Russian National Guard in the Volgograd Region neutralized four prisoners who took prison employees hostage and the hostages were released, law enforcement told Sputnik.

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UPDATE 2 - Biden Announces New Military Aid Package for Ukraine Valued at $125 Million

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(Adds value of package in headine and para 3)

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Friday announced that the United States would provide a new military package to Ukraine that includes air defense missiles, counter-drone equipment, and anti-armor missiles and ammunition.

"I am proud we will announce a new package of military aid for Ukraine today. The package includes air defense missiles to protect Ukraine's critical infrastructure; counter-drone equipment and anti-armor missiles to defend against Russia's evolving tactics on the battlefield; and ammunition for frontline soldiers and the mobile rocket systems that protect them," Biden said in a statement.

The Pentagon said the assistance, the Biden administration's sixty-fourth trance of weapons, was valued at $125 million.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a separate statement said the new military package includes additional ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (TOW) missiles.

The package also includes small arms ammunition, ambulances, demolition equipment and munitions, as well as spare parts, medical equipment, ancillary equipment, services, training and transportation, Blinken said.

"We will deploy this new assistance as quickly as possible to bolster Ukraine's defense of its territory and its people," Blinken said.

Biden also shared that he spoke with Volodymyr Zelenskyy to reaffirm America's support for Ukraine.

"These actions build on a series of historic steps we have taken with our Allies and partners over the last few months to support Ukraine," Biden added.

In a separate statement, National Security Council spokesperson Sean Savett said that Biden spoke with Zelenskyy to offer congratulations on the upcoming Ukrainian Independence Day.

Western countries have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. Aid shipments began in 2022 with artillery munitions and training and have escalated to include tanks, advanced air-defense systems, missiles and cluster munitions. The Kremlin has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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Wall Street Up on Rate Cut Bets Though Size of Easing Uncertain

NEW YORK, August 23 (Sputnik) - US stocks ended up a second straight week on bets that the Federal Reserve will execute its first interest rate cut in four years in September, although Friday's rally itself had an air of caution due to uncertainty over the likely pace and size of the easing.

The three main US stock indexes on Wall Street — the S&P 500, the Nasdaq Composite and the Dow Jones Industrial Average — closed the week up around 1% each.

The S&P, an index which tracks the stocks of 500 high-performing US companies, closed up 0.9% for Friday and 1.1% for the week.

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The Nasdaq, which comprises pricey technology stocks such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google, finished the day up 1.2% and the week up 1.1%.

The Dow, the broadest indicator for US equity markets and one that often reflects value, rose 0.8% for the session and 0.95% for the week.

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell told an audience of global central bankers, economists and other financial professionals gathered at the central bank's annual banking symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming on Friday that it was ready for a directional change after keeping rates at two-decade highs for more than a year.

Money market traders took that to mean that the first US rate cut since March 2020 will happen at the conclusion of the Fed's next policy meeting on September 18.

But they also gave a narrow one-in-three chance that the Fed will agree to a sizable cut as large as 50 basis points, or a half-percentage point by next month. The Fed, on the contrary, had hiked rates by 525 basis points, or 5.25%, over the past two years.

The relatively low odds for a 50 basis point cut in September resulted from Powell not giving any specifics on how the Fed would move ahead. The timing and pace of rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks, the Fed chair said.

Still, "the market is kind of breathing a sigh of relief," Skyler Weinand, chief investment officer at Regan Capital, said in comments carried by CNBC. "The market sees [it as] 'alright, the cycle has changed.' We haven't taken a 180 [degree turn] but we've taken a right turn towards an easing cycle."

Some economists, like Adam Button, however, expect the Fed to start with a 50 basis-point cut in September and follow through with 25 basis-point cuts at the next two rate decisions scheduled on November 7 and December 18.

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US Govt Approves $300Mln Sale of Apache Helicopters to Australia - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has approved the sale of $300 million worth of Apache attack helicopters to Australia, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced on Friday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Australia of AH-64E Apache Sustainment Support Services and related equipment for an estimated cost of $300 million," the DSCA said in a press release.

The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of the possible sale earlier on Friday, the release said.

"The government of Australia has requested to buy AH-64E Apache sustainment support services, including US Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services. ... The estimated total cost is $300 million," the release said.

The proposed sale will improve Australia's capability to meet current and future threats by providing the necessary support to successfully employ its AH-64E Apache helicopters, the release added.

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US Approves $52Mln Sale of Anti-Sub Sonobuoys to India - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has approved the sale of anti-submarine sound-measuring buoys to India, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced on Friday.

"The Secretary of State has approved a possible Foreign Military Sale to the government of India of anti-submarine warfare sonobuoys and related equipment for an estimated cost of $52.8 million," the DSCA said in a press release.

The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale earlier in the day, the release said.

"The government of India has requested to buy AN/SSQ-53G High Altitude Anti-Submarine Warfare (HAASW) sonobuoys; AN/SSQ-62F HAASW sonobuoys [and] AN/SSQ-36 sonobuoys ... The estimated total cost is $52.8 million," the release said.

The proposed sale will improve India's capability to meet current and future threats by enhancing its capacity to conduct anti-submarine warfare operations from its MH-60R helicopters, the release added.

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US Recon Aircraft Arrives in Europe,Conducts Baltic Flight Near Russia and Belarus-Reports

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) — A US RC-135U reconnaissance aircraft (Combat Sent) arrived in Europe for an annual mission to assess enemy radars, indicating it conducted a flight in the Baltic region near Russia and Belarus after landing in the UK, Newsweek reported on Friday.

According to the report, earlier this week, the Combat Sent aircraft flew eastward through Dutch, German, and Polish airspace, bypassing the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, before returning to Mildenhall after passing through Baltic and Finnish airspace.

The report said, that while the flight lasted about six hours, the exact purpose and duration of the Combat Sent's deployment to Europe were unclear.

The report added that the Combat Sent collects electronic intelligence, with the Air Force stating that it can locate and identify foreign military radar signals, which are analyzed both automatically and by onboard electronic warfare officers, enabling the processing of multiple signals simultaneously.

