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Political Witch Hunt: US Activists Go to Trial in Florida, Accused of Acting as Russian Agents

The activists, who fight for the rights of Black people and others in the US, have been accused of trying to "sow division" in the US because they oppose US policy regarding the war in Ukraine.

Four activists who have been accused of "illegally" acting as Russian agents to somehow help the Kremlin create political discord and interference in US elections will go to trial in Florida on Tuesday, CBS News reported. The four activists are associated with the African People's Socialist Party and the Uhuru Movement with locations in the US cities of St. Petersburg and St. Louis. One of the activists is Omali Yeshitela, 82, whose organization focuses on Black empowerment and reparations for slavery.

An attorney for the 82-year-old activist said that while the civil rights group shared many goals of the Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia, they were not acting under the Kremlin's control. The judge handling the case said it is unrelated to claims of Russia interfering in the 2016 US presidential election. All four activists have pleaded not guilty.

Jeremy Kuzmarov, a managing editor of Covert Action magazine, the author of several books on US foreign policy, joined The Final Countdownon Wednesday to discuss the US government's continued attacks on dissidents and independent thinkers in the states.

"Omali Yeshitela, he's over 80 years old, and he's written like 10 books and he's a very intelligent person. He'd been involved in activism since the '60s. He was involved with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. And, they sent in like tanks in his home, and there were drones in his house, and he and his wife were terrorized. This is an 80-plus year old man, and it was overkill," Kuzmarov explained. "It's really overkill, and it's no threat to America's security."

Writing about the attack for Green Left, Yeshitela said that at 5 AM on Friday in July of 2022, about 30 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents and police in armored vehicles used flash-bang grenades and broke down the door of his home. At the same time, other Uhuru Movement leaders also had their homes raided. Yeshitela said that the FBI agents did not show him any warrant, and said the raid was connected to the indictment of a "Russian man who is in Russia who was supposedly spreading 'Russian influence' in the US."

"With assault rifles pointed at my chest, they forced me out of the house along with my wife Ona Zené Yeshitela, a critical leader of our movement," said the activist, who acknowledged traveling to Russia and other countries for conferences. "Even though we were not formally under arrest and faced no charges, they handcuffed us and told us to sit on the curb, which we refused to do."

It was not until nine months after they raided their homes that the US DOJ announced indictments against the civil rights leaders.

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“...it's possible that the Feds have something concrete on this Uhuru group, that they're taking it to trial, that they feel they can convince a jury. So, I don't know how strong their case is," said Kuzmarov. "I think on a broader level, it looks to be kind of a political witch hunt. And then, as far as the money invested, yeah, I mean, the US is like, you know, crying about Russian interference when, as it’s pointed out, this group had no influence at all.”

Prosecutors wrote in the 2023 indictment that Aleksandr Viktorovich Ionov engaged with the four defendants “for years” and urged them to make pro-Russian statements while paying for their travel. He also allegedly paid for two unsuccessful political campaigns for St. Petersburg City Council and a protest tour to raise awareness of the genocide against African people in the US. The total amount of payments to the defendants seems to be at least $10,000, according to a report from the New York Times.

“...sometimes you get invited to a conference and this kind of, this organization invited you and maybe you have some connection with the Russian government, but you don't even know that, you know, you're going to a human rights conference,” the analyst explained.

“I think we're seeing a more authoritarian form, a more overt authoritarian government. I mean, in the past, dissidents have faced all kinds of harassment and marginalization, but usually they weren't outright arrested, or had the FBI raiding their home with tanks. And that's what we're seeing now,” he added.

Jill Stein, an American physician, activist, and politician as well as the US Green Party’s nominee for the 2024 US presidential election, said the “attack on the Uhuru Three is fundamentally an attack on free speech, on our right to oppose endless wars and economic oppression abroad.” She added that the attack was on “our right to oppose the cost of these endless wars at home, namely economic austerity and the war on democracy."

“And yeah, Scott Ritter, I mean, he's a patriotic American who served in the Marine Corps and Marine intelligence. And they've really gone after him because, I think, he's an insider and they want to send a message to other people not to become whistleblowers," said Kuzmarov. "So they've really thrown the mat at him.”

The US Department of Justice began a broad criminal investigation into US citizens who have worked with Russian state television networks, according to a report released last month. Former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter, who is a critic of US foreign policy and Dimitri K. Simes, Russian TV Channel One presenter and founder of the US-based think tank Center for the National Interest, 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.

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'They Cannot Afford Another Botched Operation': Whistleblowers Reveal US Secret Service Blunders

Not only were the agents who were tasked to protect the former president trained through a shoddy online webinar, some of them weren't even Secret Service agents, said whistleblowers who spoke to the Republican senator's office.

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Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) has claimed that most agents who were present during the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump in July were not US Secret Service (USSS) agents, but were in fact Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) agents. The US politician told Fox News that the only training the agents received was a "2-hour online webinar" training. Citing claims made by whistleblowers, he added that the agents who were protecting the former president that day had no prior experience in security detail.

Hawley wrote the whistleblowers' allegations in a letter to Ronald Rowe, the acting director of the USSS, and attached the letter to an X post.

Tyler Nixon, an attorney, media relations specialist and political analyst, joined Rachel Blevins on The Backstory on Wednesday, and presented a rundown of the agency's long-standing failings.

"Well, there's no question that the Secret Service (USSS) is a very troubled agency and it has been varyingly for many years," Nixon said. "...the agency has had serious problems with … racial discrimination. There was a lawsuit that became a class action that dragged on for nearly 17 years of Black agents from the '80s and '90s who were held back, discriminated against, suppressed in terms of promotions. They won and the Secret Service fought that tooth and nail."

The lawyer disclosed that he represents the first Black Secret Service agent who served on presidential protection, who has threatened to be a whistleblower to the "Warren Commission concerning the laxity, drinking and other things that the agents had perpetrated or done on the President John F. Kennedy detail," he said, adding that "many argue [the laxity] contributed to their slow reactions [of JFK's assassination]."

"[USSS] has to, I think, if they were talking about it, it's well over a billion-dollar budget. I think it might have been $1.4 billion, if I'm not mistaken. But whatever it is, it is absolutely enough that they should have the best equipment, the best agents and the best operations. And I think it's just proof that, generally speaking, you can throw as much money as you want at a government agency to address a problem if there's institutional incompetence and institutional issues and just the fact that the government operates the way it does without accountability," Nixon explained.

"And one of the other things was, which really stands out in the Trump affair was that they were assigning [...] based on apparently the status, let's just say, of the protectee, meaning Trump's not the president. He's a candidate, a former president. Versus what [American conservative commentator Dan Bongino] noted should be the criteria for assigning the resources, which is the threat profile," he added.

"In Butler, there was what I would view as it wasn't simply incompetence. There was actually active security stripping, which is very, very troubling because that's not just a matter of people not doing their jobs properly. It's a matter of an intent to expose him to potential assassination or assassination, and that is, that's corruption that is so - I mean, it would be criminal, obviously, that level of corruption," he continued. "So, major reforms need to happen with that agency, if not a total reckoning."

Last month, Sputnik reported that US Congressman Ritchie Torres (D-NY) introduced legislation to expand the range of USSS' security perimeters following the assassination attempt against Trump. The bill, dubbed the AR-15 Perimeter Security Enhancement Act, would ensure that perimeters around the person that USSS is tasked with protecting would be extensive enough to cover the area that a fired gun could cover, as well as to secure all elevated positions.

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"...we're not seeing accountability, we're seeing nothing. They have been stonewalling and slow walking this investigation. I mean, we are now coming up on two months out from this, and everybody could see what happened. There, you know, this doesn't require a six-month investigation with, I mean, all this drawn out, you know, where basically they're going back," Nixon said.

"...the local law enforcement in Butler were taking their jobs very seriously and were pushing to the USSS, wondering what the heck they're doing. The USSS didn't even show up to the morning briefing where even if they had left, had all these gaps in security that they had let arise, they would have been able to maybe sort of sew it all together in that last briefing, but they didn't show up for that. And no, there is no accountability at this point."

"And I don't think we will - [acting USSS Director Ronald] Rowe, who is the replacement, excuse me, for [Kimberly] Cheatle who resigned, which, you know, that was a foregone conclusion. I mean, she was sort of the sacrificial lamb, but he was more intimately involved in these, in these decisions to deny Trump the additional security that his, that the actual ground agents were requesting in addition to Trump's people. And, he's part of the problem," the attorney explained.

It was reported in August that USSS had taken initial disciplinary action against "multiple agents" following the assassination attempt against Trump. According to a report from The Hill, the special agent in charge of the Pittsburgh field office - which was responsible for planning the security for Trump's appearance in Butler - was on "administrative duty." At least five agents had been placed on that status as well, the report added.

"It's just, it doesn't matter because unfortunately what we have is we've instituted incompetence in addition to the possibility of corruption that we've seen," he added.

