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8/26/24 Monday

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'US Defense Lobbyists Need War': Middle East Regional War Could Spiral as US Fails to Intervene

An analyst told Sputnik on Monday that Israel has shown that they are not fully protected in their conflict with Hamas and that a broadening war with Hezbollah will create a worse situation for Tel Aviv.

Israel and Hezbollah launched a heavy exchange of fire against one-another on Sunday morning which threatened to trigger a broader regional war that could negatively affect cease-fire negotiations, a US news outlet reported. Both sides said they were only aiming for military targets, which resulted in the death of three people in Lebanon and an Israeli soldier.

On Monday, Michael Maloof, a former senior security policy analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, author and analyst, joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown. He cautioned that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "cannot afford a ceasefire", and that the conflict will escalate even further.

"Netanyahu really [...] cannot afford a ceasefire. He could do so. He would weaken his own posture," Maloof began. "It would go against the grain of his more radical ministers, [Minister of National Security Itamar] Ben-Gvir and [Finance Minister Bezalel] Smotrich, who really want another Nakba or a clearing out of Palestinians altogether. First in Gaza, then West Bank, and then they're going to go up into Lebanon. This is their messianic mission."

"And, Netanyahu has been compelled to go along with it. And, Washington has bought into it because they have not stood up to Netanyahu. The only hope at this point for the world is either a military uprising from within or a civil war to bring the Netanyahu government down," he continued. "This is the only way it's going to stop this forward progression that we're now seeing with this effort that Netanyahu has undertaken."

"He basically outlined his war plan when he addressed Congress recently. And the Congress applauded. So, what was the essence of that war plan? To attack Iran. That's ultimately the direction they want to go. They want to clear out the areas that they believe are their biblical rights and they are hell-bent on undertaking that task and there's no equivocation," the analyst said.

It was first reported on Sunday that Israel had informed the US of their plans to strike Lebanon overnight. Hezbollah fired over 320 rockets and dozens of drones toward Israel in retaliation for the killing of Fuad Shukr, a senior Hezbollah commander who was killed in Beirut. The Israeli military said about 100 of their warplanes struck more than 1,000 Hezbollah projectiles aimed at northern and central Israel.

Steve Gill, a US attorney, asked the show's guest if Israel believes they have the Gaza Strip "under control" now that they are firing missiles into Lebanon.

"Gaza is not under control, will not be under control. That's why they're insisting on maintaining the two corridors and Hamas is objecting. Hamas has not been eliminated," Maloof said.

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“But if they want to go ahead and undertake efforts against Hezbollah, they're going to be meeting a force ten times as strong in Hezbollah because they've got more personnel, they've got more rockets, more high precision missiles,” he added. “I think that, and also if they want to deal with Iran, that's going to be yet another layer of contention. I think the fact that there has been restraint basically shown by Hezbollah and Iran is really a shrewd tactical effort on their part to, basically, bring about a death by a thousand cuts, if you will, on Israel itself as an entity.”
“...Ben-Gvir [is] now wanting to set up settlers in Gaza. The whole idea is to move Palestinians and all Arabs out of these two areas. First Gaza, then West Bank, move them into Egypt ultimately. That's the ultimate goal. And that's why Israel wants to continue maintaining control over that Philadelphi corridor,” the analyst said. “Egypt probably will acquiesce to Washington demands to do that, which once again demonstrates that Washington is somehow very much engaged and backing Netanyahu.”
Ben-Gvir reportedly said that he would build a synagogue on the Temple Mount, the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, in Jerusalem in order to give equal rights to Jews and Muslims, according to a report on Monday. Netanyahu dismissed his minister’s comments and said that there had been “no change in the status quo on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.” The temple is the third holiest site for Muslims, and while others are allowed to visit, only Muslims are allowed to pray.
“You can kiss goodbye the whole notion that we're supporting democracy in this area because of the way the Israeli government is conducting itself and the way they're treating non-Jewish citizens and even the Palestinians, even Arab Israelis - they're second-class tertiary. Ben-Gvir wants them all gone.”
“...the ultimate goal is Iran. And this isn't just AIPAC that's pushing all this. This is also our own defense industry. Our defense lobbyists, they need war. There's this, in order to continue thriving the way that they have,” he explained. “They're hitting traditional Palestinian lands on the West Bank, which was ostensibly to be part of the two-state solution. It's disappearing. In reality, the two-state solution will not be a viable alternative. Even though the Saudis and the other Arab states are saying that that is a requirement in order to have peace with Israel.”
“As long as that government is in place, you're going to have this problem unless there can be an internal disruption that will unload Netanyahu as the leader or the country goes into a civil war,” he continued. “[A civil war] is increasingly possible because [there are] different types of reformed Jews and the more Ashkenazi types who are just hell-bent on a pure Jewish state as opposed to working with the Palestinians and even other Arabs that are in the region.”
Sputnik reported on Monday that neither Hezbollah nor Israel really wants a full-scale war as it would upend life in Israel and Tehran and stretch US resources. The US is wary of a full scale conflict because Hezbollah, unlike Hamas, is not a small-scale non-state actor but is a powerful force in terms of its ground strength as well as its air defense power, an academic told Sputnik.

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Over 50,000 Tons of Arms & Equipment Shipped to Israel From US - Report

The US has continued to support Israel, despite the Gaza health ministry reporting that more than 40,000 people in the region have been killed since the conflict first began in October.

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More than 50,000 tons of armaments have been given to the US by Israel since the start of the war in the Gaza Strip since last October, the Defense Ministry said on Monday. This includes, “armored vehicles, munitions, ammunition, personal protection gear and medical equipment,” the ministry said.

According to a report from The Times of Israel, the deliveries are “crucial for sustaining the Israeli Defense Force’s (IDF) operational capabilities during the ongoing war.”

Despite the substantial death toll of more than 40,000 people who have been slaughtered in Palestine, the US has been supplying Israel non-stop since the war between the IDF and Hamas first broke out in October. The US has enacted legislation providing tens of billions of dollars in military aid to Israel, and this month the US approved another $20 billion in arms sales to Israel.

Overall, Israel has been the largest recipient of US foreign aid since it was first founded and has received about $310 billion in total economic and military assistance.

US President Joe Biden has dropped out of the 2024 presidential race, however his vice president, Kamala Harris, has taken his place and is running for the position of the Oval Office. Harris’ campaign has expressed that Israel will continue to be supported should she take office.

Despite calls from foreign countries, US voters, and human rights groups, the Biden administration has done little to regulate Israel as Palestinians experience a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. The US withheld shipments of heavy bombs in the spring in response to the Israeli raid on Rafah, however part of that shipment has since been released.

The US has not been open about all the arms it has supplied to Israel, either. The US reportedly approved and delivered on more than 100 arms sales to Israel since October 7, according to a report from March. But these sales flew under the radar as congressional approval was not required because each sale fell below a certain cost amount.

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Scholz Vows Increased Deportations Following Brutal Mass Stabbing

The attack preludes next month’s three regional elections, which Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) - a center-right party - are slated to win, though they are closely followed by the far-right Alternative for Germany party (AfD), according to recent polls.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has vowed to strengthen weapons and deportation laws following a deadly mass stabbing in the western city of Solingen on Friday night.

A suspected Islamic extremist killed three people and injured eight others during a street festival that marked the city’s 650th anniversary. A 26-Syrian asylum-seeker reportedly turned himself over to the police, while admitting to the assault, NPR reported on Sunday citing German authorities.

The 26-year-old had his asylum application rejected and was supposed to be deported last year to Bulgaria, through which he had first entered the European Union. Germany’s failure to deport the Syrian man has renewed criticism of the German government’s handling of deportation and migration policies.

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Scholz laid a white rose at a makeshift memorial in Solingen and said he was “furious and angry” about the attack.

“This was terrorism – terrorism against us all, threatening all our lives, our coexistence, our way of life,” Scholz told reporters. “That is also what the people who plan and carry out such attacks always intend and it is something we will never accept.”

The chancellor said that there had already been a 30% increase in deportations this year, but promised that the government would look at how they can “contribute to raising these figures even further.”

“We must do everything to ensure that such things never happen in our country, if possible,” Scholz said of the attack. He said that would include toughening knife laws in particular “and this should and will happen very quickly.”

