

9/9/24 Monday

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Who is to Blame for the US Afghanistan Withdrawal Failure?

On Sunday, House Republicans issued a report on the final months of the US occupation of Afghanistan, including its disastrous withdrawal. It put most of the blame on US President Joe Biden. Democrats have responded by placing the onus on former President Donald Trump, who signed the peace deal with the Taliban.

While it is impossible to know how the Afghanistan withdrawal would have gone during a Trump administration, there is no doubt that Biden made decisions out of arrogance and with a focus on optics over substance, leading to a humiliating defeat for America and its allies. It is fair to question if the Trump plan was feasible, but to throw it away and then blame it for your failures, as the Biden administration is doing, does not hold water. It defies logic to blame a plan you didn't use.

Trump's [deal with the Taliban](#) had conditions. It required that the Taliban stop attacking US forces. They did. It required that it start negotiations with the US-backed Afghan government, and they did engage in on-and-off talks. It also, crucially, required that they do not allow terrorist groups inside of Afghanistan, specifically mentioning Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

In exchange, the United States would remove all of its forces by May 2021, would review and potentially lift US sanctions on members of the Taliban and recommend that the UN's sanctions of the Taliban be reviewed and potentially removed.

Trump's claim that he would have left troops in Bagram base is likely false, that is not in the text of the agreement. However, it would have allowed 8,600 troops to stay in the country until talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban started.

While the document stressed that the US still does not recognize the Taliban as a state, it notes that following the US withdrawal, the US would "seek economic cooperation for reconstruction with the new-post settlement Afghan Islamic government" that was to be birthed through the talks with the Afghan government.

"All of that went away, and yet those conditions were violated tremendously. And, Biden undertook the extraction that he did and in the way that he did," argued former US State Department foreign policy analyst Michael Maloof on [Sputnik's Political Misfits](#). "It's something that's not really new because Biden, even when he was vice president, during the Obama administration, wanted to get out of Afghanistan. He didn't care how... this [was a] failure of policy."

The plan would never come to fruition. As early as January, weeks after taking office, [Biden was already signaling](#) that he may keep troops past the May 1 deadline. Days later, the Taliban responded, moving its commanders and soldiers back into combat positions.

"Senior commanders and governors have been directed to return to their positions and attend special sessions and discussions to chalk out a future strategy," a Taliban regional commander [told US media](#) at the time.

Media reports framed it as a decision Biden was making on his own, consulting with his advisers but not the government of Afghanistan and certainly not the Taliban. In April, Biden [announced his decision](#): US Troops would instead begin their final withdrawal from Afghanistan, with the final troops leaving on the symbolically significant date of September 11.

The Taliban said publicly that the plan was unacceptable to them, and gave the US two weeks from the May 1 deadline to pull out completely. There are no reports of the Biden administration engaging in direct talks with the Taliban about extending the deal, by all appearances, it seems to have been a unilateral decision by the Biden administration. The first reports of direct negotiations between Biden officials and the Taliban came on August 10, just five days before the group took over the Presidential Palace in Kabul. The Taliban would end up kicking the US out on August 30, as refugees hung to the wings of the final plane leaving Kabul.

Biden also imposed new restrictions on the Afghan government, requiring that any deal they made with the Taliban [protect the rights](#) of women and girls in Afghanistan. A noble cause to be sure, but not one that the Afghan government, which was already losing its fight against the Taliban, was in a position to demand.

At every turn, Biden could have argued that the Taliban violated the Trump agreement and sent more troops in, even if they were just there to secure the area as allies and equipment were moved out and not to prop up the failing Afghan government. The Taliban no longer saw itself constrained by the Trump deal –by May they [had resumed](#) their attacks on US soldiers. Biden clearly didn't see himself constrained by it because he's the one who broke it, yet it is Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris who are pointing to the deal as the reason for their failure.

"We are in the midst with this government today of a very Orwellian experience, of '1984,'" Maloof said. "What I'm referring to specifically is double speak, doublethink. Don't believe what you see. Don't believe what you hear. Believe us."