Rowe, who took over Cheatle's role following her resignation, said he would not fire any agents until internal investigations were completed. A bipartisan task force was created by the House of Representatives to investigate the security failures that occurred during the shooting.

One person was killed and two others were injured before the 20-year-old gunman, Thomas Matthew Crooks, was killed by a Secret Service sniper. Hawley has asked Rowe, the acting director, to answer questions based on information he received from the whistleblowers, including: details on the training that Trump's protective detail received, and whether or not that training has been revamped since the shooting, as well as how many HSI agents were present at the time.

"I think they do legitimately have and should have serious concerns over Biden's safety. First of all, from the perspective of who wouldn't want to make Kamala Harris president before the election, like, the impact that would have. I mean, I hate to say it, there's a motive with a lot of people to see that happen, to think they will cinch the election somehow, or it will swing things, number one," Nixon explained.

"The Secret Service absolutely, I think, also cannot afford, they know that one more thing like this, one more botched protective detail operation and they are done. I mean, there's no, there will be no, I mean, that will be the end of that agency. And I think it's like, you know, this is our survival on the line."

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Political witch hunt: US activists go to trial in Florida, accused of acting as Russian agents

Four activists who have been accused of “illegally” acting as "Russian agents" to somehow help the Kremlin create political discord and interference in US elections will go to trial in Florida on Tuesday, CBS News reported. “Omali Yeshitela, he's over 80 years old, and he's written like 10 books and he’s a very intelligent person. He'd been involved in activism since the ‘60s. He was involved with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. And, they sent in like tanks in his home, and there were drones in his house, and he and his wife were terrorized. This is an 80-plus year old man, and it was overkill,” said CovertAction Magazine managing editor Jeremy Kuzmarov on Sputnik’s The Backstory program. “It's really overkill, and it's no threat to America's security.” The four activists are associated with the African People’s Socialist Party and the Uhuru Movement with locations in the US cities of St. Petersburg and St. Louis. One of the activists is Omali Yeshitela, 82, whose organization focuses on Black empowerment and reparations for slavery. “I think we're seeing a more authoritarian form, a more overt authoritarian government. I mean, in the past, dissidents have faced all kinds of harassment and marginalization, but usually they weren't outright arrested, or had the FBI raiding their home with tanks. And that's what we're seeing now,” Kuzmarov highlighted. An attorney for the 82-year-old activist said that while the civil rights group shared many goals of the Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia, they were not acting under the Kremlin’s control. The judge handling the case said it is unrelated to claims of Russia interfering in the 2016 US presidential election. All four activists have pleaded not guilty.

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Turkey in the Spotlight as Erdogan Seeks BRICS Membership for Ankara

The ambitious Turkish president has signaled interest in joining the fast growing bloc composed of some of the world’s most dynamic economies.

Police arrested 15 people in Turkiye after an attack on two US Marines by members of a nationalist group Monday.

The detainees “are accused of membership in the Turkish Youth Union,” reports the Washington Post, “a secular nationalist group that opposes U.S. and European Union influence in Turkiye. The assault took place Monday afternoon in Konak, a municipality in Izmir, in western Turkiye, on the Aegean Sea… The Turkish Youth Union posted a video of an attack on social media, which showed a group pushing two men and covering one of their heads in what appeared to be a white sack to chants in English of ‘Yankee, go home.’”

The attack demonstrated strong anti-American sentiment in the region amid US support for Israel’s military operation in the Gaza Strip, which has killed nearly 41,000. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has increasingly fashioned himself as a leader of the Muslim world, taking a strident tone against Tel Aviv even as the country maintains significant trade ties with Israel.

“It's no secret that there is mass disgruntlement in this important NATO member, speaking of Turkiye… towards United States of America,” said writer and historian Dr. Gerald Horne, who

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joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Tuesday to discuss the latest developments in the West Asian country. "Not least because of the assumed and likely accurate accusation that US imperialism was involved in the failed 2016 coup against Mr. Erdogan, the leader."

"Likewise, there is disgruntlement in Turkiye about the historic role of US imperialism in Iraq going back about two decades to the ill-fated, ill-advised George W. Bush invasion of that neighbor of Turkiye, dislodging Saddam Hussein, unleashing chaos in the streets that is yet to dissipate and, of course, we also know that there are still US troops in Iraq who are attracting the negative attention not only of those in the streets of Turkiye but also amongst those in the streets of Iraq and Iran as well," he continued.

The United States has experienced a decrease in global popularity as it strongly supports Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, frequently sending weapons and aid packages to the controversial leader even while sometimes publicly rebuking his intransigence. The decline has been especially sharp in the Middle East as US troops stationed in Iraq and Syria have occasionally been subject to attacks from militant groups in the region.

But the United States' approval is declining in Europe as well, shifting into negative territory in many countries for the first time since former President Donald Trump's term in the White House. Researcher Frederick DeVeaux claims the negative trend is particularly stark in Austria, Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's strong partnership with the US amid NATO's proxy against Russia has become a major albatross for the hapless politician as populist parties criticizing Germany's role in the war rise to prominence.

"We all watched with rapt attention the recent election in Germany, where the right wing did quite well in the eastern sector of that country," said Horne. "Less attention has been paid to the reality that a substantial percentage of the immigrant workforce in Germany is of Turkish origin… There is disgruntlement once again in the streets with regard to the so-called Alternative for Germany party, which is widely viewed as a party of the hard right, doing quite well in these elections, not least by beating the drums and bringing attention to immigrant workers, many of whom are Turkish in origin."

Turkiye has been engaged in talks to accede to the European Union since 1999, Horne noted, with many Turks likely perceiving Islamophobia to be a factor in the country's refusal to be allowed to join the bloc for a quarter of a century.

Erdogan has turned toward the BRICS in the meantime, seeking to join the growing bloc even as it maintains significant ties to the US and its allies via its membership in NATO.

"Even if there had not been this slow walking, there was good reason for Ankara to seek membership in the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa," said Horne. "After all, Iran and Saudi Arabia we expect to be represented at the BRICS summit in Russia in a few weeks. As we speak in China, quite remarkably, there are four dozen plus African heads of state and government that are meeting in China, in Beijing, under the umbrella of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which is a regular forum."

"If Turkiye wants to flex its muscles in Africa and wants to be influential for example in the Horn of Africa, it would be well advised to attach its apron strings to those of BRICS."

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US Role in Indonesia, Philippines Eyed as Washington Maintains Anti-China Presence in Region

The United States has continuously worked to provoke and contain China, identifying the Asian country as a major threat to its global hegemony.

"Jakarta has been engulfed in fiery unrest in recent days, as thousands of protesters attempted to storm parliament in response to controversial changes to election laws," notes the website Orinoco Tribune, acknowledging large demonstrations taking place in the Indonesian capital recently.

The online newspaper republished analysis offered one year ago by the investigative reporter Kit Klarenberg documenting "an extensive network of political, media, and civil society infrastructure" established by the CIA-linked National Endowment for Democracy to facilitate regime change in the country of 275 million people. "After years of fostering insurrectionary fervor in the country, has the NED's influence finally reached a boiling point?" the website asks.

"The US has been unhappy" with Indonesian President Joko Widodo noted writer and peace activist KJ Noh, who joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Tuesday to discuss developments in the region. "They sometimes use the term 'aggressive neutrality' in that he has been balancing between China and the United States. So, for a very, very long time they did not want [Widodo] in power and it may be that there are more moves that are happening right now in order to depose him."

"Certainly, we know that Widodo has been in the crosshairs of the United States for a while," the analyst claimed.

Widodo's successor Prabowo Subianto is set to assume power next month, Noh noted, speculating that "movements on the ground" could accelerate if the United States intends to move forward with regime change.

The US often implements political change in foreign countries via a process known as a "color revolution" wherein US-backed media, activists and other civil society institutions are utilized to lay the groundwork for coups, often via fomenting mass protest or insurrection.

The United States is also looking to interfere in the Philippines, offering to escort Philippine supply ships to an outpost the country is maintaining in the South China Sea to lay claim to a disputed island. The Philippines has consistently maintained the outpost to keep alive its claim to the territory, supplying it with building materials even after vowing to only send food and basic supplies.

"They want to see if they can create a provocation," Noh said of the US's offer of assistance to the Philippines. "The Philippines made a promise to China to remove the rusting ship the Sierra Madre. They broke that promise, they've been resupplying it and then they said that they would only resupply food… and water, and then it turns out that they were trying to resupply building materials, etcetera. Once again, to kind of squat the Second Thomas Shoal and to establish it as they're trying to claim squatter's rights."

"Once the US says that it is also going to start to escort these ships, then that takes the provocation to yet another level," said the activist. "They don't have any right to that area because they have no legal jurisdiction. They have no historical rights to that area. The only thing they're trying to claim is that they have contested [exclusive economic zone] rights, which

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are contested with multiple other countries but that does not give them the right to squat any of the islands there, which historically have been established to be Chinese."
The Philippines aims to internationalize the issue by leveraging alliance to mislead the public. By engaging with these non-involved parties, including making some off-table trade-offs, the Philippines seeks to "enhance its bargaining power and maritime presence," said Chen Xiangmiao, director of the World Navy Research Center at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies.
The US is the real "mastermind" behind the tension in the South China Sea, instructing Manila to stir up trouble but avoiding a scenario that goes out of control, and it is also the US that has mobilized its close allies to back the Philippines, Chen said.