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UPDATE - Biden Announces New Military Aid Package for Ukraine

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(Modifies headline and para 1, adds Blinken statement in paras 3-5, background in para 9)
WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Friday announced that the United States would provide a new military package to Ukraine that includes air defense missiles, counter-drone equipment, and anti-armor missiles and ammunition.
"That is why I am proud we will announce a new package of military aid for Ukraine today. The package includes air defense missiles to protect Ukraine's critical infrastructure; counter-drone equipment and anti-armor missiles to defend against Russia's evolving tactics on the battlefield; and ammunition for frontline soldiers and the mobile rocket systems that protect them," Biden said in a statement.
US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a separate statement said the new military package includes additional ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (TOW) missiles.
The package also includes small arms ammunition, ambulances, demolition equipment and munitions, as well as spare parts, medical equipment, ancillary equipment, services, training and transportation, Blinken said.
"We will deploy this new assistance as quickly as possible to bolster Ukraine's defense of its territory and its people," Blinken said.
Biden also shared that he spoke with Volodymyr Zelenskyy to reaffirm America's support for Ukraine.
"These actions build on a series of historic steps we have taken with our Allies and partners over the last few months to support Ukraine," Biden added.
In a separate statement, National Security Council spokesperson Sean Savett said that Biden spoke with Zelenskyy to offer congratulations on the upcoming Ukrainian Independence Day.
Western countries have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. Aid shipments began in 2022 with artillery munitions and training and have escalated to include tanks, advanced air-defense systems, missiles and cluster munitions. The Kremlin has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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Trump Says Biden Didn't Have Clue What He Did With Russia, Ukraine

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) – Donald Trump said on Friday that US President Joe Biden did not understand what he did to Russia and Ukraine.
"Biden didn't have a clue what he did with Russia and Ukraine. That's a war that should have never started. If I were president, zero chance that that would have happened. It would have never and it didn't for four years," Trump said during a rally in Las Vegas, Nevada.
Earlier on Friday, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced his decision to suspend his campaign and endorse Trump. Among the reasons that influenced his decision, he named Trump's pledge to bring peace to Ukraine by reopening negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.
Russia has been conducting a special military operation in Ukraine since February 24, 2022. Putin said the operation aims to "protect people subjected to genocide by the Kiev regime for

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eight years." According to the president, the ultimate goal of the operation is to liberate Donbas and create conditions that guarantee Russia's security.

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Oil Prices Up 2% on US Interest Rate Cut Odds, Recovering Partly From Dismal Week

NEW YORK, August 23 (Sputnik) - Crude prices rose a second day in a row on Friday as the chance of a US interest rate cut by September boosted risk appetite in a market struggling until lately with fading geopolitical support amid odds for a ceasefire in the Gaza war.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled up $1.82, or 2.5%, at $74.83 per barrel, adding to Thursday's 1.5% gain.

WTI tumbled 7% between Friday and Wednesday, pushing it to a 2024 low of $71.47. For the week, the US benchmark remained in the negative, finishing down 2.4%. For 2024 thus far, it was up 4%, after rallying 22% earlier in the year.

UK-origin Brent settled its latest New York trading session up $1.80, or 2.3%, at $79.02 per barrel, advancing the previous session's gain of 1.5%.

Brent lost more than 6% in four prior days of trading, hitting a November low of $74.79 on Wednesday. For the week, the global crude benchmark was down around 1%. Year-to-date, it was up 2%, after running up some 20% earlier.

Friday's rebound in crude prices came after the Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said the central bank was ready to adjust US interest rates hovering at two-decade highs. An interest rate cut would lower the cost of doing business in the United States - a boon to the economy and the consumption of oil that is dependent on growth.

The dollar and the yield on US bonds' benchmark ten-year note tumbled on the news, making oil and other commodities priced in the greenback more attractive to buyers using other currencies.

Money market traders bet that the first US interest rate cut since 2020 will happen as early as the Fed's next rate decision on September 18.

But they also gave a narrow one-in-three chance that the central bank will agree to a sizable cut as large as 50 basis points, or a half-percentage point by next month. The Fed, on the contrary, had hiked rates by 525 basis points, or 5.25%, over the past two years.

"The key is whether they're going to do a quarter or 50 basis points" in September, Phil Flynn, energy analyst at commodities broker Price Futures Group, said.

Flynn said the strength of the oil market going forward will depend on whether Powell is "going to signal how aggressive he will be in cutting rates in the future." The Fed chair did not give any cues on that, saying: "The timing and pace of rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks."

Some analysts also said it was far from certain that the bullish trajectory in oil would be maintained, citing continued pressure on the Israeli government and the Palestinian movement Hamas to end the war in Gaza.

The conflict was initially a boon to the oil market. Crude prices rallied with little stop between January and March from Israel's bombardment of Gaza and the retaliation by Hamas and its

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allies, including Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iran, that sometimes disrupted oil shipments.
From the end of June, however, the oil rally began to unravel as the United States and its peace-keeping allies pushed for a ceasefire in Gaza.

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US, Indian Defense Chiefs Discuss Efforts to Deepen Partnership - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh met on Friday to discuss efforts to bolster the defense partnership between the United States and India, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said in a statement.
"The two officials discussed ongoing efforts to deepen the Major Defense Partnership between the United States and India in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region," the statement said.
Austin and Singh celebrated progress across several bilateral defense initiatives, the statement said.
The defense chiefs also agreed to advance priority co-production projects, including jet engines, unmanned platforms, munitions and ground mobility systems, the statement said.
The officials look forward to meeting again at the next 2+2 ministerial dialogue, the statement added.

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Suspension of Kennedy Campaign 'Good News' for Trump in US Swing States - Campaign Memo

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Independent US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s decision to suspend his campaign and remove his ticket from ballots in battleground states benefits former President Donald Trump's campaign, Republican pollster Tony Fabrizio said in a memorandum shared by the Trump campaign on Friday.
"With the exit of RFK Jr. from the race and his endorsement of President Trump, there will undoubtedly be a great deal of speculation of what it means and who it will help," the memo said. "This is good news for President Trump and his campaign - plain and simple."
Support for Kennedy in swing states breaks for Trump, the memorandum said.
Earlier on Friday, Kennedy announced that his name will remain on ballots in most US states, except for swing states. Kennedy also threw his support behind Trump, citing their shared support for freedom of speech and ending the conflict in Ukraine.
Trump called Kennedy's support a "very nice endorsement" during a speech in Nevada on Friday.

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Trump Thanks Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for His 'Very Nice' Endorsement

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump on Friday thanked Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for his "very nice" endorsement in the 2024 presidential campaign.