Earlier this month, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser proposed regulations that would allow knives measuring up to 2.4 inches (6 centimeters) to be carried in public rather than those that are 4.6 inches (12 centimeters).

In May, a terrifying knife attack committed by an Afghan immigrant took place in Mannheim and left four people injured and one person dead. The attack occurred at an anti-Islamist political rally and a livestream video shows what appears to be the leader of a right-wing campaign group being pursued by the attacker.

These mass stabbings have prompted Scholz to announce that Germany will begin deporting people from Afghanistan and Syria again - currently, Germany does not carry out deportations to those countries because they have no relationship with the Taliban and they consider the situation in Syria too compromised, AP News reported.

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'US defense lobbyists need war': Middle East regional war could spiral as US fails to intervene

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“But if they want to go ahead and undertake efforts against Hezbollah, they're going to be meeting a force ten times as strong in Hezbollah because they've got more personnel, they've got more rockets, more high precision missiles,” Michael Maloof, a former senior security policy analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense told Sputnik’s The Final Countdown. It was first reported on Sunday that Israel had informed the US of their plans to strike Lebanon overnight.

Hezbollah fired over 320 rockets and dozens of drones toward Israel in retaliation for the killing of Fuad Shukr, a senior Hezbollah commander who was killed in Beirut. The Israeli military said about 100 of their warplanes struck more than 1,000 Hezbollah projectiles aimed at northern and central Israel. “...also if they want to deal with Iran, that's going to be yet another layer of contention. I think the fact that there has been restraint basically shown by Hezbollah and Iran is really a shrewd tactical effort on their part to, basically, bring about a death by a thousand cuts, if you will, on Israel itself as an entity,” he added.

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Telegram Founder's Detention Shows 'Dangerous Trend' of Online Surveillance

Western governments are increasingly seeking to deepen their control of online platforms while looking to discredit those like TikTok and Telegram which they perceive to be beyond their control.

The mass adoption of the Internet has widely been seen as a positive phenomenon in encouraging greater openness and accountability in society.

Polling by Pew Research Center in 2022 demonstrates the largely helpful role citizens around the world attribute to the technology, with majorities of people in most countries approving of its impact. Citizens of Central and Eastern European countries like Poland and Hungary are especially approving of social media's influence on democracy, with respondents claiming it helps them stay informed about world and local events.

The United States, however, is a notable outlier in the research firm's survey, with 64% of Americans saying social media has had a mostly negative effect on democracy and 79% saying it has created greater political division.

The finding comes as the role of social media and the Internet has increasingly been vilified in US society, with a panic over the alleged deleterious effect of online disinformation in politics. The height of the Russiagate conspiracy theory during the presidency of Donald Trump represented perhaps the high-water mark for the trend, but Western lawmakers continue to stoke concern over online content to justify government intervention and even outright bans on some platforms.

This weekend's arrest of Telegram founder Pavel Durov, then, can be seen as the latest development in the trend after Durov provoked the ire of Western officials earlier this year by revealing the US Federal Bureau of Investigation's attempts to install a backdoor in the popular encrypted messaging application.

"This attempt to break down communications and free speech around the world, I think, is a dangerous trend," warned host Steve Gill on Sputnik's The Final Countdown program Monday. "We just saw the CEO of Rumble… fled to avoid prosecution on whatever trumped up charges they may come after him. So this is a big issue. It is a big story. And I've been interested that the US media isn't paying much attention to it. They should be."

"It's notable that, of course, Durov was arrested on allegations and is still being held, though he hasn't been convicted for any crimes," noted independent journalist John Jackman. "The investigation has alleged, essentially, that the messaging platform Telegram has been used for fraud, drug trafficking, money laundering, and a coterie of other offenses. Now, what's interesting about this is basically what the French authorities are saying is that Durov himself is responsible for any abuse that happens on that platform."

Western authorities have long resented Telegram, which is resistant to the kind of surveillance and content moderation imposed on other online platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or X. Telegram's relative freedom allows dissidents to thrive and users to share information from alternative perspectives, but authorities have accused the platform of being used to facilitate myriad crimes and abuses.

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Recent years have seen Western governments take increasing steps to influence the flow of information online through the implementation of moderation regimes and, more recently, the banning of TikTok. Figures such as Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and X CEO Elon Musk have become more or less amenable to authorities' attempts to exert control over their platforms, but Jackman argued that Durov has continued to chart his own course.

"Is Elon in trouble?" Jackman asked. "Well the answer is, if he stays on the right side of US foreign policy then he should be fine and continues to advocate for things like overthrowing the government of Venezuela, staying on the right side of the conflict in Ukraine, not cozying up to Russia too much, and so on. And then, of course, with Meta* and Mark Zuckerberg, there's absolutely no issue.

"One of the striking aspects of Durov's arrest is that the French authorities actually waited until he landed to even file a warrant,"Jackman said, noting that French officials did not make the Telegram founder aware that he was wanted until he was already en route to France. "He had absolutely no indication that anything was coming. This was actually the same thing that happened with [Venezuelan businessman] Alex Saab, and it's clear that France wanted to get their man and ensure that there was absolutely no chance of him evading the dragnet."

Jackman called the tactic "draconian" and lamented Western governments' attempts to repress their own citizens.

"What [censorship] means is that you're weak, basically," he claimed. "When you have to censor speech, when you have to be able to have the power to limit what people can say, then that means that you're operating in a world where you're scared of the facts, where you're scared of truth."

"We've seen this not only in contemporary and modern times, but we've also seen this throughout history: when great governments, empires, or nations start to lose their ability to actually govern effectively… you see these crackdowns on speech to start to try to limit the fact that the people can point out that the emperor has no clothes," he continued. "And I think that's exactly what we're seeing."

"The reason why they're arresting people like Durov and not Elon Musk is fundamentally because the tentacles of law enforcement and intelligence agencies specifically have not, are not able to seep their way into applications like Telegram the way they are X or the Meta platforms. And so I think this is more of an issue about controlling the broader narrative rather than it is pursuing any specific types of criminal activity."

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US Containment Strategy Against Russia Failing Amid Emergence of Multipolar World

The United States faces economic and geopolitical challenges in successfully implementing the kind of containment strategy it successfully pursued during the Cold War.

Containment was the famous term for the United States' foreign policy, chiefly in regard to Russia, from the late 1940s until the end of the Cold War. The geopolitical strategy was intended to counter Russia by preventing the spread of friendly communist governments around

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the world and seeking to roll back and replace such regimes where possible. By starving the newly formed Soviet Union of allies the US hoped to undermine Russia itself, defeating the ideological threat posed by its socioeconomic system.

The US and its Western partners have sought to pursue a similar strategy presently against the emergent counter-hegemonic bloc anchored by Russia, but with far less success, argues political science professor Nicolai Petro. Petro joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Mondayto address the issue, discussing his new piece The Folly of a New Containment.

"My co-author and I argue that containment doesn't match the challenges that the United States is facing in the future," said Petro, who teaches at the University of Rhode Island. "It's just an old way of thinking about the world's problems based on strengths that the United States no longer has in the world."

"And the old containment had its problems, but it held together because it was limited in scope," he continued. "It didn't actually seek to confront the Soviet Union everywhere at the same time. And, very importantly, it also sought to separate China from the Soviet Union and it would never have worked – Henry Kissinger spoke about this – it would never have been implementable had China and Russia been united against the United States. And, of course, that's the situation we're facing today."

Russia and China have become diplomatically close in the last several years after gradually strengthening ties under Chinese leader Xi Jinping. The two countries declared a "no limits" partnership in February 2022 and have maintained close economic ties, to the consternation of the United States, since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his special military operation against the Ukraine regime later that month.

The strong Russo-China friendship has stymied US attempts to undermine both countries, which are viewed as a threat to continued American hegemony. But Petro argued that the underlying rationale for containment 2.0 is also less strong. Whereas Western hostility against the Soviet Union could be explained in terms of a global battle versus communism, the United States now appears antagonistic toward the existence of the Russian state itself.

Western bellicosity has naturally provoked a patriotic response from average Russians.