Today, the Taliban is in complete control of Afghanistan. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said that the repressive conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan are "unparalleled in today's world." The US has no leverage over who the Taliban does –or doesn't– allow in its country, and they are better armed than they have ever been, having seized valuable equipment left behind, estimated to be worth more than \$7 billion. Last month the Taliban held a parade showing off abandoned US and Soviet-era equipment, including US helicopters, surface-to-air missiles, and armored personnel carriers.

"We're living off a principle that while they don't adhere to our democratic notion, we're not going to have anything to do with them. Well, that doesn't allow us to at least have... some influence over time. And, when we at least have a presence, we can affect some change," explained Maloof. "The Chinese and Russians have somehow figured out how to deal with them and still want to adhere to certain principles, and I think that over time, they'll prevail with some of their views on policy. But we're not there because we don't want to be players. We just picked up our marbles and went home."

Trump and Harris will have the opportunity to lay out their arguments on who screwed up Afghanistan on Tuesday, when the two will hold their first debate ahead of November's presidential elections.

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Canada's 30-Day Consultation on Surtax on Chinese Batteries, Semiconductors, Solar Products, Critical Minerals to Begin on Sept. 10 - Finance Ministry

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UPDATE - US to Announce Additional Sanctions on Iran Today, Including on Iran Air - Blinken

(Updates with details in paras 3-4, background in paras 5-8)

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - The United States will announce new sanctions against Iran later today, including on the country's national airline Iran Air, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday during a press conference in London alongside UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy.

"The United States will be announcing further sanctions on Iran later today, including additional measures on Iran Air. We expect allies and partners to be announcing their own measures on Iran as well," Blinken said.

Blinken said the US move comes after Washington confirmed reports that Russia had received shipments of ballistic missiles from Iran and that Moscow would use these weapons in the coming weeks.

He also said Russia was sharing technology with Iran, including on nuclear issues.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry dismissed on Monday US media reports about Iran allegedly supplying Russia with weapons.

Last week, CNN reported, citing sources, that Iran allegedly transferred short-range ballistic missiles to Russia for use in military operations in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, commenting on the CNN report, said that such information does not always correspond to reality.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani previously said that any attempts to link the Russia-Iran cooperation with the Ukrainian conflict was made solely for the purpose of justifying the West's continued supply of weapons to Kiev.

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IDF's Killing Of American Citizen in West Bank Unacceptable – Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) – The killing of an American citizen by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the West Bank is not acceptable, and no one should be shot and killed for attending a protest, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a press conference in London on Tuesday.

"The killing was both unprovoked and unjustified. No one should be shot and killed for attending a protest," Blinken told reporters when asked about the killing of US citizen Aysenur Ezgi Eygi in

the West Bank.

Blinken was responding to a reporter's question about an IDF investigation that concluded on Tuesday that it was "highly likely" that Eygi was hit "indirectly and unintentionally" by Israeli fire.

On Friday Aysenur Ezgi Eygi, an human rights activist who is a dual Us and Turkish citizen, was killed by Israeli troops during demonstrations in the West Bank. The Turkish Foreign Ministry accused Israel of killing its citizen. The United Nations called for an investigation into Eygi's death.

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Blinken to Meet Zelenskyy in Ukraine, Hold Talks in Poland This Week - State Department

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Ukraine on Wednesday for talks with Volodymyr Zelenskyy before heading to Poland on Thursday for talks with senior Polish officials, the State Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

"On September 11, Secretary Blinken will travel to Ukraine with UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy, where they will meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and senior Ukrainian government officials to discuss continued support for Ukraine's defense against Russia's aggression and how to ensure Ukraine can thrive militarily, economically, and democratically in the long term," the release said.

It added that Blinken will then travel to Poland on Thursday for talks with senior Polish government officials on a range of bilateral issues, including Ukraine and bilateral defense and energy cooperation.