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Russia Forced to Fight On as Ukraine Repeatedly Proves Incapable of Honest Negotiation

Analyst Mark Sleboda offered an update on Russia's progress in the Ukraine conflict as Western headlines have been dominated by Kiev's ill-fated terrorist attack on the Kursk region. A Russian strike in the city of Poltava on Tuesday made headlines as Ukrainian officials claimed dozens had been killed by a pair of ballistic missiles.
"We do not have to go to Russian officials to determine what was hit in this strike," noted international affairs and security analyst Mark Sleboda, adding, "We can just refer to Kiev regime officials – aside from the propaganda social media post put out by Zelensky's wife. According to Reuters, ... Volodymyr Zelensky was saying 'the strike damaged a building of the Military Institute of Communications,'" Sleboda said at Sputnik's Political Misfits program Tuesday.
"Further on, in the same Reuters article: 'officials did not immediately disclose the identity of the victims, but Ukrainian military bloggers suggested that some might be cadets or mobilized,'" he continued. "I.e., conscripted men undergoing training. Serhiy Beskrestnov, a blogger specializing in communications and electronic warfare, posted a tribute to 'my signals operator comrades,' which makes a lot of sense because it is a Military Institute of Communications."
Even Ukrainian sources, Sleboda noted, have admitted the target of the Russian strike was a military installation. "The truth is that training facilities – military training facilities – are regularly hit on both sides,"said the analyst, recalling a Ukrainian strike on a Russian military training ground in the Lugansk region about a month ago. The attack, Sleboda pointed out, was carried out with US ATACMS missiles which require the direct participation of the United States for the input of targeting information.
Witte followed up by inquiring about the recent progress of the Russian military, which has gradually continued its campaign westward liberating one village at a time. Ukraine's botched incursion into Russia's Kursk region has remained in the headlines in recent days, drawing attention away from Moscow's steady march towards the Dnipro River. But Sleboda said Russia's ongoing advances in the Pokrovsk area should not be ignored.
"They've punched through the Kiev regime's defensive lines – first, several months ago in Avdeyevka, and then they got into operational space just to the west of that, which we call the

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Ocheretino bloom, and now we call it the Pokrovsk Offensive," said Sleboda. "Russian forces are moving so fast and the Kiev regime defenses are so light, they have so few men and so few resources that… they're not turning every single building into a firing point and mini fortress."
"That's how fast Russian forces are moving," he continued. "They've already got, by some accounts, 40 to 50% of Selidovo and are moving to taking Pokrovsk into pincers. The effect of taking Pokrovsk will be like severing the artery, right?The heart's blood that is pumping supplies to the remaining Kiev regime occupied positions both north and south in the Donbass… It has huge strategic importance. And the Kiev regime is only very late in the day now trying to even withdraw forces from Kursk to send all the way back to try to defend. But I think it's too late for all of that."
"This is major, it is an operational crisis and the defensive collapse of the Kiev regime," Sleboda claimed. "And Russia has started a whole new offensive in the south there in this direction to take Ugledar further also into pincers. So, huge things are happening in central and south Donbass right now."
Witte asked for Sleboda's predictions for the progress of the Russian army, suggesting 2025 could be a pivotal year in the conflict. The host claimed Moscow would arrive in the Dnepropetrovsk region by the spring of next year, consolidating its previous gains as it pushes westward.
"There's no seasonal pause or anything like that," Sleboda claimed. "When will this end? Well, after the Donbass is liberated, Russia has to continue to liberate the parts of Kherson and Zaporozhye, namely Kherson city and Zaporozhye city, eponymously named, that are both under the control of the Kiev regime and some small amounts of territory in both of those regions."
"Because those regions, as far as Russia is concerned, had referendums and are now included in the Russian constitution as part of Russia," the analyst continued. "Russia has recently said, as a result of the Kursk incursion, there's no negotiations anymore. We can't negotiate. It's impossible."
"The Russian side has strongly condemned the barbaric terrorist attack of the armed formations of the Nazi Kiev regime in the Kursk region of the Russian Federation. It was emphasized that in such a situation there could be no talk of any negotiations with Kiev regarding the prospects for a political and diplomatic settlement," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement in August
"There's no one trustworthy or capable of negotiating on the Kiev regime side, which means regime change in Kiev at the least – probably not stopping to the Polish border, which could still be years down the line," he concluded.

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Turkey in the spotlight as Erdogan seeks BRICS membership for Ankara

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"It's no secret that there is mass disgruntlement in this important NATO member, speaking of Turkiye… towards United States of America," said writer and historian Dr. Gerald Horne, who joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Tuesday to discuss the latest developments in the West Asian country. "Not least because of the assumed and likely accurate accusation that US imperialism was involved in the failed 2016 coup against Mr. Erdogan, the leader."

"Likewise, there is disgruntlement in Turkiye about the historic role of US imperialism in Iraq going back about two decades to the ill-fated, ill-advised George W. Bush invasion of that neighbor of Turkiye, dislodging Saddam Hussein, unleashing chaos in the streets that is yet to dissipate and, of course, we also know that there are still US troops in Iraq who are attracting the negative attention not only of those in the streets of Turkiye but also amongst those in the streets of Iraq and Iran as well," he continued.

Turkiye has been engaged in talks to accede to the European Union since 1999, Horne noted, with many Turks likely perceiving Islamophobia to be a factor in the country's refusal to be allowed to join the bloc for a quarter of a century.

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US role in Indonesia, Philippines eyed as Washington maintains Anti-China presence in region

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Russia forced to fight on as Ukraine repeatedly proves incapable of honest negotiation

“They've punched through the Kiev regime's defensive lines – first, several months ago in Avdeyevka, and then they got into operational space just to the west of that, which we call the Ocheretino bloom, and now we call it the Pokrovsk Offensive,” analyst Mark Sleboda offered an update on Russia’s progress in it’s special operation on Sputnik’s Political Misfits program.

Sleboda highlighted the remarkable speed of the Russian advance and the weakness of Ukrainian defenses which are sparse and poorly equipped.

"Russian forces are moving so fast and the Kiev regime defenses are so light, they have so few men and so few resources that… they're not turning every single building into a firing point and mini fortress,” the analyst highlighted.

Sleboda explained that Russia liberating Pokrovsk would have a major strategic effect by cutting off vital supply lines to Ukrainian forces and altering the balance of control in the Donbass region.

“That’s how fast Russian forces are moving,” he continued. “They've already got, by some accounts, 40 to 50% of Selidovo and are moving to taking Pokrovsk into pincers. The effect of taking Pokrovsk will be like severing the artery, right? The heart's blood that is pumping supplies to the remaining Kiev regime occupied positions both north and south in the Donbass… It has huge strategic importance,” the analyst stressed.

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Sleboda criticized the belated efforts by the Ukrainian regime to reposition their forces, suggesting that these attempts are unlikely to change the current momentum of the conflict.

“And the Kiev regime is only very late in the day now trying to even withdraw forces from [the] Kursk [region] to send all the way back to try to defend. But I think it's too late for all of that.”

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United States’ targeting of Russian media highlights hypocrisy of the global hegemon – former CIA analyst Larry Johnson

Former CIA analyst and State Department counterterrorism expert Larry Johnson spoke with Sputnik to criticize the United States’ persecution of journalists and political analysts associated with Russian media.

“The latest stunt pulled by the Biden Department of Justice to declare all of these sanctions on Russia for alleged interference in the US political system is a level of hypocrisy that is staggering in its magnitude and in its foulness,” said the analyst. “Let's be clear about one thing: the one country in the world that has been involved with more interference in the internal political affairs of every other country is the United States.”

The US frequently funds pro-Western media and activism in foreign countries it targets for regime change to pave the way for a pro-US government to come to power.

“This year [the US has] allocated almost $4 billion to interfere or meddle in the political affairs of other countries,” he continued. “$315 million of that goes to the National Endowment for Democracy. $300 million is specifically what they call counter-Russian influence. And another $2.9 billion is for ‘democracy’ programs. And these have been used basically to run propaganda, to pay people, to organize ‘democracy’ programs in places like Georgia.”

The US has interfered in countries such as Georgia, Brazil, Indonesia and Ukraine, paving the way for the latter country’s extremist anti-Russia government through its support for the Euromaidan coup d'etat in 2014.

“It's the United States that's meddling,” Johnson emphasized.

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“They're going to try to attack any kind of alternative voice in the media” – former CIA analyst Larry Johnson

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“How is a news network that's not allowed to broadcast and that’s shut [out] of social media in the United States supposed to influence [the election]?” former State Department counterterrorism expert Larry Johnson told Sputnik.