"We just had a very nice endorsement from RFK, Jr., Bobby. I want to thank Bobby. That was very nice," Trump said during a rally in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Trump's remarks came just moments after RFK Jr. announced the suspension and not the termination of his presidential campaign and his support of Trump.

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DNC Prevented Opponents from Appearing on Ballot Like US Accuses Russia of Doing – RFK Jr

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Friday that the Democratic National Convention (DNC) has prevented serious opponents such as himself from appearing on ballots, highlighting the irony of the US accusing the Russian government of allegedly doing the same in past elections.

"President Biden mocked Vladimir Putin's 88% landslide in the Russian elections, observing that Putin and his party controlled the Russian press, and that Putin prevented serious opponents from appearing on the ballot. Here in America the DNC also prevented opponents from appearing on the ballots," RFK Jr. said during a press briefing.

The independent candidate further argued that US domestic television networks have exposed themselves as Democratic Party organs over the course of the past year. Notably, RFK recalled how despite his polling numbers reaching the high 20s, mainstream media imposed a "near perfect" embargo on interviews with him.

RFK further noted that representatives of those same networks were present in the briefing room as he spoke and expressed his belief that their institutions abdicated their sacred responsibility of a free press as a safeguard of democracy.

"I'll just take a moment to ask you to consider the many ways that your institutions have abdicated this really sacred responsibility, the duty of a free press to safeguard democracy and to challenge, always, the party in power. Instead of maintaining that posture of fierce skepticism toward authority, your institutions have made themselves government mouthpieces and stenographers for the organs of power," he said.

The presidential election in Russia was held from March 15-17. The Russian Central Election Commission declared incumbent President Vladimir Putin winner, having gathered 87.28% of the vote.

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RFK Jr. Says Nord Stream 2 Sabotage Harms European Industrial Base, US National Security

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The sabotage of Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline and sanctions on Russia have harmed Europe's industrial base and the United States' national security, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Friday.

"The Nord Stream pipeline sabotage and the sanctions have destroyed Europe's industrial base, which formed the bulwark of US national security," Kennedy said during a speech in Arizona.

The conflict in Ukraine has also been disastrous for the US insofar as the government has "squandered" billions of dollars on supporting the regime in Kiev.

Moreover, the US pushed Russia into an alliance with China and Iran, Kennedy said, adding that the world is closer to the brink of nuclear exchange than at any time since 1962.

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RFK Jr Says Promise to End War in Ukraine Enough to Justify his Support for Trump

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Friday that Donald Trump's pledge to bring peace to Ukraine by reopening negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin alone would suffice to justify his support for his campaign.

"President Trump says that he will reopen negotiations with President Putin and end the war [in Ukraine] overnight as soon as he becomes president. This alone would justify my support for his campaign," Kennedy Jr. said in his remarks on the future of his campaign.

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UPDATE - Biden Says US Will Announce New Military Aid Package for Ukraine

(adds para 3, 4, 5)

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) — US President Joe Biden said in a statement that the United States would soon announce a new military aid package for Ukraine, which includes air defense missiles, counter-drone equipment, and anti-armor missiles and ammunition.

"That is why I am proud we will announce a new package of military aid for Ukraine today. The package includes air defense missiles to protect Ukraine's critical infrastructure; counter-drone equipment and anti-armor missiles to defend against Russia's evolving tactics on the battlefield; and ammunition for frontline soldiers and the mobile rocket systems that protect them," Biden said on Friday.

According to the statement, earlier today, Biden said that he spoke with Volodymyr Zelenskyy to reaffirm America's support for Ukraine.

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"These actions build on a series of historic steps we have taken with our Allies and partners over the last few months to support Ukraine," Biden added.
In a separate statement, National Security Council spokesperson Sean Savett said that Biden spoke with Zelenskyy to offer congratulations on the upcoming Ukrainian Independence Day.

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RFK Jr. Says Ukraine Conflict 'Predictable' Response by Russia to NATO Encirclement

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Russia's special military operation in Ukraine is a predictable response to NATO's encirclement of Russia, independent US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Friday.
"The war is Russia's predictable response to the reckless neocon[servative] project of extending NATO to encircle Russia – a hostile act," Kennedy said during a speech in Arizona.
Ukraine is a proxy in a geopolitical struggle initiated by neoconservatives in the United States, Kennedy said.
The United States wanted the conflict to continue, Kennedy said, pointing to former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's effort to thwart a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

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Kennedy Says 'Simply Suspending,' Not Terminating Presidential Campaign

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Independent Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Friday that he is suspending his campaign and not terminating it.
"I am not terminating my campaign, simply suspending it," Kennedy said during a press conference.
Kennedy added that his name will remain on the ballot in most US states, save for about ten battle ground states where his campaign would be a spoiler.

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rfk jr. says conflict in ukraine is Russia's predictable response to NATO encircling them

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rfk jr. says he is removing name from ballot in 10 battleground states where his campaign would be spoiler

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Biden Says US Will Announce New Military Aid Package for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) — US President Joe Biden said in a statement that the United States would soon announce a new military aid package for Ukraine, which includes air defense missiles, counter-drone equipment, and anti-armor missiles and ammunition.

"That is why I am proud we will announce a new package of military aid for Ukraine today. The package includes air defense missiles to protect Ukraine's critical infrastructure; counter-drone equipment and anti-armor missiles to defend against Russia's evolving tactics on the battlefield; and ammunition for frontline soldiers and the mobile rocket systems that protect them," Biden said on Friday.

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Republican White House Lawyers Before Trump Era Endorse Harris for US President - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - A dozen White House lawyers who served Republican administrations prior to the Trump era have endorsed Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris in the November election, Fox News reported on Friday.

The Republican lawyers, who served during the Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush administrations said in a letter that Harris was a better choice for democracy and the rule of law than their own party's presidential candidate, Donald Trump.

The lawyers said they endorse Harris and support her election as president because returning Trump to office would threaten American democracy and undermine the rule of law in the United States.

John Michael Luttig, a former US appeals court judge who identified himself as Republican, said in a statement via the social media platform X that he was joining the lawyers in backing Harris.

On Thursday, Harris accepted the Democratic Party's nomination of her candidacy for US president, pledging to look after the welfare of all Americans regardless of their political affiliation and preserve democracy and the rule of law. Harris also vowed to protect the United States from its rivals, citing specifically Iran and North Korea.