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BLINKEN SAYS IDF'S KILLING OF AMERICAN CITIZEN IN THE WEST BANK IS NOT ACCEPTABLE, no one should be shot and killed for attending protest

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RPT - PREVIEW - Trump, Harris to Hold First 2024 US Presidential Debate Since Biden Dropped Out

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris will debate each other for the first time on Tuesday as their parties' respective nominees for president in the 2024 election.

The candidates will take the stage at 9:00 p.m. ET (4:00 a.m. GMT) in Philadelphia for the debate organized by ABC. Trump and Harris have not officially agreed on further debates ahead of Election Day on November 5.

The debate is the first between Trump and Harris, although Trump previously debated President Joe Biden in June. Biden's poor performance in the debate sparked criticism from fellow Democrats that led to his decision to drop out of the race and endorse Harris as his replacement.

Like the debate between Biden and Trump, the debate on Tuesday will not include a studio audience. The candidates will also have their microphones muted when they are not permitted to speak.

The Harris campaign said on Monday that an "extreme and unhinged" Trump is increasing dangerous threats of revenge and retribution ahead of the debate. Trump is openly talking about how he will target political enemies and "rule as a dictator," the campaign said.

Trump has said that Harris is not the best possible Democratic candidate and that she would be a worse leader than Biden. Trump has repeatedly referred to Harris as "Comrade Kamala" in speeches and social media posts.

Trump has also criticized ABC as a "fake news" organization despite agreeing to a debate on the network. Harris would not agree to a Fox News debate on September 4.

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Musk Says US Going Bankrupt 'Extremely Quickly'

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - US billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk believes that the United States is going bankrupt 'extremely quickly.'

"America is going bankrupt extremely quickly," Musk said during a discussion on the All-In Podcast on Monday.

The interest payments on the US national debt have exceeded the US defense budget, Musk said, noting that the United States owes over a trillion dollars a year just in interest.

The US national debt currently stands at about \$35 trillion, according to the US Treasury Department.

The United States has been in a state of chronic excess of expenditures over income for almost a century; the last time there was a long period of surplus was from 1920 to 1930. The only US leader after World War II with a budget surplus was Harry Truman (1946-1950), and the largest government spending surplus was under Ronald Reagan at \$1.34 trillion. The US finances such a gigantic budget deficit from the national debt, which in July for the first time exceeded the \$35 trillion mark, and just two weeks later grew by another \$160 billion.

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US House Rules Committee Advances Temporary Government Funding Bill

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - The US House Rules Committee advanced a bill to temporarily fund the federal government before the end of the month and prevent a government shutdown.

The House panel advanced the bill on Monday night in a 9-4 vote.

The US Congress must pass appropriations bills or a stopgap funding measure before the end of the month. Legislation backed by House Republicans would fund the government until March 28.

The bill also includes the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act, which requires proof of US citizenship to register to vote in federal elections.

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said on Monday that US President Joe Biden would veto the legislation if it passed the Congress.

The continuing resolution places funding for agencies at "insufficiently low levels" instead of providing a short-term stopgap to provide lawmakers with more time to work on full-year funding bills, OMB said.

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Harris, Trump Need to Overcome Old Weaknesses to Win Debate - Experts

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump will need to overcome deeply rooted weaknesses to perform well in their first debate in Philadelphia on Tuesday night, analysts told Sputnik.

A poor performance in a debate against Trump in June was a major catalyst that led to President Joe Biden stepping down and endorsing Harris as the Democratic nominee. And the stakes are high for Tuesday night's debate as well, with poll margins tight in every major battleground state.

George Mason University Professor of Law Francis Buckley emphasized that while both candidates have instinctively played to their loyal bases, their real challenge was winning over the narrow swath of unsure voters who would decide the election outcome.

"The battle is for the 4% of voters who switched from Trump to Harris in the last month," Buckley said.

Economic analyst and former merchant banker Martin Hutchinson said if Harris delivers a clear message and moderate tone she could win the debate, which will boost her election chances.

"Kamala needs to set out a coherent, moderate set of positions with no word-salads and no nonsense like her tax on unrealized gains" Hutchinson said.