The recent persecution of figures connected to RT and Sputnik is merely another attempt to run the “Russiagate” playbook, attempting to discredit alternative media outlets that critique US foreign policy, Johnson highlighted. “Electoral interference” continues to take place, Johnson claimed, but it is not the Russians but the US government that is engaged in an attempt to influence and control the popular narrative for its own benefit.

“With respect to the entire bogus claim that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, we now know without a doubt that that was a Democrat operation led by Hillary Clinton and her team,” the analyst stressed.

“Everything we were told about Donald Trump and the Russians was a lie. I was one of the few writing about it at the time to call it out… The notion that RT is manipulating and influencing the presidential election is beyond laughable,” he continued, noting that the Russian television channel’s app is banned from many app stores in the West while its content has been removed from YouTube and other websites.

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Georgia School Shooter in Custody, Identified as 14-Year-Old Student - GBI Director

WASHINGTON, September 5 (Sputnik) — 14-year-old student Colt Gray, responsible for the school shooting at Apalachee High School, is now in custody, Georgia Bureau of Investigation Director Chris Hosey said during a press briefing.

"The shooter is in custody. His name is Colt Gray. He is a 14-year-old student here at the school," Hosey said on Wednesday.

Hosey added that Gray would face charges of murder and be tried and handled as an adult.

Earlier today, at least four people were reported dead and some 30 others injured in a shooting at Apalachee High School in Georgia.

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US Did Not Foresee All Difficulties Associated With Move to Sentinel Missile - Air Force

WASHINGTON, September 5 (Sputnik) - The United States underestimated the complexity of the process of modernizing its ground-based nuclear forces, but is already working to restructure the Sentinel program and make it cheaper to implement, US Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James Slife said during a conference hosted by Defense News.

"The missile [Sentinel] itself is only a small piece of that puzzle, we underestimated the

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complexity of it, we underestimated the complexity of it because we only do it roughly every 75 years or so," Slife said on Wednesday. "[We will] bring a lot of engineering focus on the ground infrastructure, and ultimately what that will enable us to do is restructure the program and change our design for the ground infrastructure to be simpler and more affordable."

Slife said the Sentinel will have all heavy copper cabling replaced with more advanced fiber optics to make it more affordable.

The Sentinel is a three-stage intercontinental ballistic missile intended to replace the aging US arsenal of Minuteman III ICBMs by 2038, with the missile itself originally expected to be adopted by the US military around 2030. The missile is expected to carry several W87-1 thermonuclear warheads with a blast yield of 475 kilotons each, and has a range of at least 9,000 miles or 15,000 kilometers, according to published sources.

However, the modified Sentinel program is now on track to cost $140.9 billion, an increase of 81% compared to a 2020 estimate, according to a recent official report.

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Obesity in US Armed Service Personnel Costing $1.35Bln Per Year - Think Tank Report

WASHINGTON, September 5 (Sputnik) - The soaring rates of obesity among serving personnel in the US armed forces are now costing more than $1.35 billion per year, a new report from the American Security Project (ASP) said.

"The United States Armed Forces face an unprecedented challenge as obesity rates across the services continue to rise," the report said on Wednesday. " As a result, the estimated cost of obesity in active-duty service members now exceeds $1.35 billion annually."

Because active-duty manpower is now at an all-time low, strategies such as loosening fitness standards, granting weight waivers, and retaining service members with obesity have been vital to ensure sufficient force strength, the ASP acknowledged.

However, the result has been an explosion in medical costs associated with overweight health conditions, "with direct care costs comprising $1.25 billion and productivity losses due to hospital stays costing an additional $99 million in 2023," the report said.

Military fitness programs have succeeded in reducing body weight by less than 1% in active-duty military populations, and none have been proven to maintain weight loss over time, the report admitted.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 5 (Sputnik) -

US SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIAN MEDIA OUTLETS

* US Attorney General Merrick Garland said on Wednesday that the United States is charging

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two employees of Russian media outlet RT with money laundering and Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) violation charges, amid a broader US government effort to address alleged election interference by Russia.
* The Treasury Department said in a statement that it has sanctioned ten individuals and two entities responsible for what it called attempts to influence the outcome of November US presidential election.
* The United States is imposing visa restrictions on Russia's Rossiya Segodnya news agency, RT and their subsidiaries, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.
* The United States has designated Rossiya Segodnya and its subsidiaries Sputnik and RIA Novosti as "foreign missions," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

SCHOOL SHOOTING IN US
* At least four people are reported dead and some 30 others injured in a shooting at the Apalachee High School in the US state of Georgia, US media reported on Wednesday.
* One suspect is in custody after a shooting at Apalachee High School in Barrow County, Georgia, the state's Bureau of Investigation said.

ATTACKS IN RUSSIA'S BORDER REGIONS
* Three people were killed and two more were injured in the village of Novaya Tavolzhanka in Russia's Belgorod Region as a result of Ukraine shelling, Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Wednesday.
* The security situation at the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant is potentially more prone to external influences and thus more dangerous, than that at the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant, ZNPP Director Yuri Chernichuk told Sputnik.
* The Russian military has eliminated more than 9,700 Ukrainian soldiers and 81 tanks during military operations in the border areas of the Kursk region, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

ZAPORIZHZHYA NPP
* The positions of Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the situation around the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant largely coincide, Rosatom CEO Alexey Likhachev said on Wednesday.
* The security situation at the ZNPP is unstable and fragile due to hostilities, International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said.
* The fire at the cooling systems facility of the ZNPP, on August 11 did not originate at the base of the plant's cooling tower and the ZNPP director promised to provide the IAEA with the results of this investigation, Grossi said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* Three people were killed and five others were injured due to Ukraine's strike on the Sokol market in Donetsk, Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) head Denis Pushilin said.
* Moscow warns that its red lines are not to be fooled with in the light of the possible US supplies of long-range missiles to Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.
* Russia's army group South has eliminated up to 670 Ukrainian soldiers over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

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RUSSIA-MALAYSIA TALKS

* Trade between Russia and Malaysia does not satisfy Moscow, the possibilities of the two countries are much wider, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday.

* Malaysia expects to intensify cooperation with Russia in all areas, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said.

* Ibrahim said that he had accepted Putin's invitation to attend the BRICS summit that will be held in the city of Kazan next month.

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Fourteen Out of 18 Paragraphs in Gaza Ceasefire Deal Finalized – Senior US Official

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) – The Gaza ceasefire deal which is being negotiated at the moment has a total of 18 paragraphs and the parties have already finalized 14 of them, a senior Biden administration official said on Wednesday.

"The [ceasefire] deal has 18 total paragraphs, 14 of those paragraphs are finished," the official said during a press briefing. "Basically, 90% of this deal has been agreed, and it's been agreed on terms that even Hamas had in their own proposal."

According to the official, the issues of Israel's presence in the Philadelphi corridor on the border between Gaza and Egypt as well as the exchange of prisoners remain in dispute.

On Monday, Netanyahu said that Israel needed to maintain a military presence in the Philadelphi Corridor on the Egypt–Gaza border. In his opinion, reaching military aims as well as the release of hostages are possible only under this condition.

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Senior US Official Claims Hamas Threatening to Execute More Hostages

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - A senior Biden administration official said on Wednesday that the Palestinian movement Hamas has threatened to execute additional Israeli hostages it holds in the Gaza Strip.

"Hamas is threatening to execute more hostages," the official said.

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UN Says No Comment on Sanctions Against Russian Media, Citing Bilateral Relations

UNITED NATIONS, September 4 (Sputnik) - The United Nations has no comment on the latest sanctions against Russian media groups Russia Today and Rossiya Segodnya, considering it a matter of bilateral relations, UN Spokesman Farhan Haq told Sputnik on Wednesday.

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"We don't comment on bilateral relations as a rule. These are not UN sanctions," Haq said.

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Hamas threatening to execute more hostages - senior us administration official

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Fourteen out of 18 paragraphs in gaza ceasefire proposal finalized, 90% of deal has been agreed - senior us administration official

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UPDATE - Oil Prices Hit 9-Month Low as OPEC+ Maintains Suspense Over Output

(Updates with crude settlement prices in paragraphs 2-4)
NEW YORK, September 4 (Sputnik) - Oil prices hit nine-month lows Wednesday as producer alliance OPEC+ maintained suspense on whether it would raise output by next month despite global demand for energy appearing weak in the short term.
US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled at $69.20 per barrel - down $1.14 cents, or 1.6%, to add to Tuesday's tumble of 4.7%, which was its worst one-day fall since November 15.
Wednesday's session low of $68.97 for WTI also marked a bottom not seen for the US crude benchmark since a December trough of $67.71.
UK-origin Brent crude settled at $72.70 per barrel - down $1.05, or 1.4%, to widen Tuesday's drop of 4.9% - in what also amounted to be the worst one-day loss since November 15. Like WTI, Wednesday's session low of $72.64 for Brent marked a bottom not seen by the global crude benchmark since December.
The odds of an OPEC+ output increase have led to "people thinking that [crude prices going] forward are going to fall with huge stock builds," Scott Shelton, crude futures broker at ICAP in Durham, North Carolina, said in an email to the company's clients, shared with Sputnik.
The 23-nation OPEC+ alliance - which consists of the Saudi-led 13-member Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and 10 independent oil producing nations steered by Russia - are slated to raise output by 180,000 barrels per day in October.
The production expansion is part of a plan to unwind the alliance's most recent layer of output cuts totaling 2.2 million barrels per day. Weak demand for energy in some of the world's most high-profile growth areas has led to doubts on whether OPEC+ would go ahead with those plans.
A Reuters report on Wednesday said that market volatility from production shutdowns in Libya, along with questionable Chinese and US demand, have raised concerns about OPEC+'s production. At least one source in the report said a delay in OPEC+'s decision looked "highly possible."