Trump has attacked Harris for being unfit for the top job, claiming that tens of millions of illegals had crossed into the United States under her watch and that of incumbent President Joe Biden. Trump has also repeatedly said that the US economy has deteriorated tremendously under the Biden-Harris administration compared to what it was under his own administration.

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RFK Jr. Hasn't Endorsed Trump, Filing Claiming So Not Reviewed by Campaign - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has not endorsed Republican nominee Donald Trump and a court filing claiming he did was not reviewed by the campaign, a Kennedy campaign spokesperson told Sputnik on Friday.

"Mr. Kennedy has not endorsed President Trump. The filing was made by an attorney and not reviewed by the campaign," the spokesperson said.

A Pennsylvania court filing on Friday requested the dismissal of Kennedy's nomination papers so that they do not appear on Pennsylvania 2024 general election ballots.

It's unclear if Kennedy still plans to drop out of the presidential race and endorse Trump later on Friday.

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biden says us will announce new package of military aid for ukraine that includes air defense missiles, counter-drone equipment, anti-armor missiles

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robert f. kennedy has not endorsed president trump, court filing was made by an attorney and not reviewed by campaign - spokesperson to sputnik

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Biden Asked Netanyahu to Remove RDF Troops from Egypt-Gaza Border - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to pull Israeli forces from Gaza's border with Egypt so that negotiations on the hostage release and ceasefire deal can move forward, Axios reported on Friday.

Israeli officials cited in the report said that Biden asked for IDF forces to be removed from a small part of the Philadelphi corridor during the first phase of the deal. The requested area comprises a 1-2 kilometer strip along the Egypt-Gaza border near where large numbers of displaced Palestinians are sheltering.

Netanyahu partially agreed with Biden's request, the report added, and committed to removing Israeli forces from one position along the border. In return, the United States will support other IDF forces remaining along the Philadelphi corridor in the deal's first phase.

The news comes only a day after President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris held a telephone call with the Israeli Prime Minister to discuss ongoing efforts to negotiate a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal.

A new round of negotiations on a deal between Israel and the Palestinian movement Hamas on

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a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and the release of hostages may take place on August 25 in Cairo and participants are expected to include CIA director Bill Burns, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, as well as senior officials from Israel and Egypt, the outlet added.

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Federal Reserve Ready to 'Adjust' Rates, Market Says 28% Chance of 50 Basis-Point Cut

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve is ready to adjust US interest rates hovering at two-decade highs, but money market traders are giving just a one-in-three chance that the central bank will agree to a half-percentage point cut by September.

The slim probability for a sizable interest rate reduction by next month is due to the lack of specifics on the likely timing and quantum of cuts given by Fed Chairman Jerome Powell on Friday, after he confirmed that the central bank was on the path of a policy easing.

For more than a year, Americans have been paying the highest fees for borrowings since the early 2000s. The last Fed rate cut was four-and-a-half years ago, right after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and there have been 11 rate hikes since then.

"The time has come for policy to adjust," Powell told an audience of global central bankers, economists and other financial professionals gathered at the Fed's annual banking symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Powell said the direction of travel is clear, signaling that the central bank was ready for a policy pivot, but the timing and pace of rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks.

Economists listening to Powell remained split on how much the Fed would do in bringing interest rates back to pre-COVID levels.

Some thought the central bank would get the ball rolling with a conservative 25 basis-point, or quarter-percentage point, cut when Fed concludes its next policy meeting on September 18.

But most betting on so-called interest rates futures called for a 50-basis point, or half-percentage point, cut in September. The odds for this remained slim though, at just 28%, due to the lack of specifics given by Powell, data tracked by Investing.com showed.

Still, some economists, like Adam Button, expect the Fed to start with a bang and remain aggressive with cuts at its next two rate decisions scheduled before the end of this year, on November 7 and December 18.

Ahead of Powell's speech on Friday, "the market was pricing in a 28% chance of 50 bps, 97 bps through December and 193 bps at this time next year," Button said, writing on the ForexLive forum. "He certainly hasn't slammed the door on 50 bps here and there was nothing in his comments about moving gradually."

Joseph LaVorgna, chief economist at SMBC Nikko Securities, had a similar view on Powell.

"He's pretty dovish … He bought the option to do whatever he needs to do next month, which is clearly an ease," LaVorgna said in comments carried by CNBC. "I don't think the bar for 50 [basis points] is particularly high."

If anything, the Fed chair was more transparent in his Jackson Hole speech than many had

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expected. At the helm of the central bank since 2018, Powell has mastered the art of saying little and keeping the market guessing between each rate decision.

On Friday, Powell took his audience on a time travel of four years, citing the factors that pressured the Fed into pushing rates to two-decade highs - particularly inflation, spurred by a post-COVID-19 jobs-and-wage recovery and consequentially-high consumer spending.

In response, the Fed added a total of 525 basis points, or 5.5 percentage points, to rates over two years, bringing them to a two-decade high of between 5.25% and 5.5%, from the COVID starting point of between zero and 0.25%.

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, went from a pre-pandemic low of 1% per year to a four-decade high of 9.1% by June 2022. The Fed's target for inflation is just 2% per year.

However, Powell said things have started changing of late, particularly the pace of inflation, which the CPI showed grew by just 2.9% per year in June 2024.

Jobs growth had also slowed, with the Labor Department this week revising down by 818,000 the growth in payrolls originally reported during the 12 months to March, citing a "statistical error". That was the highest markdown in job estimates since the post-financial crisis era of 2009 and highlights the vulnerability of the labor market following the post-COVID jobs boom.

"Inflation has declined significantly. The labor market is no longer overheated, and conditions are now less tight than those that prevailed before the pandemic," Powell told his Jackson Hole audience. "Supply constraints have normalized. And the balance of the risks to our two mandates has changed."

The Fed's dual mandate is simple: Create maximum employment for Americans by maintaining unemployment at 4% or below and keep inflation at or beneath 2% per year.

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US State Dept. Taps Arms Transfer Official for Israel-Palestine Conflict Role - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The US State Department selected an official involved in arms transfers to Israel to lead policy related to the Israel-Palestine conflict, HuffPost reported on Friday.

The Biden administration chose Mira Resnick to fill a role focused on developing policy linked to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the report said, citing two people familiar with the matter.