"It really doesn't leave anything positive or any positive role for a future Russia in the world," said Petro of modern attempts to pursue a containment strategy. "That's why I think it really doesn't address the needs of the United States. And I think most countries around the world also see it that way."

The modern economic situation for the US is also far more challenging, Petro acknowledged. The United States emerged from World War II almost unscathed, leaving it in a position to benefit from the reconstruction of Europe. But "the halcyon days of the 1950s and 60s" are long gone, he noted.

"Any new containment policy involves an arms race," said Petro. "Can we afford an arms race now? I mean, we are a country that has a $35 trillion deficit and no prospect of reducing that significantly in the future."

"So it is, as you point out, a very different situation from a growing economy that did not have that indebtedness after World War II, or that eventually rebalanced itself after the debt that the United States incurred during World War II because of substantial growth. But there are no such growth prospects for the United States today."

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Cut the Defense Budget by 97.5%

The United States is one of the most politically polarized countries in the world.
Because effective lawmaking requires bipartisanship and members of Congress are, like their constituents, at their most ideologically dividedpoint in a half century, cooperation is in increasingly short supply. As a result or, more precisely non-result, the U.S. Congress passes fewer bills every year.
There is, however, one consistent area of agreement on Capitol Hill: defense spending. Each year for the past six decades, the massive National Defense Authorization Act—Washington-speak for the federal defense spending bill has passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. Defense appropriations are so sacrosanct that the press often describes the NDAA as "must pass"; it is routine for Congress to add in hundreds of millions of dollars of extraneous spendingthat the Pentagon does not want or request.
In the U.S. Congress, even "antiwar" voices support the military. Obama's 2008 campaign was primarily predicated on his opposition to the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Yet even his GOP opponent John McCain didn't care call out Obama on the fact that when he had six chances to vote on the Iraq War—he wasn't in the Senate yet when it voted on the measure authorizing President George W. Bush to attack the government of Saddam Hussein—he voted to send the cash each time. Bernie Sanders has repeatedly voted to fund the military and sending weapons for wars being waged by U.S. proxies like Israel and Ukraine.
Vice President Kamala Harris, whom Republicans describe as Marxist, socialist and communist, is thoroughly committed to the cult of American militarism. "As Commander-in-Chief, I will ensure America always has the strongest, most lethal fighting force in the world," she said in Thursday's nomination acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention.
The idea that military expenditures are "must pass" relies on the assumption that the U.S. faces existential threats to its safety and/or sovereignty. This is crap.
As Statfor's classic 2011 assessment of the United States and its geopolitical position noted: "The American geography is an impressive one."
Consider Russia. It has thousands of miles of land borders, most of it without significant natural barriers like mountain ranges or large bodies of water to deter a potential invader, millions of square miles of fairly flat lands that can quickly and easily be traversed, with numerous neighbors that are hostile and have posed a historical threat. Given its situation, Russia's rulers have traditionally relied on friendly buffer and vassal states around its perimeter.
"The U.S. Atlantic Coast possesses more major ports than the rest of the Western Hemisphere combined," Stratfor observed. "Two vast oceans insulated the United States from Asian and European powers, deserts separate the United States from Mexico to the south, while lakes and forests separate the population centers in Canada from those in the United States. The United States has capital, food surpluses and physical insulation in excess of every other country in the world by an exceedingly large margin." Canada and Mexico are friendly vassal states.

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"Red Dawn" was just a movie. Gun nuts who think they'll need AR-15s to arm a Resistance against alien invaders are deluded. No one wants to invade us. No one wants to take away our freedoms.

No one can.

We are acting like the hippopotamus. Hippos are the most dangerous land animal on the planet, killing 500 human beings every year. They're nervous and high-strung because they rapidly evolved from a much smaller creature that made easy prey. Poor things! They don't realize that they've become huge, grown fearsome teeth and no longer need to be aggressive and territorial. Like the hippo, the U.S. started out small and vulnerable to aggressors like England, which re-invaded in 1812. But things have changed for both the hippo and us. Can't we be smarter than a hippo?

The U.S. has, like other countries, faced raids like the Pearl Harbor attack and cross-border incursions from Mexico in the 19th century. In a now largely-forgotten episode, two of the Aleutian islands were occupied by Japanduring World War II, before Alaska became a state. Non-state terrorists have struck the contiguous 48 states, as on 9/11. But none of those incidents, though violent and disturbing, represented anything close to an existential threat. Most other countries, faced with attacks on such a small scale, would not feel traumatized as much as merely annoyed.

We have not faced a substantial risk of territorial invasion by an enemy army or navy since the War of 1812.

In the 21st century, the U.S. faces two main threats to national security: terrorism and cyber attacks. These are addressed by, respectively, the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI. We don't need a fleet of ships lining our coastlines or a perimeter of military bases to fend off the Germans or the Japanese or the Chinese or the Russians. And we don't have them. The "Defense" Department doesn't defend the U.S.; it attacks and disrupts other countries and non-state entities abroad and, far less frequently, defends U.S. allies against internal uprisings, rival factions and hostile neighbors.

Given our remarkably enviable security situation is not inconceivable that the U.S. could get by eliminating its military budget entirely, as have countries like Costa Rica, Panama and Iceland, all of which have abolished their army, navy and air force and yet have been invaded since. Could it be that, much as you are likelier to be shot by a gun if you own one, that an unarmed nation is less likely to be attacked because its neighbors no longer view it as a potential threat? Alternatively, we could decide not to continue the current practice of constantly adding new and fancier technology to our existing arsenal. We could make do with the equipment and materiel we have now, while spending enough to maintain it.

Defense should be about defense, i.e. defending our own borders. Brazil, bigger than the contiguous 48 U.S. states, and by far the dominant military power on the South American continent, has a military budget of $20 billion. That's equivalent to 2.5% of the U.S., which currently wastes $1.6 trillion a year—more than half of discretionary federal spending.

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US Air Force Says Reprogrammed EW Systems on Ukrainian F-16s to Counter Russia

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force said that it has reprogrammed electronic warfare (EW) systems on the F-16 jets delivered to Ukraine to help Kiev "more effectively" fight Russia.

"To effectively integrate the F-16 into the Ukrainian Air Force, its EW subsystems required reprogramming to be effective against evolving Russian threats in the spectrum. The 68th EWS [68th Electronic Warfare Squadron] took this challenge head-on given the urgent priority it represents to the U.S. and our partners," the US Air Force's 350th Spectrum Warfare Wing said in a statement on Monday.

The system used on the soon-to-be delivered F-16s is one that the US does not possess in its inventory, the Air Force's wing said. Another challenge was the timeline needed to optimize these EW systems to meet the delivery date of the aircraft, it said.

After understanding the system, the 68th EWS "deviated from normal methods and sent its members overseas to a partner-nation lab to collaboratively develop and test the system alongside coalition teammates," according to the statement.

The team was able to figure out the system in two weeks, the 350th Spectrum Warfare Wing said.

"When you're talking about a near-peer conflict, you need all of your coalition partners to operate with the same playbook so you can achieve spectrum dominance," the 68th EWS director was quoted as saying in the statement. "One F-16 with a reprogrammed pod won't achieve air dominance alone, but it may give you a pocket of air superiority for a moment's time to achieve an objective that has strategic importance and impact."

The Economist reported in August that Ukraine received the first 10 of the 79 F-16 fighter jets promised by Western countries on July 31. Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed the delivery and said that they have already been used to down some missiles.

Russian officials have said that the supplies of weapons by the West to Kiev, including F-16 jets, cannot fundamentally change the situation on the ground.

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US Military Escort for Philippine Ships in South China Sea 'Reasonable Option' – Admiral

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) – The US military said Tuesday that it is "an entirely reasonable option" for it to accompany Philippine vessels during resupply missions in the disputed South China Sea region, Bloomberg reported.

"Certainly within the context of consultations, every option between two sovereign nations in terms of our mutual defense — escort of one vessel to the other is an entirely reasonable option within our Mutual Defense Treaty," Admiral Samuel Paparo, head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, said, as quoted by Bloomberg.

Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Romeo Brawner said his country's armed forces would escort the ships when they could and "seek other options when we are already constrained from doing it ourselves." He added that the Philippines also cooperated with countries other than the US.