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While crude prices haven't even finished a week of September's trading, losses for the month have already exceeded the August tally. WTI is down more than 6%, above last month's 5.8% drop. Brent has slumped more than 8%, way above the previous month's 2.5%.

This week's slump began "first and foremost [with] weak global manufacturing data starting in China and ending in the US, [which] showed stagflation with higher prices and industrial contraction", noted Phil Flynn, energy analyst at the Price Futures Group in Chicago.

China's economy has been stuttering for months. Prices of newly constructed homes fell 4.9% in July from a year earlier, the fastest drop in nine years, according to calculations by Reuters. Unemployment ticked up by 0.2% in July to 5.2%, with the 16-24 age group, particularly, hit by a 17% jobless rate — the highest since such data became available in December.

In the United States, demand for oil has weakened, with crude inventories falling by just 846,000 barrels during the week ended August 23, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said. That drop was versus expectations for a 2.8-million barrel deficit. In the prior week, consumption was 4.7 million barrels.

US distillate stockpiles did worse during the August 23 week, sliding by only 275,000 barrels against an expected draw of 815,000 barrels and the prior week's tumble of 3.3 million. Distillates are primarily processed into the diesel required by trucks, buses and ships, and also goes into making airplane fuel.

The EIA's next update on US oil inventories is due Thursday.

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un tells sputnik will not comment on new us sanctions on russian media including rossiya segodnya as it does not comment on bilateral relations

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Trump Says Hearts Are With Victims of School Shooting in US

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) –Former US President Donald Trump expressed on Wednesday that his thoughts are with the victims and those impacted by the school shooting in Georgia.

"Our hearts are with the victims and loved ones of those affected by the tragic event in Winder, GA," Trump said on Truth Social.

At least four people are reported dead and some 30 others injured in a shooting at the Apalachee High School in the US state of Georgia, according to media reports.

"These cherished children were taken from us far too soon by a sick and deranged monster," Trump said.

Georgia's Bureau of Investigation said that one suspect is in custody after the shooting.

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US Signs Science, Technology Cooperation Deal With Latvia - State Department

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The United States signed an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation with Latvia, the US State Department said on Wednesday.

"On September 4 in Riga, Latvia, the United States and the Republic of Latvia signed the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Latvia on Scientific and Technological Cooperation. The Agreement will expand cooperation in science and technology and deepen the vital partnership between the United States and Latvia," the State Department said in a statement.

The agreement notes a mutual pledge between the US and Latvia to facilitate international cooperation, a recognition of the value of open data for scientific research, and shared goals of preserving the norms and values of scientific cooperation, the statement said.

Through the agreement, the US and Latvia are demonstrating their conviction that elevating international cooperation on science and technology will serve to strengthen bonds of friendship and advance both countries' mutual goal to support scientific solutions to pressing global challenges, the statement said.

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Deputy US National Security Advisor Finer Meets With Zelenskyy in Kiev - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - Deputy US National Security Advisor Jon Finer met with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials in Kiev, Reuters reported on Wednesday.

Finer and Zelensky discussed Ukraine's priorities in its conflict with Russia through the remainder of US President Joe Biden's term, the report said, citing US officials.

The talks featured a 90-minute meeting with Ukrainian military officials to discuss the state of the conflict and the strategy moving forward. Finer was updated on Ukraine's military incursion in Russia's Kursk region as the Russian army continues to advance along the front.

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white house deputy national security adviser jon finer met zelenskyy in kiev on wednesday - reuters

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US Actions Target Employees for Illegal Activities, Not Russian Journalists - Miller

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The United States' recent sanctions on individuals at Russian media organizations are directed at employees who have been involved in illegal activities, not Russian journalists, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"The actions that we announced today were not with respect to Russian journalists, they were with respect to employees of these organizations who were engaged in the illegal activities that were identified by the Justice Department," Miller said during a press briefing.

The State Duma's foreign affairs committee head Leonid Slutsky has called the US sanctions on Russian media a vivid example of censorship and pressure on freedom of speech.

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US in Touch With Venezuelan Authorities About Detained Sailor as Appropriate - White House

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The United States has been in touch with the Venezuelan authorities as appropriate about the US service member who was detained last week, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"I can confirm a US service member was detained in Venezuela. My understanding is that the individual was on personal travel," Kirby said during a press briefing. "I can say we've been in touch with the Venezuelan authorities as appropriate for more information."

On August 30, a US Navy sailor was detained on or about August 30 by Venezuelan law enforcement while on personal travel to Venezuela. A US military representative said in a statement that the US Navy is looking into the incident.

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Blinken to Travel Haiti, Dominican Republic This Week - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to Haiti and the Dominican Republic this week to meet with senior officials and discuss a range of regional issues, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Brian Nichols said on Wednesday.

“Secretary Blinken [will] travel to Haiti and the Dominican Republic. During his trip, the Secretary will meet with Haitian and Dominican partners to discuss a range of priorities,” Nichols said during a press briefing.

Blinken will first travel to Port-au-Prince to meet with Haitian Prime Minister Garry Conille and with the transitional Presidential Council to discuss ways of fostering a secure and peaceful Haiti, Nichols said.

While in Haiti, Blinken is also expected to meet with the head of the Multinational Security

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Support Mission (MSS) and the Haitian National Police to underscore the United States' continued support, Nichols said.

From Haiti, Blinken will head to the Dominican Republic to meet with President Luis Abinader to discuss bilateral economic ties, regional security, and the 2025 Summit of the Americas scheduled to take place in the country, Nichols said.

The United States hopes to see the deployment of additional MSS force members to Haiti from several other countries besides Kenya take place in “the very near future” and expects the international community to make additional financial resources available to the United Nations Trust Fund for the MSS mission in Haiti, Nichols added.

In June, Conille welcomed the 400-strong contingent of Kenyan law enforcement officers that landed at the Port-au-Prince airport, marking the beginning of the MSS mission to the country.

Haiti has long been mired in a socio-economic and political crisis that escalated after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in 2021. The country has faced an unprecedented increase in the activities of criminal groups that engage in extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and control entire areas of the country, as well as foreign interference.

On February 29, gang violence erupted in Haiti’s capital Port-au-Prince. The gangs said their goal was to prevent the country’s prime minister from returning to Haiti and took control over parts of the city. The gangs also stormed Haiti's largest prison and freed an unspecified number of inmates. Following the events, the Haitian government declared a state of emergency in the capital region.

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White House on Ukraine Cabinet Reshuffle: US Not Advising on How to Manage Their Democracy

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) – The United States is not providing advice to its Ukrainian counterparts on how to manage their democracy amid a large cabinet shakeup, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"No, we're not offering advice on how to administer their democracy. That's up to President Zelenskyy. It's up to the Ukrainian people. These decisions are for President Zelenskyy … to make with respect to who’s supporting him and his cabinet," Kirby said during a press briefing.

The cabinet shuffle is not going to have an impact on the way Washington interacts with Kiev nor on the support it provides them, Kirby added.

On Tuesday, Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed his deputy head of office, Rostyslav Shurma. Resignations were also submitted by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Minister Ruslan Strilets, Justice Minister Denys Maliuska, Strategic Industries Minister Alexander Kamyshin, and Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Olha Stefanishyna. Deputy Prime Minister and Reintegration Minister Iryna Vereshchuk also announced her resignation.

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us actions taken today not aimed at russian journalists but rather employees of organizations engaged in illegal activities - state dept.

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US Confirms China Consul General Left Due to Routine Rotation, Not Expulsion - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The US government has confirmed that the departure of China's Consul General in New York was due to the end of a regular rotation, not due to expulsion, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"The Consul General was not expelled. Our understanding is that the Consul General reached the end of a regular scheduled rotation in August, and so rotated out of the position, but was not expelled," Miller said during a press briefing.

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US Designates Sputnik, RIA Novosti, RT as 'Foreign Missions' - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The United States has designated Rossiya Segodnya and its subsidiaries Sputnik and RIA Novosti as "foreign missions," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"The department has designated the operational presence of Rossiya Segodnya and its subsidiaries, Ria Novosti, RT, TV-Novosti, Ruptly, and Sputnik as foreign missions, as they are effectively controlled by the government of the Russian Federation," Miller told a briefing.