Resnick previously served in the State Department's Political-Military Affairs bureau, which has greenlit arms transfers to Israel amid the conflict in the Gaza Strip, the report said.

Former State Department official Annelle Sheline, who left the department in protest of the Biden administration's approach to the conflict, reportedly said that tapping Resnick for the role reflects a "doubling down" on continuing to provide aid to Israel.

Resnick is replacing Andrew Miller as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs. Miller left the State Department this summer and was known by other officials to be wary of Biden's firm support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the report said.

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UN Worried About Kursk, Zaporizhzhya NPPs Being Caught Up in Conflict - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, August 23 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is very worried about the nuclear power plants in the Zaporozhye region (also known as Zaporizhzhia) and the Kursk region that have been caught up in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, UN spokesman Stephan Dujarric said on Friday.

"I think everyone should be worried about having two nuclear power plants in the middle of a war zone," Dujarric told a briefing at the United Nations.

Last week, Rosatom CEO Alexey Likhachev, in a phone conversation with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi, drew attention to the deteriorating security situation at the Zaporizhzhya and Kursk NPPs due to the reckless actions of the Ukrainian side.

The Zaporizhzhya and Kursk nuclear power plants are the targets of criminal terrorist acts by Ukraine, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told Sputnik on Friday.

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UN to Start Polio Vaccinations for 600,000 Children, Second Round in 4 Weeks - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, August 23 (Sputnik) - Polio vaccinations for more than 600,000 children in the Gaza Strip will begin soon, with a second round planned four weeks later, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"The first round will provide vaccinations for over 600,000 children, and the second round will commence four weeks after the first," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), along with other partners, have been preparing two rounds of polio vaccination campaigns targeting children under the age of ten.

"WHO is sending more than a million polio vaccines to Gaza, which will be administered in the coming weeks," Dujarric said.

However, the vaccines had not yet arrived in Gaza, Dujarric added.

In late July, the Gaza Health Ministry declared the Palestinian enclave a polio epidemic area, citing the months-long fighting as the main reason for the spread of the disease.

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Russian Embassy in Ottawa Says Justice Must Prevail As Interpol Adds Hunka to Wanted List

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WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) – The Russian Embassy in Ottawa said on Friday that "justice should prevail" following the listing of Ukrainian Nazi SS veteran Yaroslav Hunka to Interpol's international wanted list.

On Thursday, Russia's Prosecutor General's Office announced that at its request and despite the reluctance of several countries, it had achieved a positive decision on the inclusion of Hunka in the Interpol database. If his location is established on the territory of other foreign states, the Russian supervisory authority will send a request for extradition.

"Justice should prevail," the embassy said in a statement via X. The mission further denounced the fact that Canada remains a safe harbor for Nazi henchmen like Hunka and recalled that the cabinet of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau refused to either open a criminal case against the war criminal or to extradite him at Russia's request.

In September 2023, Hunka, a 98-year-old Ukrainian Canadian, was invited to attend Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address at the Parliament of Canada. Hunka was introduced as a hero who fought against the Russians during World War II and received two standing ovations from the entire Canadian legislature.

In October, Hunka was charged in absentia with genocide of civilians during World War II by the Russian Investigative Committee. He is accused of participating in large-scale executions of at least 500 civilians in the Lviv region of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic from 1943-1944. In December, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office told Sputnik that it had requested that Hunka be extradited to Russia to face criminal charges of genocide against Soviet citizens.

Canada has had a long and controversial history of granting safe haven to former Nazi veterans, oftentimes including those convicted of crimes in the Soviet Union. In the mid-1980s, the Canadian government launched the Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals, also known as the Deschenes Commission, to investigate the immigration of individuals with a Nazi background into the country.

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US Secret Service Declines to Confirm Placing Agents on Leave After Trump Shooting

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The US Secret Service (USSS) said on Friday that it cannot confirm reports that the agency placed at least five agents on leave after the assassination attempt against former US President Donald Trump last month, characterizing the issue as a personnel matter.

"The US Secret Service is committed to investigating the decisions and actions of personnel related to the event in Butler, Pennsylvania and the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump," USSS Chief of Communications Anthony Guglielmi said in a statement shared with Sputnik. "Given this is a personnel matter, we are not in a position to comment further."

On Friday, Fox News reported that at least five USSS agents were placed on administrative leave following the assassination attempt against Trump at a July 13 campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

The agency reportedly placed one member of Trump's protective team and four members of the USSS Pittsburgh Field Office on leave.

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The agency's mission assurance review is progressing, Guglielmi said. The review is examining the processes, procedures and factors that led to the "operational failure" at the Trump rally.
Any identified and substantiated violations of policy will be investigated by the Office of Professional Responsibility for potential disciplinary action, Guglielmi said.
USSS came under scrutiny in the wake of the assassination attempt, prompting Kimberly Cheatle to resign as the agency's director.

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US House Oversight Panel Asks TSA About Placing Tulsi Gabbard on Terror Watchlist - Letter

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - US House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer sent a letter on Friday to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) chief David Pekoske regarding whistleblower allegations that the agency placed former US Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard on a terror watchlist.
A whistleblower from the Federal Air Marshals Service (FAMS) disclosed to Congress that the TSA allegedly targeted Gabbard under its Quiet Skies program, which is designed to mitigate threats posed by higher risk passengers, the letter said.
The TSA added Gabbard to the Quiet Skies program on July 23, 2024 – one day after she criticized the Biden administration in an interview, the letter said.
A whistleblower also disclosed that his wife was targeted with "special mission coverage" because she attended former US President Donald Trump's January 6, 2021 speech in Washington, but was "nowhere near" the US Capitol that day, the letter said.
Moreover, the whistleblower claims that the TSA classified the protected disclosures as a leak and initiated a retaliatory investigation.
"It is alarming that TSA is wasting its resources to surveil an air marshal's wife and Ms. Gabbard – a high-profile, American public figure – when the threat of terrorist attacks on the United States is high," the letter said.
The letter requests information from TSA on actions taken with respect to employees linked to the disclosures regarding Gabbard and the air marshal's wife, as well as all information related to Gabbard and the Quiet Skies program. The letter also requests a briefing for committee staff no later than August 30.