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Their comments followed a collision between Philippine and Chinese ships near the disputed Sabina Shoal on Sunday, amid recurring clashes.

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China Rejects Canadian Tariffs on EV's, Will Safeguard Rights, Interests – Embassy

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) - China is strongly dissatisfied with Canada's decision to impose a 100% surtax on Chinese-made electric vehicles (EV) and vows to take all necessary measures to protect the legitimate rights and interests of its businesses, a spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa told Sputnik on Monday.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada was imposing a 100% surtax on Chinese-made EVs and a 25% surtax on steel and aluminum imports from China to curb what it called "unfair competition" from Chinese EV producers. Ottawa notably accuses them of engaging in non-market policies and practices enabled by China's purported intentional and state-directed policy of oversupply.

"On August 26, the Canadian government, in disregard of China's repeated objections and demarches, insisted on imposing tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles. China expresses its strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition," the spokesperson told Sputnik.

China's alleged production overcapacity is a groundless accusation from the Canadian side, the spokesperson said as he further highlighted that the Chinese EV industry developed, among other reasons, due to persistent technological innovation and well-established supply chains.

The latest decision is politically motivated and is typical trade protectionism, the spokesperson said. The tariffs are in violation of the World Trade Organization rules. Moreover, it will tarnish Canada's image as a global champion for free trade and climate change mitigation, he continued.

"China urges the Canadian side to respect facts, abide by the WTO rules, immediately correct its wrong practices, and stop politicizing economic and trade issues," the spokesperson noted.

The Chinese government will undertake all necessary measures to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises, he added.

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RFK Jr. in Light of Durov Arrest Says Europe Has Lost Free Speech Rights

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) - Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., in response to France arresting Telegram messenger's CEO Pavel Durov, said that free speech rights in Europe are gone.

"We've lost Europe. Europe now does not have free speech," Kennedy said during a podcast interview with US journalist Tucker Carlson that aired on Monday.

Kennedy also pointed out that US billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk has been made out to be seen as a "villain" after purchasing Twitter and making it a free speech platform. Musk would

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have been the hero of the old Democratic party in the United States, Kennedy added.

Earlier, Durov's detention in France was extended until Wednesday.

Durov was detained at the Paris Le Bourget airport on August 24. According to a statement from the Paris prosecutor's office, he is suspected of involvement in a number of offenses, including failure to provide the requested information to the authorities, and management of a messenger that is allegedly used to distribute child pornography and to trade drugs.

According to the French press, Durov, who also has French citizenship, was on the country's wanted list; the businessman could face up to 20 years in prison.

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Meta CEO Says They Shouldn't Have 'Demoted' Hunter Biden Laptop Story on Platform - Letter

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) - Meta (banned in Russia for extremism) founder Mark Zuckerberg in a letter to US House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan admitted that the Hunter Biden laptop story was not Russian disinformation and should not have been demoted on the social media company's platform while it was under review.

"In a separate situation, the FBI warned us about a potential Russian disinformation operation about the Biden family and Burisma in the lead up to the 2020 election...It's since been made clear that the reporting was not Russian disinformation, and in retrospect, we shouldn't have demoted the story," Zuckerberg said in the letter on Monday.

Moreover, Zuckerberg mentioned that in 2021, Biden Administration officials repeatedly pressured Meta's teams for months to censor certain COVID-19 content.

The Meta CEO revealed that he regrets making certain COVID-19-related changes due to the pressure from the US government.

"I believe the government pressure was wrong and I regret that we were not more outspoken about it," Zuckerberg said. "I also think we made some choices that, with the benefit of hindsight and new information, we wouldn't make today."

US billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, now the owner of X, said Meta's actions appear to be a First Amendment violation, which includes Americans' rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

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Top 15 Defense Contractors Due to Make $52Bln in Orders From World Tensions - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) - The world’s 15 biggest aerospace and defense companies are set to generate a cash flow of $52 billion in 2026, as orders pour in over the next three years from around the world because of growing confrontations and tensions with Russia, China, Iran and other countries, according reports said.

The top 15 defense contractors are now projected to enjoy a free cash flow of $52 billion in 2026, Vertical Research Partners reported after conducting an analysis for the Financial Times

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newspaper of London.
The flood of liquidity and disposable income will almost double the contractors' combined cash flow at the end of 2021.
The companies will enjoy half of that windfall as they are projected to generate a combined cash flow of $26 billion by the end of 2026, more than twice the amount produced in 2021.
Only Boeing, which has been experiencing systematic problems on major projects such as its Starliner spacecraft and 787 and 737 MAX airliners, is excluded from the full projected windfall.
In Europe, the biggest corporate winners include BAE Systems in the United Kingdom, Rheinmetall in Germany and Saab in Sweden, which will enjoy a combined cash flow expansion of more than 40%.

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US Navy Orders $587Mln Low Band Electronic Warfare Jammers From L3 Tech - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) - L3 Technologies Inc., Communication Systems-West has received a more than half billion dollar US Navy contract to develop and manufacture electronic warfare jamming equipment for the supersonic Boeing EA-18G Growler and for Australia, the US Defense Department announced.
"L3 Technologies, Communication Systems-West [of] Salt Lake City, Utah is awarded a $587,386,007 ... contract for the design, production and delivery of electronic warfare test articles and fleet prototypes," the Defense Department said in a press release on Monday.
The equipment will include 11 pod simulators, eight operational prototype pods, four jettison mass model pods, two captive mass models, two mission system prototypes and two technique development systems as well as engineering support, the release said.
The new equipment will develop "a low-band capability in support of engineering and manufacturing development of the Next Generation Jammer Low Band program for the Navy EA-18G Growler and Royal Australian Air Force," the release added.
Most of the work on the contract will be performed in Salt Lake City, Utah (57%), Boulder, Colorado (11%); Lansdale, Pennsylvania (10%) and Stuart, Florida (10%), according to the release.

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UPDATE 2 - Biden Spoke With Modi to Discuss Indian Prime Minister's Trip to Kiev - White House

(Updates with details in paras 5,6)
WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden held a phone conversation with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday to discuss the latter's recent trip to Kiev, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.
"The President did speak with Prime Minister Modi today," Kirby said in a press briefing. "I think

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it's safe to say they certainly talked about Ukraine and the prime minister's trip to Kiev and the prospects for moving forward in accordance with President Zelenskyy's plan for a just peace."

Modi visited Ukraine on August 23 to hold talks with Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The prime minister said that India is ready to play any role in helping bring an end to the Ukraine conflict.

The White House in a separate press release said that Biden also discussed Modi's recent trip to Poland as well as meetings scheduled during the upcoming United Nations General Assembly in September for high-level week.

The two leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to work together, including through regional groups like the Quad, to address issues in the Indo-Pacific region, the release added.

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Hungarian Charged For Allegedly Conspiring to Export US Military-Grade Radios to Russia

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) - A Hungarian national has been charged for allegedly conspiring to illegally export US military-grade radios to Russia, the US Department of Justice said in a press release.

"The Justice Department unsealed a criminal complaint charging Hungarian national Bence Horvath with violations of US export controls targeting Russia, including by conspiring with others to illegally export US-origin radio communications technology to Russian government end users without a license," the release said on Monday.

Horvath was arrested at San Francisco International Airport last week and faces one count of conspiring to violate the Export Control Reform Act of 2018 (ECRA).

The report said, citing court documents, that Horvath and others managed a multinational procurement network with direct ties to various entities in the Russian government, including for large-scale projects such as the construction of operational radio communications systems in Russia's Kursk region.

The complaint alleges that since at least January 2023, Horvath allegedly arranged to purchase US-origin radio communications technology and smuggle such technology to Russian government end-users through a network of affiliates located in Spain, Serbia, Hungary, and Latvia, among others.

As part of the plans, the report said that Horvath purchased 200 military-grade radios and intended to export them to Russia, but they were confiscated by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

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US JCS Chairman Meets Israeli Officials to Discuss Situation On Lebanese Border – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) – US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman (JSC) Gen. CQ Brown met with Israeli officials in Tel Aviv to discuss the recent development on the border with

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Lebanon, Joint Staff spokesperson Jereal Dorsey said on Monday.

"Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., met with Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and Israeli Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi today in Tel Aviv. The leaders reaffirmed the importance of the U.S.-Israeli strategic partnership while also discussing the most recent engagement across the Israeli-Lebanese border and the need to de-escalate tensions to avoid a broader conflict," Dorsey said.

The two sides also talked about Brown's recent conversations with regional partners and the importance of defending Israel. They discussed the vital need for humanitarian assistance to reach Gaza residents and to minimize civilian casualties, he added.

"Additionally, Gen. Brown participated in operational updates and panel discussions with Israeli Defense Force senior leaders and visited the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] Northern Command headquarters," Dorsey said.

Hezbollah and Israel exchanged rocket attacks on Sunday. Hezbollah said it fired over 320 rockets and dozens of drones toward Israel in retaliation for the killing of senior commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut last month.

The situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border escalated after the start of Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip in October 2023. The IDF and Hezbollah have been conducting attacks on each other's positions in areas along the border.

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US Racing to Refill Oil Reserve, Nearing 50Mln-Barrel Top-Up Since Large Draws

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is racing to refill the US oil reserve, aiming to return by early next year about 50 million barrels, or roughly a quarter of what it had used up from the facility.

In its latest spree of buying, the Department of Energy said on Monday it has "a requirement to conduct a purchase of approximately three million six hundred thousand barrels of United States-produced sour crude oil for January, February and March 2025."

The crude is to be delivered to the Bryan Mound site of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) in Freeport, Texas, the Department of Energy said.

The purchase is conducted "at a price no higher than $79.99 per barrel," the Department of Energy added.

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

Prior to the latest order, the Department of Energy had bought back some 47 million barrels at an average price of $76.89 per barrel.

The purchase was roughly $18 per barrel lower than the $95 average that SPR oil was sold for in 2022, constituting "a good deal for taxpayers," the Department of Energy said.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, August 27 (Sputnik) –
CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* Western countries in the UN Security Council have requested a meeting on Ukraine for August 28, while Russia requested a separate meeting for August 30, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Monday.
* US President Joe Biden held a phone conversation with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discussed the latter's recent trip to Kiev, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.
* The United States and Ukraine will continue having conversations concerning the allowed use of US-supplied weapons for striking Russian territory, but those discussions will remain private, Kirby said.
* The United States is increasing its military equipment deliveries to Ukraine to fix damaged equipment after Russia's massive strike, Kirby said.
* The Ukrainian side did not send official requests to Minsk to withdraw troops from the Ukrainian-Belarusian border, Belarusian Foreign Ministry spokesman Anatoly Glaz told Sputnik.
MIDDLE EAST
* Attacks that Lebanon's Hezbollah launched against Israel in retaliation for the assassination of its commander have not affected the ongoing talks in Cairo on a ceasefire in Gaza, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Monday.
* Moscow expresses deep concern about the dangerous increase in tension in the Lebanese-Israeli border area and calls on the parties to the conflict to exercise maximum restraint, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.
* The Israel Defense Forces said that Lebanese movement Hezbollah had made 90% of rocket launches from civilian areas during Sunday's attack against Israel.
DUROV'S ARREST IN FRANCE
* The arrest of Telegram founder Pavel Durov in France demonstrates that everything in the world has become distorted because the West is changing realities in its interests, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Monday.
* The detention in France of Durov is an example of a policy of maximum pressure on alternative communication networks, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said.
* The Belgian Institute for Postal services and Telecommunications, which is in charge of overseeing the work of the Telegram messenger in the European Union, told Ria Novosti that it had not received any data on violations by the messenger of the new EU rules concerning the operation of social networks in the EU.
* Durov may remain in police custody in France until August 28, the Paris Prosecutor's Office told RIA Novosti.
* The United Nations is monitoring the situation surrounding the arrest of Durov in France, but has no comment to provide at the moment, spokesman Stephane Dujarric told Sputnik.
* The arrest of Durov in France is not a political decision, French President Emmanuel Macron

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said.

SITUATION IN KURSK NPP

* International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said on Monday that he will head an IAEA mission to the Kursk nuclear power plant (NPP) on August 27 "given the serious situation."

* The power unit No. 4 of the Kursk NPP has been put into scheduled preventive maintenance works to maintain a stable operating condition of equipment for guaranteed safe power generation, the plant said.

DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA'S KURSK REGION

* Russian air defense systems on duty shot down two Ukrainian drones over the Black Sea and the Kursk Region, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday.

* The Ukrainian armed forces have lost more than 6,200 servicepeople and 73 tanks since the beginning of the operation in the Kursk direction, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

PUTIN-TOKAYEV TALKS

* Russian President Vladimir Putin held phone talks with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Monday, the agenda covered the countries' interaction, especially their cooperation on energy issues, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday.

* Tokayev and Putin have agreed during a phone conversation to ensure the preparation for Russian leader's state visit to Astana, Tokayev's office said.

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US Army Selects Northrop Grumman ATHENA Multiple Threats Sensor Program - Release

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The US Army has selected the ATHENA multiple threats senior program to enhance the survivability of its combat aircraft in battlefield conditions, Northrop Grumman announced in a press release on Monday.

"Northrop Grumman has been selected by the US Army to compete in the first phase of the Improved Threat Detection System (ITDS) program, featuring Northrop Grumman's Advanced Tactical Hostile Engagement Awareness (ATHENA) sensor," the release said.

Northrop Grumman will contribute to the ITDS through an other transaction agreement through the Consortium Management Group, on behalf of the Consortium for Command, Control and Communications in Cyberspace, the release said.

"ATHENA is a next-generation missile warning sensor providing always-on, 360-degree situational awareness - elevating aircraft protection and survivability," the release added.

The ATHENA sensor delivers high-resolution, surround video and wide-band threat detection that can quickly geolocate incoming electro-optical/infrared threats, including hostile fire and anti-tank guided missiles, small arms, rocket propelled grenades and anti-tank guided munitions, according to the release.

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US to Build New Deep Space Monitoring Base in UK For Space Force, AUKUS - Northrop

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman will construct a Deep Space radar monitoring site in the United Kingdom (UK) for the US Space Force, the company announced in a press release on Monday.

"Northrop Grumman Corporation has been awarded its Deep-Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC) Site 2 contract from the US Space Force," the release stated.

This second site will establish a next-generation ground system enabling security and stability in deep space on a global scale, Northrop Grumman said.

The new facility will "monitor objects in geosynchronous orbit 22,000 miles above the equator 24/7 in all weather conditions, providing full global coverage protecting critical US and allied satellites," Northrop Grumman said.

The DARC Site 2 will also operate in collaboration with all the AUKUS partners in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, the release explained.

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US Special Counsel Seeks to Revive Trump's Classified Documents Case - Court Document

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - US Special Counsel Jack Smith has asked an appeals court to revive former President Donald Trump's classified documents case, disagreeing with claims that Smith's appointment violated the US Constitution, a court document filed on Monday show.

"The Attorney General validly appointed the Special Counsel, who is also properly funded. In ruling otherwise, the district court deviated from binding Supreme Court precedent, misconstrued the statutes that authorized the Special Counsel's appointment, and took inadequate account of the longstanding history of Attorney General appointments of special counsels," a member of of Smith's team, Assistant Special Counsel James Pearce, wrote in the filing.

Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed Smith in 2022 to investigate Trump's alleged mishandling of classified materials and his role in the events surrounding the 2020 election. Both investigations garnered criminal charges against Trump, who has pleaded not guilty in both cases.

Trump's defense attorneys in the classified documents case had argued that Smith's appointment violated the Constitution's Appointments Clause, a motion that prompted US District Judge Aileen Cannon to hold a multi-day hearing in June.

Last month, Judge Cannon dismissed the classified documents case against Trump, saying the appointment of Smith as special counsel violated the Constitution.

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US Continues to Assess Iranian Threats, Remains Prepared to Support Israel - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) — The US continues to assess Iranian threats of attack and remains prepared to support Israel's defense and protect US forces, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Monday.

"We continue to assess that there is a threat of attack, and we, again, remain well postured to be able to support Israel's defense as well as protect our forces, should they be attacked," Ryder said during a press briefing.