Miller added that the entities designated under the Foreign Missions Act must inform the Department of State about all personnel working in the United States and disclose real property they hold.

The State Duma's foreign affairs committee head, Leonid Slutsky, has called the US sanctions on Russian media a vivid example of censorship and pressure on the freedom of speech.

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US Targets 32 Internet Domains Allegedly Tied to Russian Government, Actors - Filing

(Updates with more details in paras 5-7)

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The United States is targeting 32 internet domains allegedly tied to the Russian government and state-sponsored actors for seizure, according to

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an affidavit filed in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on Wednesday.

"I make this affidavit in support of a warrant for the seizure of 32 internet domains (the 'SUBJECT DOMAINS') that have been used by the Russian government and Russian government-sponsored actors to engage in foreign malign influence campaigns colloquially referred to as 'Doppelganger,' in violation of US money laundering and criminal trademark laws," the filing said.

The filing alleges that the sites were used to covertly spread Russian government propaganda.

Earlier on Wednesday, US media reported that the White House and Justice Department will take steps to address alleged efforts by Russia to interfere in the United States' 2024 elections. The Kremlin has rejected such accusations and called them absurd.

The Russia-linked influence campaigns were allegedly aimed at reducing international support for Ukraine, bolstering pro-Russian policies and interests and influencing voters in United States and foreign elections, the US Justice Department said in a statement.

The campaigns allegedly involved "cybersquatting" on domain names, fabricating influences and fake profile, and promoting AI-generated false narratives on social media, the statement said.

The seizure is accompanied by the announcement of criminal charges against two RT employees, sanctions designations against ten individuals and two entities, and the designation of several Russian media organizations as foreign missions.

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US Imposes Visa Restrictions on Rossiya Segodnya, RT, Subsidiaries - Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) – The United States is imposing visa restrictions on Russia's Rossiya Segodnya news agency, RT and their subsidiaries, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday.

"The Department's actions include introducing a new visa restriction policy, Foreign Missions Act determinations of RT's parent company Rossiya Segodnya, and other subsidiaries RIA Novosti, RT, TV-Novosti, Sputnik and Ruptly, and announcing a Rewards for Justice offer," Blinken said in a statement.

Blinken accused the media outlets of "covert influence operations."

Earlier on Wednesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that it is not Russia's job to interfere in US elections and that the winners will be chosen by the American people.

In July, Peskov called accusations of Russian interference in US elections "absurd" and rejected them.

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US did not expel china's consul general in new york, official reached 'end of regularly schedule rotation' - state dept.

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US Sanctions 10 People, 2 Entities for Alleged Russian Influence on Elections - Treasury

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The US Department of the Treasury said in a statement on Wednesday that it has sanctioned ten individuals and two entities responsible for what it called attempts to "influence" the outcome of November's presidential elections.
"Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated ten individuals and two entities as part of a coordinated US government response to Moscow's malign influence efforts targeting the 2024 US presidential election," the statement said.

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us imposes visa restrictions on Rossiya Segodnya, subsidiaries including ria novosti, rt, tv-novosti, sputnik and ruptlty - blinken

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China's NY Consul General Expelled After Ex-Aide to Hochul Charged as Gov't Agent- Reports

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - China's consul general in New York has been expelled after a former aide for New York governors Kathy Hochul and Andrew Cuomo was charged with acting as an agent for the Chinese government, CNN reported, citing statements by Hochul.
"I have conveyed my desire to have the counsel general from the People's Republic of China and the New York mission expelled, and I've been informed that the counsel general is no longer in the New York mission," Hochul is quoted as saying in the report.
On Tuesday, US prosecutors charged Linda Sun, the former deputy chief of staff to New York governor Kathy Hochul, with acting as an alleged "undisclosed agent" of the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party in the United States.

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Canada's Neo-Democratic Party Terminates Agreement With Governing Liberals - Leader

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The leader of Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) Jagmeet Singh said on Wednesday that he had terminated the supply-and-confidence agreement that had bound his faction to the governing Liberals of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.
"Today I notified the Prime Minister that I've ripped off the supply-and-confidence agreement. Canadians are fighting a battle … for the future of the middle class. Justin Trudeau has proven

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again and again he will always cave to corporate greed. The Liberals have let people down. They don't deserve another chance," Singh said in a video via X.

The NDP leader said there was a greater battle ahead which would be to defeat the "threat" of a government led by the leader of the Conservative official opposition, Pierre Poilievre.

Singh said the Liberals are too weak and selfish to fight for people's needs and cannot change, while the NDP will protect Canadians from the massive cuts that would accompany a Conservative victory in the next elections.

In March 2022, the NDP and the Liberals signed a confidence-and-supply agreement in which the New Democrats pledged to support the Liberal government on confidence votes in exchange for commitments on legislation put forward by their party. The deal was notably made to ensure the survival of a liberal minority government following the 2021 elections.

Last week, Poilievre issued a letter directed at Singh in which he requested that he pull out from the agreement. In response, NDP House Leader Peter Julian said that leaving the deal was always on the table.

The next Canadian federal elections are scheduled to take place on or before October 20, 2025.

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At Least 4 People Killed, About 30 Injured in Shooting at Georgia High School - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - At least four people are reported dead and some 30 others injured in a shooting at the Apalachee High School in the US state of Georgia, CNN reported on Wednesday.

However, the exact number of injuries resulting from gunshots remains undetermined, the report said.

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US Targets 32 Internet Domains Allegedly Tied to Russian Government, Actors - Filing

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The United States is targeting 32 internet domains allegedly tied to the Russian government and state-sponsored actors for seizure, according to an affidavit filed in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on Wednesday.

"I make this affidavit in support of a warrant for the seizure of 32 internet domains (the 'SUBJECT DOMAINS') that have been used by the Russian government and Russian government-sponsored actors to engage in foreign malign influence campaigns colloquially referred to as 'Doppelganger,' in violation of US money laundering and criminal trademark laws," the filing said.

The filing alleges that the sites were used to covertly spread Russian government propaganda.

Earlier on Wednesday, US media reported that the White House and Justice Department will take steps to address alleged efforts by Russia to interfere in the United States' 2024 elections.

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The Kremlin has rejected such accusations and called them absurd.

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Oil Prices Hit 9-Month Low as OPEC+ Maintains Suspense Over Output

NEW YORK, September 4 (Sputnik) - Oil prices hit nine-month lows Wednesday as producer alliance OPEC+ maintained suspense on whether it would raise output by next month despite global demand for energy appearing weak in the short-term.

With two hours to settlement, US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was at $69.69 per barrel - down 65 cents, or 0.9%, to extend Tuesday's tumble of 4.7%, which marked its worst one-day fall since November 15.

Wednesday's session low of $69.19 for WTI also marked a bottom not seen for the US crude benchmark since a December trough of $67.71.

UK-origin Brent crude was at $73.15 per barrel - down 60 cents, or 0.8%, to widen Tuesday's drop of 4.9% - in what amounted to be the worst one-day loss since November 15. Wednesday's session low of $72.64 also marked a bottom not seen by the global crude benchmark since December.

The odds of an OPEC+ output increase have led to "people thinking that [crude prices going] forward are going to fall with huge stock builds," Scott Shelton, crude futures broker at ICAP in Durham, North Carolina, said in an email to the company's clients, shared with Sputnik.

The 23-nation OPEC+ alliance - which consists of the Saudi-led 13-member Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and 10 independent oil producing nations steered by Russia - are slated to raise output by 180,000 barrels per day in October.

The production expansion is a part of a plan to unwind the alliance's most recent layer of output cuts totaling 2.2 million barrels per day. Weak demand for energy in some of the world's most high-profile growth areas has led to doubts on whether OPEC+ would go ahead with those plans.

A Reuters report on Wednesday said that market volatility from production shutdowns in Libya, along with questionable Chinese and US demand, have raised concerns about OPEC+'s production. At least one source in the report said a delay in OPEC+'s decision looked "highly possible."

While crude prices haven't even finished a week of September's trading, losses for the month have already exceeded the August tally. WTI is down 5.2%, closing in on last month's 5.8% drop. Brent has slumped 6.9%, way above the previous month's 2.5%.

This week's slump began "first and foremost [with] weak global manufacturing data starting in China and ending in the US, [which] showed stagflation with higher prices and industrial contraction", noted Phil Flynn, energy analyst at the Price Futures Group in Chicago.

China's economy has been stuttering for months. Prices of newly-constructed homes fell 4.9% in July from a year earlier, the fastest drop in nine years, according to calculations by Reuters. Unemployment ticked up by 0.2% in July to 5.2%, with the 16-24 age group, particularly, hit by a 17% jobless rate — the highest since such data became available in December.