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US Imposes Russia-Related Sanctions on Nearly 400 Individuals, Entities - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) – The United States is imposing new Russia-related sanctions on nearly 400 individuals and entities, the Department of the Treasury said on Friday.
"Building on the sanctions already imposed on Russia in response to its continued war of aggression against Ukraine, today the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Department of State targeted nearly 400 individuals and entities both in Russia and outside its

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borders—including in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East—whose products and services enable Russia to sustain its war effort and evade sanctions," the statement said.

The US accused Russia of efforts to facilitate sanctions evasion by opening new overseas branches and subsidiaries of Russian financial institutions, according to the statement.

"Foreign regulators and financial institutions should be cautious about any dealings with overseas branches or subsidiaries of Russian financial institutions, including efforts to open new branches or subsidiaries of Russian financial institutions that are not themselves sanctioned," the statement added.

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US, 10 Latin American States Reject Venezuela Supreme Court Validating Maduro Victory

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The United Stated and a group of ten Latin American countries on Friday issued a joint statement in which they categorically rejected the Supreme Court of Venezuela's announcement that it had validated the results of the 2024 election in which Nicolas Maduro was reelected president, the states said in a joint statement on Friday.

"The governments of Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, the United States, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay categorically reject the announcement made by the Venezuelan Supreme Court of Justice, who yesterday indicated having concluded an alleged verification of the July 28 electoral process result, emitted by the National Electoral Council, and which it pretends to validate the unsupported results issued by the electoral body," the statement said.

The countries reiterated that only an independent and impartial audit of the votes will allow guaranteeing the respect of the popular, sovereign and democratic will of the Venezuelan people, the statement said.

In addition, the signatories will continue to insist on the necessity of respecting the will of the Venezuelan people who expressed themselves clearly and peacefully, the statement added.

On July 29, the National Electoral Council declared that Nicolas Maduro secured 51% of the vote for president for 2025-2031 term. The Venezuelan government has declared that a number of countries were interfering in the country's election and in the Venezuelan people's right to self-determination.

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US Threatens Countries With Sanctions if They Decide to Host Russian Banks – Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) – The US is threatening to impose sanctions against countries that allow Russian banks to open local branches on their territories, US Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo told the Financial Times.

The United States has issued a warning of secondary sanctions to countries trading with Russia if they move forward with opening Russian bank branches that will allegedly facilitate the

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supply of dual-use goods for the Russian military-industrial complex.

"We will go after the branch they're setting up, but also the other entities and the companies in your jurisdiction that work with them," the report quoted Adeyemo as saying.

According to Adeyemo, the United States is now ready to hinder attempts by Russian banks to open branches abroad to simplify payments for goods and services.

On August 8, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law allowing foreign banks to open branches in Russia starting September 1, 2024.

Earlier in the day, the United States announced a new massive package of sanctions against Russian and foreign companies and individuals in a bid to disrupt the country's international supply chains.

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Teamsters Canada Serves CN With 3-Day Strike Notice Hours After Taking Down Picket Lines

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Teamsters Canada issued on Friday a three-day strike notice to the Canadian National Railway Company (CN) that will come into effect starting August 26 at 10:00 a.m. ET if no agreement is found, the union said in a letter.

On Thursday, Canadian Labor Minister Steven MacKinnon directed the Canada Industrial Relations Board to assist the rail companies and Teamsters Canada in settling their dispute after the union began a strike earlier in the day.

"Please find this letter as official notice to the Company of our intention [CN] of our intention to withdraw the services of our combined membership of approximately 6500 members … effective 1000 EST Monday, 26 August 2024," the letter said, despite the union announcing hours earlier that it was taking down its picket lines at the CN and that rail workers would be returning to work on Friday

The union continues to believe that all matters at stake are negotiable and remains available for discussions in order to find a negotiated solution and avoid a further work stoppage, the letter added.

Teamsters Canada is the country's largest transportation and supply chain union. It is involved in a longstanding dispute with the CN and the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) over a new collective agreement. Both companies move around C$1 billion ($736 million) worth of goods on a daily basis, according to the Railway Association of Canada.

Teamsters Canada has previously warned that strike action could paralyze railroad transport if the CN and the CPKC did not reach an agreement with them by August 22. The union says the main obstacle to a negotiated agreement remains the companies' demands rather than union proposals. Companies continue to seek a weakening of protections around rest periods and scheduling, increasing the risk of fatigue-related safety issues.

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US Authorizes Imports of Russian Diamonds Outside Russia Before March 1, 2024 - Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The US Treasury Department on Friday issued a license authorizing transactions related to imports of Russian diamond jewelry that was located outside the Russian Federation prior to March 1, 2024.

Transactions "that are ordinarily incident and necessary to the importation and entry into the United States, including importation for admission into a foreign trade zone located in the United States, of diamond jewelry that was physically located outside of the Russian Federation prior to March 1, 2024, and not exported or reexported from the Russian Federation on or after March 1, 2024, are authorized," the Treasury said.

In a separate license the Treasury authorized transactions related to Russian diamonds through September 1, 2025, but with certain restrictions. Transactions related to any diamonds with a weight of 1.0 carat or greater are authorized only if the gems were outside the Russian Federation before March 1, 2024, while transactions related to Russian diamonds with a weight of 0.5 carats or greater are authorized if the gems are outside the Russian Federation before September 1, 2024.

In a separate statement, the Treasury also announced sanctions on the Moscow Jewelry Plant, also known as the Moscow Jewelry Factory.

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Modi's Visit to Kiev Could Be Helpful to End Conflict in Ukraine - White House

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kiev could be helpful to end the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Friday.

"India is a strong partner for the United States, and the Prime Minister is as well, and him going to Kiev and having conversations with president Zelenskyy about where this all ends and how it ends, if that can be helpful to getting us to an end to the conflict that comports with president Zelenskyy's vision for a just peace, well, then we think that would be helpful," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Modi arrived in Ukraine earlier on Friday and is scheduled to meet with Volodymyr Zelenskyy to discuss bilateral ties. The prime minister will also meet with members of the Indian community in Ukraine.

The visit is the first by an Indian prime minister since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992 and comes at a time when Ukraine, suported by NATO, has made a military incursion into Russian territory in the Kursk region.

On August 6, the Ukrainian forces crossed the border into Russia and launched an offensive in the Kursk region. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Ukraine had carried out another large-scale provocation, firing indiscriminately at civilian targets. Putin added that there could be no peace talks with Ukraine after the attack on the Kursk region.