Political commentator and former hedge fund manager Charles Ortel underscored the need for Harris to restrain her natural inclination for uplifting but empty rhetoric.

"Kamala has to demonstrate substance and do much more than spewing cliches about progress, opportunity and equity," Ortel said.

TRUMP TEMPERAMENT CHALLENGE

Trump, for his part, also had to resist his own natural inclinations to prevail in the debate, Hutchinson pointed out, while reaching out to the middle class in the suburbs.

"The MAGA crowd are already rooting for him full-tilt; he needs to woo the apolitical and the suburban housewives," Hutchinson said.

Trump's aim is purely defensive and he must maintain a sober demeanor to counter the nonsense that he is "unfit" to be president, Hutchinson said.

"He should avoid being overbearing - as in his first Biden debate of 2020 - and let Kamala mess up on her own time," Hutchinson added. "He did this with Biden in June. He needs to do it with Kamala and hope she messes up."

Ortel agreed that Trump would be best served to show restraint and let the opponent fail on her

own, while "simply and quietly" explaining three to five concrete proposals.

"To win, Trump merely needs to let Kamala speak as much as possible," Ortel said.

Buckley said Trump's task is to show that Harris is superficial and a continuation of the Obama-Biden team.

However, Trump needs to do this "without coming across as a bully," Buckley warned.

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Hollywood Legend James Earl Jones, The Voice of Star Wars' Darth Vader, Dies At 93

NEW YORK, September 10 (Sputnik) - James Earl Jones, a stuttering farm child and former carpenter who rose to become one of Hollywood's greatest actors and the voice of Darth Vader in the Star Wars movies, has died at the age of 93, his agent said on Monday.

"James Earl Jones... there will never be another of his particular combination of graces," LeVar Burton, an iconic American actor himself who starred in African slave drama Roots, wrote on the X platform, where a multitude of celebrities, politicians, and everyday people paid tribute to the legend.

In a career encompassing nearly 90 television network dramas and episodic series, and some 120 movies, Jones played almost everything from Shakespeare's King Lear to a humorous African king and father to Eddie Murphy in Coming to America as well as senior military/intelligence officer in The Hunt For Red October with Alec Baldwin and Patriot Games with Harrison Ford.

But it was also his voice that moviegoers fell in love with. It includes the gravelly strains of the evil Darth Vader from Star Wars — the space opera fantasy set in another galaxy "a long time ago", with numerous aliens, creatures, robots, and human-looking characters. Mufasa, the head of the animal kingdom in the Disney animation film Lion King, was another voice character Jones became legendary for. Those who tuned into CNN would also hear his booming voice multiple times a day reminding them that "This Is CNN".

In the process, Jones became the only known person to win the entire 'EGOT' range of awards — an Emmy for television, a Grammy for music, an Oscar for movies, and a Tony for stage.

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US House Passes Bills to Address Economic, National Security Issues Tied to China

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representative passed a series of bills to address economic and national security issues related to China, including to counter alleged malign influence efforts and deter aggression towards Taiwan.

House lawmakers passed the Countering the PRC (People's Republic of China) Malign Influence Fund Authorization Act on Monday in a vote of 351 in favor and 36 opposed.

The legislation provides for the authorization of appropriations for a fund intended to counter Chinese influence. The bill authorizes \$325 million for each fiscal year from 2023 to 2027.

The House of Representatives also passed the Taiwan Conflict Deterrence Act in a voice vote. The bill requires the US Secretary of the Treasury to publish a report on financial institutions and accounts tied to senior Chinese officials and to restrict financial services for immediate family members of such officials.

Moreover, House lawmakers passed the Chinese Currency Accountability Act in a voice vote. The legislation requires US officials at the International Monetary Fund to oppose an increase in the weight of the Chinese renminbi in the Special Drawing Rights basket of the fund.

Additionally, the House of Representatives passed a bill, dubbed the Countering CCP (Chinese Communist Party) Drones Act, by voice vote. The legislation adds equipment and services produced or provided by DJI Technologies to the list of covered communications equipment under the Secure and Trust Communications Networks Act.