In the United States, demand for oil has weakened, with crude inventories falling by just

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846,000 barrels during the week ended August 23, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said. That drop was versus expectations for a 2.8-million barrel deficit. In the prior week, consumption was 4.7 million barrels.

US distillate stockpiles did worse during the August 23 week, sliding by only 275,000 barrels against an expected draw of 815,000 barrels and the prior week's tumble of 3.3 million. Distillates are primarily processed into the diesel required by trucks, buses and ships, and also goes into making airplane fuel.

The EIA's next update on US oil inventories is due Thursday.

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Biden Briefed on 'Tragic' Shooting at High School in US State of Georgia - White House

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden was briefed on the "tragic shooting" at a high school in the US state of Georgia, the White House said on Wednesday.

"President Biden has been briefed by his Homeland Security Advisor, Liz Sherwood-Randall, on the tragic shooting at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia and his administration will continue coordinating with federal, state, and local officials as we receive more information," the statement said.

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Suspect in Custody After Apalachee High School Shooting - Georgia Bureau of Investigation

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - One suspect is in custody after a shooting at Apalachee High School in Barrow County, Georgia, the state's Bureau of Investigation said.

"We have agents on site assisting local, state and federal law enforcement [with] the investigation. One suspect in custody," the Georgia Bureau of Investigation said via the social media platform X.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation urges civilians to steer clear of the area while authorities continue to investigate the incident.

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Hospital in US State of Georgia Receiving Gunshot Victims After School Shooting - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - A hospital in Barrow County, Georgia, is treating patients who sustained gunshot wounds at high school in Apalachee, CNN reported on Wednesday.

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According to a separate report, the school shooting resulted in two fatalities and four injuries.

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Biden Admin. Bet on Intel Hits Bump as Chipmaker Wallows in Losses - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration's hopes to spark a renaissance in US chipmaking may have hit a wall with financial troubles at Intel Corp, the company integral to the plan, Bloomberg said in a report Wednesday.

Intel is to receive $8.5 billion in grants and $11 billion in loans from the 2022 Chips and Science Act if it meets key milestones that look increasingly difficult to achieve, given the company's worsening finances, the report said.

Intel is facing a sales slump worse than anticipated and is bleeding cash, forcing its board of directors to consider drastic actions such as splitting its manufacturing division or paring back global expansion plans, the report said.

These could complicate the chipmaker's quest for government funding, at a time when it needs it most, Bloomberg added.

The rules of the Chips Act state that companies can only receive taxpayer dollars when they deliver on promised expansion of production.

The US government is counting on Intel to reach its tech policy goals, which include establishing a secure supply of cutting-edge chips for its military and making a fifth of the world's advanced processors by 2030.

Intel's odds of delivering on those promises slumped after it posted not just a surprise loss but also delivered a dismal outlook in quarterly earnings announced on August 1. Its shares suffered the worst rout in decades and its debt was downgraded to just a few notches above junk level after it slashed roughly 15,000 jobs.

While some chipmakers like Taiwan's TSMC have grown over the years to offer technology widely regarded as the world's best, Intel has struggled to build on its pioneering status and five-decade legacy.

Intel has invited major end-users of its products such as Broadcom, MediaTek and Microsoft to use its factories, but none have begun doing so.

US chipmakers Nvidia and Advanced Micro Devices have also been asked to consider manufacturing at Intel's sprawling Ohio site and turn it into the world's largest factory for semiconductors. Both have not taken the bait.

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US Looking Into Reports of Navy Sailor Detained in Venezuela - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department is aware of media reports about the detainment of a US sailor in Venezuela and is looking into the incident, a

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spokesperson told Sputnik on Wednesday.
"We are aware of reports that US Navy Sailor was detained on or about August 30, 2024, by Venezuelan law enforcement authorities while on personal travel to Venezuela. The US Navy is looking into this and working closely with the State Department," the spokesperson said in a statement.

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Apalachee High School Placed on Lockdown After Reports of Gunfire - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - Apalachee High School in the US state of Georgia has been placed on lockdown after reports of gunfire, Fox 5 reported on Wednesday.
School officials announced the school was on lockdown in response to reports of gunfire, the report said.
Dozens of law enforcement officers arrived at the school and emergency responders were treating individuals there, with one person being airlifted to a hospital.

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US Senior Defense Official to Attend Military Forum in China in September – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia Michael Chase will attend an annual military forum in Beijing next week, a Pentagon spokesperson told Sputnik on Wednesday.
"[W]e can confirm that Deputy Assistant Secretary Chase is expected to attend this month's Xiangshan Forum," the spokesperson said in a statement.
The forum is scheduled to take place in Beijing between September 12-14 with delegations from more than 90 countries planning to attend the most important military forum in China, according to the organizers.
In 2023, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China Chad Sbragia represented the United States at the Xiangshan Forum along with political science professor Fiona Cunningham.

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Odds for US Interest Rate Cut of 50 Basis Points Grow as Jobs Openings Tumble - Analysts

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - Prospects for a Federal Reserve interest rate cut of 50 basis points are growing after the latest data on US job openings underwhelmed expectations, heightening fears of a labor market retrenchment, analysts said.
The Fed will decide on September 18 if it should cut interest rates for the first time in four years. The odds for a half-percentage point rate reduction was higher than before, after the Job

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Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) report for July showed the smallest opportunities in three years amid rising layoffs, analysts said.

"Short-term US interest rate futures underline [that] a … 50-bps rate cut in September is now priced as more likely than a 25-bps cut," analysts at markets information portal Financial Juice said in a post Wednesday.

Investing.com's Fed Rate Monitor Tool also showed the odds for a 50-basis point rate cut having risen to 48% after the release of the JOLTS report, from 42% a day before and 36% a week earlier.

Wall Street economists, polled by US media, had expected 8.1 million job openings in July, little changed from June's 8.184 million.

The JOLTS report from the Labor Department instead showed job openings falling to the lowest since early 2021, while worker cullings rose — a sign of a weaker employment market overall.

Indeed, economists at the Bank of Montreal had braced for grim news ahead of the JOLTS report, warning that a lower ratio of job openings to unemployed seekers and a drop in hiring rates "could highlight potential vulnerabilities in the labor market".

The JOLTS report came a week after the Labor Department revised down by 818,000 the jobs growth it originally reported for the 12 months to March, citing a "statistical error." The revision put renewed focus on the labor market, which until a few months ago had been hailed as the juggernaut of the US economic recovery.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell all but confirmed that an interest rate cut was on the cards when he told the central bank's highly-anticipated annual banking symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, last month that a directional change was imminent after two years of hikes that had taken rates to two-decade highs.

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta President Raphael Bostic also told a live-streamed banking event on Wednesday that recent US inflation reports have bolstered his "confidence [that] inflation is likely on a sustainable path back to 2%."

That Fed target of 2% per year for inflation is what led to interest rates spiraling since 2022. Prior to the coronavirus outbreak of 2020, inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), remained below 2% per year for a decade. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the CPI soared to a four-decade high of 9.1% per year by June 2020. As of July this year, it had slowed to 2.9% per year.

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IMF To Start Virtual Talks With Russia on Sept.16 Before In-Person Meetings- Statement

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) will start virtual talks with the Russian authorities on September 16 before traveling to Russia for in-person meetings, Annette Kyobe, the IMF Resident Representative for the Russian Federation, said in a statement obtained by Sputnik.

"As part of Russia's upcoming Article IV consultation, an IMF staff team will hold bilateral discussions with the Russian authorities. The team will hold virtual discussions from September 16 onwards and will then travel to the country for in-person meetings," Kyobe said.

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As is the case with Article IV consultations, the IMF staff team will discuss the country's economic developments and policies, she added.

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Turkish Cypriot Leader Hopes Turkey's BRICS Accession Successful, Will Benefit N. Cyprus

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar told Sputnik he is hopeful that the Turkish membership in BRICS will be successful and also benefit the Turkish Cypriots.

Turkey has officially applied for full membership in BRICS, Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov said on Wednesday.

"This is a bloc of countries, I think all powerful countries, and Turkey has good connection with them," Tatar said. "I very much hope that it is successful. If it's successful, obviously it would reflect positively on Turkish Cypriots."

Tatar also expressed belief that since BRICS member nations are all outside the European Union, Northern Cyprus will get "a better chance to promote our name."

BRICS was established in 2009 as a cooperation platform for the largest emerging economies, uniting Brazil, Russia, India and China. South Africa joined the group in 2010. On January 1, 2024, BRICS expanded its membership to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

Cyprus has been de facto divided into the southern Greek and the northern Turkish sections since 1974. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was declared in 1983 with Ankara's backing. It is recognized only by Turkey.

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Majority of US Voters Believe Harris Shares Responsibility for Biden's Policies - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - A majority of likely voters in the United States believe that Vice President Kamala Harris shares responsibility for President Joe Biden's policies, a new Rasmussen Reports poll revealed on Wednesday.

Nearly one-third of voters, 32%, believe that Harris deserves a lot of blame for the "failure" of some Biden policies and another 23% believe Harris deserves some of the blame for Biden's policies, the poll report said.