The remarks were in response to a reporter's question about whether the US had any indications of Iran preparing to launch an attack on Israel in light of Hezbollah's recent rocket attacks.

Hezbollah and Israel exchanged rocket attacks on Sunday. Hezbollah said it fired over 320 rockets and dozens of drones toward Israel in retaliation for the killing of senior commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut last month.

The Israeli military said that about 100 warplanes had hit more than 1,000 Hezbollah projectiles aimed at northern and central Israel.

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Colorado Man Threatened to Kill Election Officials, Judge With Rifle - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - A Colorado man faces federal charges after threatening to kill election officials and a state judge with his rifle, the Department of Justice announced in a press release on Monday.

"A Colorado man will make his initial appearance at the federal courthouse in Durango, Colorado, today on federal charges in connection with a series of online threats he made toward election officials in Colorado and Arizona, a Colorado state judge, and federal law enforcement agents," the release said.

Teak Brockbank, 45, of Cortez, was arrested on Friday in Cortez, the Justice Department said. He is charged with transmitting interstate threats and if convicted, faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

According to court documents, on August 4, 2022, Brockbank allegedly posted a message referring to separate election officials in Arizona and Colorado and then stated: “Once those people start getting put to death then the rest will melt like snowflakes and turn on each other. . . . This is the only way. "

The FBI is continuing to investigate the case, the Justice Department said.

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US Provided Intel to Israel of Hezbollah's Weekend Attack - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The United States provided intelligence to Israel warning it of Hezbollah's rocket and drone attack on Sunday, Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Patrick Ryder told reporters on Monday.

Hezbollah and Israel exchanged rocket attacks on Sunday. Hezbollah said it fired over 320 rockets and dozens of drones toward Israel in retaliation for the killing of senior commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut last month. The Israeli military said that about 100 warplanes had hit more than 1,000 Hezbollah projectiles aimed at northern and central Israel.

"We did provide some intelligence surveillance reconnaissance support, ISR, in terms of tracking incoming Lebanese Hezbollah attacks, but did not conduct any kinetic operations as they were not required," Ryder said.

Ryder added that he believes the United States' increased military presence in the Middle East has helped keep recent clashes from worsening tensions in the region.

Earlier on Monday, Israeli Ambassador to the US Michael Herzog said that the Israeli strike on Hezbollah in southern Lebanon on Sunday prevented a major war in the Middle East.

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US Digital Rights Group Says Durov's Arrest Threatens Free Speech of Millions of Users

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), a US digital rights group, told Sputnik on Monday that the arrest of Telegram founder and CEO Pavel Durov by French authorities threatens free speech and the privacy rights of millions of users worldwide.

"Communications platforms like Telegram are a vital part of internet architecture and fundamental drivers of free speech. If, as has been reported, Telegram CEO Pavel Durov has been arrested in France for moderation practices on his platform, it threatens the free speech and privacy rights of millions of users around the world," Senior Policy Analyst at EFF Joe Mullin said in a statement for Sputnik.

According to the organization, millions of Telegram users' rights to free expression are now at stake as a result of Durov's arrest.

On Monday, the French TV channel TF1 reported that Durov's detention was extended until Wednesday.

On Saturday, Russian-born Durov, who is a citizen of multiple countries, including France, was detained in France on charges linked to criminal uses of the Telegram app, including terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering, and fraud, which could land the 39-year-old billionaire in prison for up to 20 years. Later, French President Emmanuel Macron said that Durov's arrest was not a political decision, but one made by judges.

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Russia Requests UNSC Meeting on West's Arms Supply to Ukraine - Mission

UNITED NATIONS, August 26 (Sputnik) - Western countries in the UN Security Council have requested a meeting on Ukraine for August 28, while Russia requested a separate meeting for August 30, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Monday.

"The Western members of the Security Council finally decided to discuss the Ukrainian topic in the UN Security Council in August. They requested a meeting for 15:00 New York time [19:00 GMT] on August 28," Polyanskiy posted on Telegram.

Russia has requested a meeting on the supply of Western weapons to Kiev for 10:00 a.m. New York time on August 30, the diplomat added.

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'Hard to Imagine' Fed Not Cutting Interest Rates in September - Daly

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The first post-pandemic US interest rate cut looks almost certain to happen in September, though what is not certain yet is the size of the reduction, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco President Mary Daly said Monday.

"It's hard to imagine anything [that] could derail [a] September rate cut," Daly said in an interview with Bloomberg.

The comment echoed Fed Chair Jerome Powell's remarks from last week that "the time to adjust policy" is now upon the US central bank.

Money market traders are giving 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, at its next meeting on September 18.

The last time the Fed cut rates was in March 2020, right after the COVID-19 outbreak. It slashed 100 basis points, or a full percentage point, to bring borrowing costs to an all-time low of between zero and 0.25% to prepare the economy for the effects of the pandemic measures.

The Fed then added 525 basis points to interest rates between March 2022 and June 2023 to bring them to a two-decade high of between 5.25 and 5.50% amid inflation triggered by government spending and breakdown in supply chains.

One of the surest signs of an interest rate cut by next month came from the Fed's July policy meeting minutes published last week that showed most policy-makers at the central bank are in agreement that a change in direction was needed.

Yet, the odds for a 50 basis-point cut was low due to the lack of specifics given by Powell on how the Fed would move forth, analysts said.

Powell said how much the Fed cuts interest rates will depend on incoming data, the evolving economic outlook and balance of risks.

Daly agreed with Powell that "it is too early to know how big rate cuts will be."

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However, she also said the Fed would need to be more aggressive if the economy weakens more than anticipated.

"It is reasonable to adjust policy at normal cadence if the economy develops as expected," Daly said.

The Fed has a long way to go and even after an easing it will be restrictive on policy, Daly added.

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Trump Says Will Create Space National Guard Once in Office

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) – Former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said on Monday that he intends to create a Space National Guard if he wins the November election.

"Now that the Space Force is up and running, the time has come to create a space National Guard as the primary combat reserve of the US Space Force," Trump said in his address for the National Guard Association of the US in Detroit. "As President, I will sign historic legislation creating a Space National Guard."

Before the creation of the US Space Force during his administration, China and Russia were "killing" the United States in space, which is not the case now, Trump stated.

Trump also pledged to make historic investments in drones, robotics, artificial intelligence, and hypersonics if he wins the election.

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Trump Says Russia 'Great Winter Fighter,' Highlights Role in Defeat of Nazi Germany

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said in an interview that aired on Monday that Russia's military is very capable, particularly in winter conditions, and highlighted Russia's role in defeating Nazi Germany in World War II.

"Russia is a great winter fighter. They beat Germany, and they beat Napoleon. They're not easy to beat," Trump said on the Shawn Ryan Show podcast.

Trump also pointed out that the Russian military is massive and the current conflict in Ukraine could have been ended within a week if the United States were not providing support to Ukraine.

The Republican presidential nominee noted that the United States' European allies must do more to help Ukraine, given their proximity to that country.

Last week, US Congressman Michael Waltz told RIA Novosti that Trump, if reelected in November, has a strategy to urge Russia and Ukraine to negotiate an end to the conflict.

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Russia Requests UNSC Meeting on West's Arms Supply to Ukraine - Mission

UNITED NATIONS, August 26 (Sputnik) - Western countries in the UN Security Council have requested a meeting on Ukraine for August 28, while Russia requested a separate meeting for August 30, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Monday.

"The Western members of the Security Council finally decided to discuss the Ukrainian topic in the UN Security Council in August. They requested a meeting for 15:00 New York time [19:00 GMT] on August 28," Polyanskiy posted on Telegram.

Russia has requested a meeting on the supply of Western weapons to Kiev for 10:00 a.m. New York time on August 30, the diplomat added.

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UN Humanitarian Operations in Gaza 'Incredibly Squeezed' - UNRWA Official

UNITED NATIONS, August 26 (Sputnik) - The United Nations humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip have been greatly squeezed as numerous evacuation orders have been issued, UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Senior Deputy Field Director Sam Rose said on Monday.

"It was about this time yesterday when evacuation orders were issued." Rose said. "The ones [slews] of last night affected a block of Gaza in which a number of UN international guest houses were situated … the humanitarian operations have been incredibly squeezed."