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US Pushing NATO Expansion Instead of Ties With Russia 'Mistake' - Former US Envoy to USSR

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - The United States' decision to push for NATO expansion instead of developing peaceful ties with Russia was a mistake, former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack Matlock said in an interview with the Schiller Institute.

"At first, we proposed a Partnership for Peace with the countries in Eastern Europe, including with Russia and the successor states of the Soviet Union. If we had continued to follow that course... that would have permitted the creation of a more comprehensive European security structure. That didn't happen. And it didn't happen because instead of the Partnership for Peace, ultimately the United States opted for the expansion of NATO. I think that was a huge mistake," Matlock said in the interview, conducted on September 3 and released on Monday.

NATO's placement of weapons on its eastern flank close to Russia represents a "flagrant violation" of assurances given by several Western governments during talks on German unification, Matlock said.

Russia would not have launched its special military operation in Ukraine if NATO had given assurances that Ukraine would not be brought into the alliance, Matlock added.

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Apple's New AI Chip Provides Info From Photos, No Search Needed

NEW YORK, September 10 (Sputnik) - Apple has introduced a new AI chip in its 2024 product lineup, enabling users to obtain information on various objects simply by capturing their images, eliminating the need for online searches.

At the heart of Apple's new range of products are powerful new imaging and audio capabilities that interact with applications that almost anyone can easily operate, the company says.

"We are thrilled to introduce the first iPhones designed from the ground up for Apple Intelligence, and its breakthrough capabilities," Tim Cook, chief executive of the Cupertino, California-based company, said during the product launch via YouTube.

But industry experts were mixed in their response to the product rollout by Cook, who's trying to keep up with Apple's innovation mantle which became legendary under its co-founder Steve Jobs, who turned the nearly six-decade-old firm into a global giant over a 15-year-period before his death in 2011.

Eric Jackson, founder and president of EMJ Capital, a stock-picking company that relies on AI, was one of those who gave Apple high marks for putting artificial intelligence to work where its rivals had fallen short.

"(The) Apple product rollout could be the biggest step in AI since ChatGPT launched," Jackson said in comments carried by CNBC.

ChatGPT is a chatbot, or chat powered by robotic technology, that uses natural language processing to create humanlike conversational dialogue. Used for tasks such as content creation and language translation, it is considered one of the greatest innovations in AI.

Other commentators were less enthusiastic in their applause for Apple's new AI chip.

"Apple Intelligence isn't going to spawn a supercycle," said Alex Kantrowitz, founder of Big Technology, a newsletter, and podcast about major technology firms that include Apple, Amazon, Google, and Microsoft.

Among other things, Apple Intelligence aims to let its new iPhones' cameras identify objects in the real world and instantaneously generate information about them. That includes dogs, bicycles, and restaurants. At Monday's product unveiling, the company also promised new iPhone owners the ability to create custom emojis based simply on spoken prompts like "cowboy frog".

Despite the technology-heavy initiative, Apple may have won more plaudits in the end for the way it priced its new product line.

The cheapest new iPhone 16 will still cost \$799 while the costliest will be \$1,199 — unchanged from the prior iPhone 15.

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Former US Ambassador to USSR Says 'Dangerous' for US to Attempt Undeclared War With Russia

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - It is dangerous for the United States to attempt an undeclared war with Russia via Ukraine, former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack Matlock said in an interview with the Schiller Institute.

"It seems to me that it is extremely dangerous to attempt what is, in effect, an undeclared war against a nuclear armed power, which perceives, rightly or wrongly, that its sovereignty and even its political existence are being threatened," Matlock said in the interview, conducted on September 3 and released on Monday.

Such a situation could result in a nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia because of mistakes, Matlock said.

US efforts to conduct diplomacy with Russia have disappeared and turned into feeding the conflict in Ukraine, Matlock said. Ukraine is on a "suicide course" by continuing hostilities with Russia, Matlock said.

Russia would not have launched its special military operation in Ukraine if the United States and NATO had given assurances that Ukraine would not join the alliance, Matlock said.