One-quarter of voters, 25%, believe that Harris does not deserve much blame for Biden's policies and 15% believe she deserves none of the blame, the poll report said.

Harris replaced Biden as the Democratic Party's 2024 presidential nominee after the latter withdrew from the race following a poor debate performance against Republican nominee Donald Trump.

The poll surveyed 1,134 likely US voters on August 28-29 and September 1. The poll has a

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margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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Biden Administration Plans to Accuse Russia of Interfering in 2024 US Elections - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is expected to accuse Russia of attempting to interfere with 2024 elections in the United States, CNN reported on Wednesday.
The White House is set to condemn the alleged interference later on Wednesday, the report said, citing six sources familiar with the matter.
The US Justice Department will also announce law enforcement measures aimed at combating the alleged interference, the report said.
The announcement will focus on Russian media network RT, which is viewed as a key piece of the alleged election interference effort, the report added.
Earlier on Wednesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that it is not Russia's job to interfere in US elections and that the winners will be chosen by the American people.
In July, Peskov called accusations of Russian interference in US elections "absurd" and rejected them.

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Bank of Canada Reduces Overnight Rate to 4.25 % in Third Consecutive Cut - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) – The Bank of Canada on Wednesday cut its overnight interest rate by 25 basis points for the third consecutive time since June, bringing it down to 4.25%.
"The Bank of Canada today reduced its target for the overnight rate to 4¼%, with the Bank Rate at 4½% and the deposit rate at 4¼%. The Bank is continuing its policy of balance sheet normalization," the bank said in a statement.
The decision was based on two considerations, Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem said in statement, the first being that headline and core inflation have continued to ease as expected.
Second, as inflation continues to get close to the desired target of 2%, the Bank wants to see economic growth pick up to absorb "slack" in the economy to help inflation return to a sustainable level, Macklem added.
"If inflation continues to ease broadly in line with our July forecast, it is reasonable to expect further cuts in our policy rate. We will continue to assess the opposing forces on inflation and take our monetary policy decisions one at a time," the governor said.
The Bank of Canada will announce its next overnight interest rate decision on October 23, 2024.

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Harris, Trump Neck-To-Neck in Key Battleground States - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - Democrat Kamala Harris and her Republican challenger Donald Trump are tied almost neck-to-neck in at least three battleground states in the 2024 presidential election, a CNN poll showed on Wednesday.

Vice President Harris and former president Trump have likely split voters almost evenly in Georgia and Nevada, as well as in Pennsylvania — the state with the largest electoral prize in the November 5 election.

Elsewhere, in three other key states, Harris holds an advantage in Wisconsin and Michigan, while Trump has the edge in Arizona, according to the poll.

More importantly, an average of 15% of likely voters have not yet firmly decided between Harris and Trump, suggesting a sizable share could shift their views as the race for the White House enters the final nine weeks of campaigning.

Voters appear to trust Harris more on matters of abortion and reproductive rights — issues key to women, who are a major constituency in the election — while Trump won higher approval on how he might likely handle immigration and the economy, the poll showed.

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Demand for US Space Capabilities 'Outpaces' Available Resources – Lt. Gen. Guetlein

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) – United States Vice Chief for Space Operations Lt. Gen. Michael Guetlein said on Wednesday that current demand for US space capabilities "outpaces" available resources.

"We must protect and defend freedom of exploration, freedom of navigation and freedom of action in space. Your Space Force is doing just that, but the demand for our capabilities and our services far outpaces the resources we currently have available," Guetlein said during his opening remarks at the 8th Annual Defense News Conference.

The US must direct more investments toward space, the general said, as he warned that failing to do so could have devastating consequences for everything Americans "hold dear."

Guetlein said the public needs to understand that nowadays, the world is dependent on space for elements of their daily life. However, the area is now contested and potential US "adversaries" such as Russia and China allegedly intend to deny it its right to use space for peaceful or defensive purposes.

"The same competitors and adversaries that have confronted us for years on land, at sea and in the air, are now contesting us in space and the last pristine environment is at risk ... If we fail to counter them, our adversaries will control space, which will enhance their ability to wage war, and the world as we know it will change dramatically," Guetlein said.

The US general notably said that China currently possesses over 1,000 satellites in orbit, half of which are said to be able to track and target US joint and coalition forces. Guetlein also

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addressed rumors that Russia might be developing anti-satellite capabilities in space, which could potentially carry nuclear weapons.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that Moscow has always been categorically opposed to deploying nuclear weapons in space. Russia's activities in space are no different from those of other countries, including the US, the president stressed. The allegations represent a ploy to prompt negotiations on the issue with terms that benefit the US, Putin said.

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US Trade Deficit At 2-Year High On Imports Surge That Economists Blame On Tariffs Fear -

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) - The US trade deficit hit a two-year high in July, growing by almost $68 billion to reach $78.8 billion, on a surge in imports that economists said could be due to advance buying by businesses hoping to avoid a surge in tariffs after the 2024 election.

"The goods and services deficit was $78.8 billion in July, up $5.8 billion from $73.0 billion in June, revised," the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), a unit within the Commerce Department, said in a news release.

Historical data from the BEA database showed the deficit at the highest since July 2022. During the latest month in review, imports grew 2.1% to $345.39 billion versus exports that expanded 0.5% to $266.6 billion — resulting in the deficit of $78.8 billion.

Economists said importers could be racking up orders ahead of November's election, where Republican candidate and former president Donald Trump has threatened to raise tariffs on most Chinese goods if he returns to the White House.

While Trump's Democrat rival, incumbent Vice President Kamala Harris, has made no specific cautions of such, importers could be hedging themselves either way, said economists.

"Trump is in favor of using tariffs on goods imported into the US," economist Greg Michalowski observed in a post made on the ForexLive forum. "Even the Dems are less opposed to tariffs versus the past. So, buy imports early, to avoid increased cost … if and when [higher] tariffs are imposed on imports."

The US merchandise-trade deficit with China rose to $27.2 billion in July, the largest since September 2022, BEA historical data showed. The value of US goods sold to China jumped by 11.3% to the highest since October 2022.

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Over 189,000 Children in Gaza Vaccinated Against Polio in First Phase of Campaign - UNICEF

UNITED NATIONS, September 4 (Sputnik) - More than 189,000 children have been vaccinated against polio in Gaza as part of the first round of the vaccination campaign, UNICEF regional director for the Middle East and North Africa Adele Khodr said on Wednesday.

"The first phase of the campaign, which ran from 1-3 September, reached more than 189,000

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children under 10 years old in the central area of the Gaza Strip, surpassing its initial target. Approximately 513 teams were deployed across the area," Khodr said in a statement.

In total, the campaign in Gaza aims to vaccinate 640,000 children under 10 years of age.

Despite the dire conditions related the ongoing conflict, families have turned out in high numbers to the vaccination sites, according to the statement.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said that polio vaccination in the Gaza Strip would take place from September 1-12. It will be carried out in the city of Deir al Balah from September 1-4, in Khan Yunis and Rafah from September 5-8, and in Gaza City and the northern part of the Gaza Strip from September 9-12.

In July, the Gaza Health Ministry declared the enclave a polio epidemic area, citing the months-long fighting as the main reason for the spread of the disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) called for a humanitarian pause in the enclave to allow for vaccination.

Palestinian movement Hamas said it supported the humanitarian pause. Israel confirmed on Saturday that it would open a humanitarian corridor for medical personnel and designate safe areas for administering the vaccines during a short period.

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US Steel Warns Future of Headquarters, Thousands of Jobs at Risk Without Nippon Deal

WASHINGTON, September 4 (Sputnik) – US Steel could be forced to close some of its steel mills and relocate its Pittsburgh headquarters if its $14.1 billion acquisition by Nippon Steel falls through, the company warned in a statement on Wednesday.

"Without the Nippon Steel transaction, U. S. Steel will largely pivot away from its blast furnace facilities, putting thousands of good-paying union jobs at risk, negatively impacting numerous communities across the locations where its facilities exist, and depriving the American steel industry of an opportunity to better compete on the global stage," the statement said. "The lack of a deal with Nippon Steel raises serious questions about U. S. Steel remaining headquartered in Pittsburgh."

The statement said US Steel employees will hold a rally later today at the Pittsburgh headquarters today in support of the Nippon Steel transaction.

CEO David Burritt earlier told the Wall Street Journal that Nippon Steel's promised $2.7 billion investment in its older mills was critical to maintain the company's competitiveness and jobs. Nippon has also committed not to lay off hourly workers through 2026.

If the deal fell through, US Steel would continue to move production to less capital-intensive operations in an expanded Arkansas mill that relied on melted scrap rather than iron ore, Burritt added. It would also close its last steelmaking operation in Pittsburgh and likely move its headquarters south.

Burritt's remarks came as Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris joined US President Biden and Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump in opposing the deal. She said Monday that US Steel should remain American-owned and operated.

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