Rose said the United Nations estimates that about a million Palestinians will now be without aid, which the UN agencies had planned to deliver.

On Sunday, a new round of talks on a ceasefire and hostages release deal between Israel and Hamas took place in Cairo. CIA Director William Burns, Qatar Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and senior officials from Israel and Egypt participated in the talks.

However, the talks did not result in reaching an agreement because Israel and Hamas refused to accept a number of the mediators' proposals, according to media reports.

Israel's continued military presence in the Philadelphi corridor remains its key security requirement.

US media reported that Israel seeks to build a wall along the Philadelphi corridor to prevent Hamas from digging tunnels.

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Biden Spoke With Modi to Discuss Indian Prime Minister's Trip to Kiev - White House

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(Adds background in paras 3-4)
WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden held a phone conversation with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday to discuss the latter's recent trip to Kiev, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.
"The President did speak with Prime Minister Modi today," Kirby said in a press briefing. "I think it's safe to say they certainly talked about Ukraine and the prime minister's trip to Kiev and the prospects for moving forward in accordance with President Zelenskyy's plan for a just peace."
Modi visited Ukraine on August 23 to hold talks with Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
The prime minister said that India and he personally are ready to play any role in helping end the Ukraine conflict.

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Biden Spoke With Modi to Discuss Indian Prime Minister's Trip to Kiev - White House

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden held a phone conversation with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday to discussed the latter's recent trip to Kiev, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.
"The President did speak with Prime Minister Modi today," Kirby said in a press briefing. "I think it's safe to say they certainly talked about Ukraine and the prime minister's trip to Kiev and the prospects for moving forward in accordance with President Zelenskyy's plan for a just peace."

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Ukraine's Offensive in Kursk Region Pushes Limits Washington Set on Kiev - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's offensive in the Kursk region is testing the limits set by Washington to avoid any major escalation in the conflict, the Financial Times wrote in an op-ed published on Monday.
Regardless of the outcome of Ukraine's offensive in the Kursk region, the United States is cautious about avoiding a direct conflict with Russia and takes the threat of nuclear conflict seriously, the report said.
The report added that the Biden administration doubts that Ukraine's forces can hold the territory they have taken in the Kursk region.
Although the Biden administration claims it had no prior notification of Ukraine's plans to attack the Kursk region, the report added that it is also in the United States' interests to deny direct involvement in Kiev's plans to carry out an attack on Russian soil.
Russia claims that US intelligence helped Ukraine prepare for its Kursk operation.
The Financial Times also pointed out that Ukraine may be mirroring Israel's strategy of taking military action without prior approval from the Biden administration, expecting that the United States will continue its support no matter the outcome.
On August 6, the Ukrainian forces crossed the border into Russia and launched an offensive

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against the Kursk region. Russian President Vladimir Putin accused Ukrainian troops of firing indiscriminately at civilians and ruled out peace talks with Kiev.

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US, Ukraine to Keep Discussing Use of US Weapons in Russian Territory - Kirby

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The United States and Ukraine will continue having conversations concerning the allowed use of US-supplied weapons for striking Russian territory, but those discussions will remain private, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Monday.

"We'll keep the conversations with the Ukrainians going but we're going to keep them private and I have no changes to our policies with respect to US weapons to speak to today, or, no guidelines to talk to," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby made the comment in response to a question whether the United States is considering lifting the alleged restrictions on the use of US weapons in Russian territory.

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White House Says No Impact on Gaza Ceasefire Talks From Hezbollah Attacks on Israel

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) – Attacks that Lebanon's Hezbollah launched against Israel in retaliation for the assassination of its commander have not affected the ongoing talks in Cairo on a ceasefire in Gaza, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Monday.

"On the attacks over the weekend. No, there was not an impact on the [ceasefire] talks in Cairo, and we're certainly glad to see that … There continues to be progress, and our team on the ground continues to describe the talks as constructive. So despite the rocket and drone attack by Hezbollah over the course of the weekend … it has not affected the actual work on the ground by the teams trying to get the ceasefire deal in place." Kirby said during a press briefing.

Hezbollah and Israel exchanged rocket attacks on Sunday. Hezbollah said it fired over 320 rockets and dozens of drones toward Israel in retaliation for the killing of senior commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut last month. The Israeli military said that about 100 warplanes had hit more than 1,000 Hezbollah projectiles aimed at northern and central Israel.

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US Mercenary Says Assisted Ukraine Sniper Operation in Russia's Kursk Region

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - A former US soldier turned mercenary claimed in an interview on Monday that he was a part of a group of US combat veterans who provided support

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during a sniper operation in Russia's Kursk region.

"We were actually asked to go into the Kursk incursion area in order to help assist with a sniper operation they were looking at. But it's chaos right now. We ended up not doing that operation, but went into Russian territory and spent the night, and frankly, looked around and tried to help where we could," the mercenary said in the interview with ABC News.

The mercenary also said he is "genuinely worried" that Ukraine may have overextended its military by attacking the Kursk region.

However, he also said that the other options for the Kiev regime to attempt to turn around the deteriorating situation on the battlefield were even worse.

The mercenary introduced himself as a "volunteer" who decided to help Ukraine and get rid of the alleged authoritarianism in Russia.

The participation of US mercenaries in the conflict in Ukraine is well known. The US private military company Forward Observations Group has been regularly posting footage of its activities in Ukraine and Russia. Yet, the company claims its "volunteers" are participating in the conflict allegedly on a volunteer basis.

Vladimir Rogov, a senior official of the Russia-appointed Zaporozhye (also known as Zaporizhzhia) regional administration, told Sputnik on Thursday that at least six or seven private military companies from foreign countries have taken part in the Ukraine conflict on the side of the Ukrainian military.

On Wednesday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that all foreign combatants involved in terrorist activities in Russia would be considered legitimate targets for the country's armed forces.

The US departments of State and Defense have declined to provide any comments regarding the presence of US mercenaries on Russian soil.

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US Surging Energy Equipment to Ukraine for Repairs After Russian Missile Strike- Kirby

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The United States is increasing its military equipment deliveries to Ukraine to fix damaged equipment after Russia's massive strike, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Monday.

"We're also surging energy equipment to Ukraine, to repair what Russia has damaged and to strengthen the resilience of Ukraine's energy grid," Kirby said in a press briefing.

Earlier on Monday, Ukraine's DTEK energy holding reported emergency blackouts throughout Ukraine after the explosions.

The Russian armed forces launched a massive strike on energy infrastructure facilities that supported the work of the Ukrainian military-industrial complex, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday.

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Kirby says no changes to policies on ukraine's use of us weapons in russian territory, conversations with ukrainians ongoing, but will be kept private

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us surging energy equipment to ukraine to repair damaged equipment following russia's missile strikes - white house's kirby

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Pentagon Appoints New Chief of All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office - Statement

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department announced on Monday the appointment of Jon Kosloski as director of the All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO).

"Today, Dr. Jon T. Kosloski arrived on detail from the National Security Agency to be appointed as the director of the All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office," the Defense Department said in a statement.

Kosloski will coordinate with the intelligence community on synchronizing scientific, intelligence and operational detection, identification, attribution and mitigation of unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP) in the vicinity of national security areas, the statement said.

"Under his leadership, AARO will continue to examine the US government historical record relating to UAP, as well as efforts to declassify and release UAP-related records to the greatest extent possible," the statement added.

Kosloski has previously held technical and leadership positions within the Research Directorate of the National Security Agency (NSA) and led advanced mission-oriented research in the fields of networking and computing.

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US Congress May Need to Pass Another Supplemental to Keep Ukraine Afloat - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The Department of Defense will likely soon ask Congress again for additional funding for Ukraine to keep the country afloat, as the scenario of continued US-sponsored conflict remains the most plausible, Under Secretary of Defense and Comptroller Michael McCord said in an interview for Breaking Defense published on Monday.

Even though Congress barely managed to consider and approve a second $60 billion aid package for Ukraine as recently as April, the US Department of Defense is already preparing to once again ask American lawmakers for another supplemental funding package to continue the conflict in Ukraine, according to the report.

"After a long, hard road we got the [previous supplemental] at the end of April, so we're still on that. Of course, we are not, at this time, working on one for FY25, which hasn't started yet. But if

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nothing changes, we will need to," the report quoted McCord as saying.