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US Sanctions Russian Airlines Norilsk Avia, Volga Dnepr, AirBridgeCargo - Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions against the Russian airlines Volga Dnepr, AirBridgeCargo and Norilsk Avia, the Treasury Department announced on Friday.

The following entities have been added to OFAC's [Office of Foreign Assets Control] SDN [Specially Designated Nationals] List: … Limited Liability Company Volga Dnepr Airlines, … AirBridgeCargo Limited Liability Company, … Aktsionernoe Obshchestvo Norilsk Avia," the Treasury Department said in a notice

The Treasury Department has also targeted for sanctions seven Russian vessels, the notice said.

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US Sanctions Russia's Artificial Intelligence Research Institutes - Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions against Russia’s artificial intelligence (AI) research institutes, the US Treasury Department announced on Friday.

"The following entities have been added to OFAC's [Office of Foreign Assets Control] SDN [Specially Designated Nationals] List: Autonomous Non Profit Organization Artificial Intelligence Research Institute, ... Russian Artificial Intelligence Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences," The Treasury Department said in a notice.

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New US Sanctions Target Russian Mining, Metals Companies

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has targeted a number of Russian mining and metals companies as well as Russia’s Nornikel Technical Services in its latest round of sanctions over the Ukraine conflict, the Treasury announced on Friday.

Earlier in the day, the US Department of the Treasury and the Department of State imposed sanctions on nearly 400 individuals and entities both in Russia and outside its borders. The sanctions were announced one day ahead of Ukrainian Independence Day.

"Today’s sanctions further limit Russia’s future revenue from metals and mining," the Treasury said in a press release.

The sanctions target Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works, Korshunov Mining Plant, Yuzhkuzbassugol and Yakutugol, among others.

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The restrictions also target Nornikel Technical Services that constructs buildings, roads and highways and Russia's Electronic components manufacturer Rekond.

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US Sanctions Russian IT Firms Providing Solutions for Country's Financial Sector -Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on Russian IT companies that provide technical solutions for the country's financial sector as part of a new massive package of restrictions on more than 400 companies and individuals, the US Treasury Department said on Friday.

"Today, OFAC [The Office of Foreign Assets Control] is targeting Russian financial technology companies as a part of implementing G7 commitments to curtail Russia's use of and access to the international financial system to further its war against Ukraine," the Treasury Department said in a press release.

The United States has imposed sanctions on Atol, Centre of Financial Technologies Group (CFT) and Diasoft Ltd, which are among the largest software development companies in Russia, that provide a range of products for Russia's financial sector, the release said.

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US Sanctions Russian Defense Minister's Son - Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has targeted the son and the daughter in law of Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov in its latest round of sanctions, the Treasury announced on Friday.

" The following individuals have been added to OFAC's SDN List: Belousov, Pavel Andreyevich," the Treasury said. "Belousova, Yevgeniya Alekseyevna."

The latest restrictions also target the 46th Central Research and Development Institute of the Russian Ministry of Defense.

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US Justice Department Says Suing RealPage for Violating Sherman Antitrust Act

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department and eight states are suing real estate software company RealPage for allegedly violating the Sherman Antitrust Act, US Attorney General Merrick Garland said on Friday.

"Today, after a nearly two-year investigation, the Justice Department, joined by eight states, has sued RealPage – a commercial real estate software company – for violating the Sherman Antitrust Act," Garland said during a press conference on the lawsuit.

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The Justice Department is joined in its civil antitrust lawsuit by California, Colorado, Connecticut, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington.

RealPage allegedly schemed to decrease competition among landlords in apartment pricing and monopolize the market for commercial revenue management software that landlords use to price apartments, the Justice Department said in a statement.

The company's alleged conduct deprives renters of the benefits of competition on apartment leasing terms, harming millions of Americans, the statement said.

RealPage allegedly contracts with competing landlords who agree to share nonpublic, competitively sensitive information about their apartment rental rates and other lease terms to train the company's algorithmic pricing software, the statement said.

The company's software then recommends rental pricing and other lease terms for participating landlords based on their and their competitors' sensitive information, the statement said. The lawsuit contends that landlords would otherwise be competing independents to attract renters based on pricing and other lease terms, the statement said.

The use of software as a sharing mechanism does not immunize the alleged scheme from Sherman Act liability, the statement added.

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Odds of Half-Percentage Point US Interest Rate Cut in September at 28% - Money Market Data

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Money market traders are betting on a one-in-three chance that the Federal Reserve will cut US interest rates by a half-percentage point in September after chairman Jerome Powell said on Friday the central bank was ready for a policy shift without specifying the timing or size of potential cuts.

Trades on interest rates futures showed a 28% chance of the Fed agreeing to a 50 basis points, or half-percentage, interest rate cut at the conclusion of its next meeting on September 18, Investing.com data showed.

Likewise, the Fed could also settle on a more conservative 25 basis points, or a quarter-percentage, cut in September should it pivot from the long-running era of high interest rates that have forced Americans to pay the most in two decades for borrowings.

Powell told an audience of global central bankers, economists and other financial professionals gathered at the Fed's annual banking symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming that the time has come for the United States to adjust interest rates. But he did not give any specifics on the timing and the size of cuts to follow.

"The time has come for policy to adjust," Powell said, before laying out the entire scenario that had brought the Fed to its current thinking on rates.

Powell said the direction of travel is clear - meaning the central bank was ready for a policy pivot - but the timing and pace of interest rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook and the balance of risks.

Economists monitoring the Fed chair's speech said traders were still in the dark on how the central bank will proceed.

But some, like Adam Button, were banking on a half-percentage point cut on September 18 and

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more reductions at the Fed's upcoming November 7 and December 18 meetings.
"Ahead of the speech, the market was pricing in a 28% chance of 50 bps, 97 bps through December and 193 bps at this time next year," Button said. "He certainly hasn't slammed the door on 50 bps here and there was nothing in his comments about moving gradually."
The Fed's last rate reduction was in March 2020, right after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It hiked rates 11 times after that, bringing them to a two-decade high of between 5.25% and 5.5%, to counter inflation that peaked at 40-year highs after the pandemic.