According to McCord, defense officials will soon begin calculating how much will be needed to keep Ukraine in a combat-ready state, but this figure will be measured in billions of dollars, like the two previous ones, the report said.

At the same time, McCord noted that the April supplemental has funding authorities that will likely last "right up to the brink of a transition of administration," or the first quarter of the financial year 2025.

US Senator Tommy Tuberville said in April that the United States has spent about $300 billion to support Ukraine since 2014 when a US-backed coup d'etat was orchestrated in Kiev.

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US House Speaker Johnson Suggests Harris Would Get No Respect From Foreign Leaders

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson in an interview with Fox News on Monday suggested that Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris would get no respect from foreign leaders if elected to be the next president of the United States.

"The only person that our adversaries fear less than Joe Biden is Kamala Harris," Johnson said as quoted by Fox News. "Imagine her as the commander-in-chief of the US military in these dangerous times. This is the most dangerous time since World War II. We cannot afford to do that."

Johnson also said that Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump needs to return to the White House, claiming he is feared and respected by world leaders.

According to Johnson, Biden has been "checked out" from his duties as US president for a long time.

Johnson encouraged US voters to leave emotions out and make a decision in the November election based on each candidate's record.

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UN Says Following Situation Around Arrest of Telegram CEO, No Comment at This Time

UNITED NATIONS, August 26 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is monitoring the situation surrounding the arrest of Telegram CEO and founder Pavel Durov in France, but has no comment to provide at the moment, spokesman Stephane Dujarric told Sputnik on Monday.

"We are following the situation but do not have a comment at this time," Dujarric said.

On Saturday, Russian-born Durov, who is a citizen of several countries, including France, was detained at a Paris airport on charges linked to criminal uses of Telegram, including terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and fraud. The charges could reportedly land the 39-year-old billionaire in prison for up to 20 years.

Durov is charged with refusing to cooperate over cyber and financial crimes on Telegram, Reuters reported.

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French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday that Durov's arrest was not a political decision, but one made by judges.

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Harris, Trump Campaigns in Dispute Over Microphones at September 10 Debate - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) – US Vice President Kamala Harris' campaign has requested that ABC and other media networks keep microphones active during the debate, whereas former President Donald Trump's team advocates for muting them except when a candidate is speaking, CNN reported on Monday.

According to the report, the Harris campaign is seeking to keep microphones on during a potential October debate, a departure from the June debate's approach where microphones were only active when a candidate was speaking.

However, the Trump campaign said it prefers a setup with muted microphones, akin to the first debate with President Biden, the report said.

Trump has also suggested that he might skip the ABC debate on September 10 in Philadelphia, the report added.

Earlier on Monday, Trump has cast doubt on whether he will debate Harris on "fake news" channel ABC News after watching a biased interview with US Senator Tom Cotton.

The September 10 debate is set to take place at the National Constitutional Center in Philadelphia, hosted by ABC News.

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McCaul Says Will Soon Release Investigation Results of US Evacuation From Afghanistan

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - US House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul said on Monday that he will release the results of the investigation into the circumstances of the US botched withdrawal from Afghanistan in the coming weeks.

"That is why I am investigating the evacuation and will be releasing a full report in the coming weeks. I will leave no stone unturned to get answers and accountability for the courageous men and women who sacrificed so much for our country," the committee quoted McCaul as saying in a statement.

McCaul issued the statement to commemorate the 13 US service members who were killed in a bombing at the Abbey Gate in Kabul three years ago amid the hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The United States withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021 after a rapid takeover of the country by the Taliban. The US military led the chaotic evacuation of thousands of people via the Kabul airport at Abbey Gate, where a terrorist attack killed 13 US troops and 180 Afghans.

Republicans in Congress have accused the Biden administration of fleeing Afghanistan, as well as leaving behind thousands of Afghans who had been collaborating with the US military

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against the Taliban for 20 years.

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un following situation around arrest of telegram ceo pavel durov, but does not have comment at this time - spokesman to sputnik

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Trump Commemorates 13 US Troops Killed in 2021 in Kabul at Arlington Cemetery

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - Former President and current Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump paid tribute to the 13 US service members killed in the Abbey Gate terrorist attack in Kabul in August 2021.

During a solemn ceremony on the third anniversary of the Kabul bombing attack, Trump paid tribute by laying wreaths individually with each family of the killed service members.

Former and current US senators and congressmen also attended the ceremony.

The United States withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021 after a rapid takeover of the country by the Taliban. The US military led the chaotic evacuation of thousands of people via the Kabul airport at Abbey Gate, where a terrorist attack killed 13 US troops and 170 Afghans.

Republicans in Congress have accused the Biden administration of fleeing Afghanistan, as well as leaving behind thousands of Afghans who had been collaborating with the US military against the Taliban for 20 years.

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US Pledges Over $64Mln in Humanitarian Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) – The United States will provide more than $64 million in humanitarian assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa, the State Department said on Monday.

"Today in Dakar, Senegal, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Julieta Valls Noyes announced more than $64 million in life-saving humanitarian assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa," the statement said

It brings the total US humanitarian assistance to the region in fiscal year 2024 to more than $3.8 billion.

The new aid will allow the recipient countries to meet urgent, lifesaving needs of refugees and other displaced and vulnerable populations across Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the statement.

The US urged international partners to increase their support for the region. Washington also encouraged foreign countries to provide aid to refugees and support sustainable solutions to

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outstanding issues, the statement said.

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US Announces Up to $2.5Mln Reward for Info About Belarusian Citizen Kadariya - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) - The United States is offering a reward of up to $2.5 million for information about Belarusian citizen Volodymyr Kadariya wanted for alleged cybercrimes, the State Department said on Monday.

"The Department of State is announcing a reward offer under the Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program of up to $2.5 million for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of Volodymyr Kadariya, aka Volodymyr Kadaria or Vladimir Kadaria, who is wanted in the United States for his alleged participation in a significant malware organization," the statement said.

Kadariya is charged with cybercrime offenses associated with an alleged scheme to transmit the Angler Exploit Kit (AEK), other malware, and online scams to the computers of millions of unsuspecting Internet users through online advertisements – so-called "malvertising" – and other means from October 2013 through March 2022, it added.

"On June 14, 2023, Kadariya was indicted in the District of New Jersey with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, conspiracy to commit computer fraud, and two counts of substantive wire fraud," the statement said.

The US authorities call on anyone who has information about Kadariya to contact the US Secret Service or US embassies and consulates.

The Belarusian Investigative Committee said in March 2023 that Kadariya, who had been hiding in different countries across the world for 14 years on charges of credit card fraud, was extradited from Kyrgyzstan and placed in custody. Kadariya pleaded guilty and will face a trial, the committee said in March 2023.

In 2016, the Belarusian citizen applied for asylum in Ukraine.

Among the victims of credit card fraud committed by Kadariya are citizens of the United States, Poland, France and the United Kingdom, the Belarusian Investigative Committee said. During the investigation, the Belarusian Investigative Committee was closely cooperating with a number of countries in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as Interpol, the committee said.

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Canada to Begin Tariff Consultations on Other Critical Sectors for Its Economy – Ministry

WASHINGTON, August 26 (Sputnik) – The Canadian Government will begin a second 30-day consultation period regarding other critical sectors for the country's future prosperity including solar products and critical minerals, Department of Finance Canada 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 will launch a second 30-day consultation concerning other sectors critical to Canada's future prosperity, including batteries and battery parts, semiconductors, solar products, and critical minerals. A consultation notice will be released in the coming days to help inform any further government action," the department said in a statement.

In addition, Ottawa intends to limit the eligibility for Incentives for Zero-Emission Vehicles, Incentives for Medium and Heavy Duty Zero Emission Vehicles, and the Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program to products made in countries with whom Canada has a free trade agreement.

The measure seeks to protect Canadian workers and key economic sectors from what it calls unfair Chinese trade practices, the department said.

In late June, the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa had told Sputnik that if Canada insisted on politicizing and weaponizing economic and trade issues to unilateral impose tariffs on Chinese exports, China would take decisive actions to defend its legitimate rights and interests.

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