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White House Says UAE Acceptance of Taliban Ambassador Will Not Affect US Relations

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) – The White House said Friday that the UAE's acceptance of a Taliban-appointed diplomat as ambassador of Afghanistan would not affect the US' relationship with the Gulf country.
"We have not recognized the Taliban, and there are no plans for us to do so, but I can assure you that this isn't going to change our relationship with the UAE," White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said at a press briefing.
On Thursday, the UAE announced that it had accepted the credentials of the Taliban ambassador from Afghanistan, Mawlawi Badreddin Haqqani.
Previously, only China had formally accepted a Taliban ambassador from Afghanistan, although Taliban appointees are overseeing diplomatic missions in various countries.

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US Imposes Russia-Related Sanctions on Nearly 400 Individuals, Entities - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) – The United States is imposing new Russia-related sanctions on nearly 400 individuals and entities, the Department of the Treasury said on Friday.
"Building on the sanctions already imposed on Russia in response to its continued war of aggression against Ukraine, today the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Department of State targeted nearly 400 individuals and entities both in Russia and outside its borders—including in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East—whose products and services enable Russia to sustain its war effort and evade sanctions," the statement said.
The US accused Russia of efforts to facilitate sanctions evasion by opening new overseas branches and subsidiaries of Russian financial institutions, according to the statement.
"Foreign regulators and financial institutions should be cautious about any dealings with overseas branches or subsidiaries of Russian financial institutions, including efforts to open new branches or subsidiaries of Russian financial institutions that are not themselves sanctioned," the statement added.

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us sanctions Russian defense minister andrei belousov's son - treasury

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США объявят в пятницу о новом пакете вооружений для Украины - Белый дом

ВАШИНГТОН, 23 авг - РИА Новости. США выделят Украине новый пакет военной помощи, о нем будет объявлено в пятницу, заявил координатор Белого дома по стратегическим коммуникациям Джон Кирби.

"Я думаю, вы услышите от нас чуть позже сегодня, вы увидите, что мы подкрепим философскую поддержку их независимости (Украины - ред.) более существенной помощью, включая, в том числе новую военную помощь, которая поступит на Украину, чтобы помочь им защищать себя", - сказал Кирби на брифинге для журналистов.

Ранее агентство Ассошиэйтед Пресс со ссылкой на неназванных американских чиновников передавало, что США могут в пятницу объявить о новом пакете военной помощи Киеву на сумму 125 миллионов долларов. В список будут включены ракеты для систем ПВО, HIMARS, противотанковые комплексы Javelin, средства радиоэлектронной борьбы, а также 105-миллиметровые и 155-миллиметровые снаряды и другая техника.

Россия считает, что поставки вооружений Украине мешают урегулированию, напрямую вовлекают страны НАТО в конфликт и являются "игрой с огнем". Глава МИД РФ Сергей Лавров отмечал, что любые грузы, которые содержат вооружение для Украины, станут законной целью для России. По его словам, США и НАТО напрямую участвуют в конфликте, в том числе не только поставками оружия, но и подготовкой кадров на территории Великобритании, Германии, Италии, других стран. В Кремле заявляли, что накачивание Украины оружием со стороны Запада не способствует переговорам и будет иметь негативный эффект.

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Press Reports About Gaza Ceasefire Talks Nearing Collapse 'Not Accurate' - White House

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - Press reports that the Gaza ceasefire talks are nearing collapse are "not accurate," White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby told reporters on Friday.

"There's been press reporting out there that, you know, they're near collapse, that is not accurate," Kirby said during a press briefing. "There has been progress made."

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Kirby Says Uncertain Whether Sullivan's Trip to China to Lay Ground for Biden, Xi Meeting

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Friday that he cannot say with certainty whether US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan's trip to Beijing will lay the ground for another meeting between President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping

"As for whether this [Sullivan's trip] lays the tracks for another [Biden's] meeting with President Xi, I just don't have anything specific to point to with respect to that," Kirby said during a press briefing.

A senior US administration official said earlier on Friday that Sullivan will visit China from August 27-29 to meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

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new us sanctions target Nornikel Technical Services - treasury

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US to Announce New Security Assistance for Ukraine Today - White House's Kirby

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The United States will unveil a new military package for Ukraine later today, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby told reporters on Friday.

"I suspect that as we officially mark their [Ukraine] independence day, and again, I think you'll hear more from us a little bit later today, you'll see that we will back up that philosophical support for their independence with more tangible support as well, including more security assistance coming to Ukraine to help them as they defend themselves," Kirby said in a press briefing.

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press reports that gaza ceasefire talks near collapse not accurate - white house's kirby

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Money Market Traders Pricing in 28% Chance of Fed Rate Cut in September

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Trump Promises 'Provisions' for Mixed-Status Families, Does Not Rule Out Separations

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) – Former US President and Republican nominee Donald Trump said he would make "provisions" for mixed status families such as immigrants married to citizens but did not rule out family separations as a result of mass deportations of migrants.

"Provisions will be made, but we have to get the criminals out," Trump told NBC News, but added that it is necessary to expel undocumented migrants.

Trump did not exclude the possibility of mass deportations.

"We have no choice, regardless, we have no choice. We're going to have to deport.," he said.

He also said that keeping undocumented migrants in the country would cost the US trillions of dollars, adding that it would be more expensive than deporting them from the country.

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US Charges Man With Threatening to Kill Biden, Harris, Obama - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - US federal prosecutors charged a Tennessee man with making threats to kill US President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Barack Obama, the US Justice Department said on Friday.

"On July 27, 2024, Kyl Alton Hall, 37, made numerous posts on the social media platform X (formerly known as Twitter). Specifically, in the posts, he threatened to kill, assassinate, shoot, and crash the plane of President Biden; assassinate Vice President Harris; and assassinate former President Obama," the Justice Department said in a statement.

Prosecutors charged Hall with two counts of threats to a sitting president and vice president and one count of a threat to a former president, the statement said. Each charge carries a potential penalty of up to five years in prison, the statement said.

The US Secret Service investigated the case, which the National Security and Civil Rights Unit of the US Attorney's Office is prosecuting, the statement added.

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'Time Has Come' for US to Adjust Interest Rates - Federal Reserve Chair Powell

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WASHINGTON, August 23 (Sputnik) - The time has come for the United States to adjust interest rates, now hovering at two-decade highs, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said Friday.

"The time has come for policy to adjust," Powell told an audience of global central bankers, economists and other financial professionals gathered at the Fed's annual banking symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. "The direction of travel is clear, and the timing and pace of rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks."

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