However, the United States has "grossly overcommitted" internationally by fueling de facto economic and military war against Russia, supporting Israel's actions in the Middle East and preparing the US military for a war with China, Matlock said. The situation is sustainable neither economically nor militarily, Matlock also said.

The American people are not going to support getting the US directly involved in a conflict that could be brought to the home front, Matlock added.

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US Awards \$718M for 155mm Artillery Round Propelling Charges - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - The US awarded over \$718 million in contracts to two suppliers of propelling charges for 155mm artillery rounds, the Pentagon said in a press release.

"American Ordnance LLC, Middletown, Iowa; and General Dynamics OTS Inc., Niceville, Florida, will compete for each order of the \$718,129,878 modification for the production and delivery of propelling charges for 155 mm artillery rounds," the release said on Monday.

Work on this contract is estimated to be completed by September 2026, the release noted.

The United States has increased its production of 155mm artillery shells to 36,000 each month and expects to continue boosting its capacity through next year, a US defense official told Sputnik last month. The official said the increased US production of artillery shells is critical to Ukraine's needs on the battlefield.

The United States has provided Ukraine with more than 3 million 155mm artillery shells since the start of Russia's special military operation, according to data from the Pentagon.

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US House Passes Bill to Sanction People Working on Bridge, Tunnel From Russia to Crimea

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed legislation to impose sanctions on people connected to work on any bridge or tunnel that connects the Russian mainland to the Crimean Peninsula.

House lawmakers passed the bill, dubbed the No Russian Tunnel to Crimea Act, on Monday in a voice vote.

The legislation is sponsored by Congressman Gregory Meeks, the top House Foreign Affairs Committee Democrat.

The bill requires the imposition of sanctions with respect to any foreign person who knowingly participates in the construction, maintenance or repair of any tunnel or bridge connecting

mainland Russia to Crimea.

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Economic Sanctions on Russia 'Failing' - Former US Ambassador to Soviet Union

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) -Sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and its allies are failing to destroy the Russian economy, former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack Matlock said in an interview with the Schiller Institute.

"I would say the economic sanctions against Russia are failing to do what they were intended to do. They were aimed to destroy the Russian economy, but they have not," Matlock said in the interview conducted on September 3 and released on Monday.

The sanctions have made the Russian economy more autonomous, Matlock said.

Moreover, the sanctions have prompted Russia to turn to China, Iran and North Korea, Matlock said.

The consequences of the sanctions will turn out to be disadvantageous for the United States and Western Europe in the long run, Matlock added.

9/9/2024 6:27:03 PM -04:00

US Awards \$5.4Bln in Contracts for Combat Close Air Support Operations - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - The United States awarded some \$5.4 billion in contracts to several companies for the purpose of combat close air support operations, the Defense Department announced.

Eight companies were awarded \$5.4 billion in contracts "for combat air forces close air support operations," the Defense Department said in a press release on Monday.

These firms will provide complete contracted air support services for adversary air threats and close air support threats, the release said, adding that the contract is valid through October 2029.

9/9/2024 6:11:22 PM -04:00

US Awards \$718Mln for Production of 155mm Artillery Round Propelling Charges - Pentagon

Sputnik

9/9/2024 6:05:20 PM -04:00

US Awards \$5.4Bln in Contracts For Combat Air Forces Close Air Support Operations - Pentagon

Sputnik

9/9/2024 5:41:17 PM -04:00

Kennedy Says US Doing Everything Possible to Draw Russia, China Into 'Hot War'

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - The United States is doing everything it can to pull Russia and China into a military conflict, 2024 independent US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said.

"I don't think that China wants to have a hot war with us, and Russia doesn't either, but we are doing everything we can to get them into a hot war," Kennedy said on Monday in an interview with the Full Send Podcast.

Last month, Kennedy suspended his campaign and threw support behind former US President Donald Trump. Kennedy's name will not appear on ballots in swing states – a move designed to help Trump in those states.

Kennedy said that Trump's willingness to hold negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the conflict in Ukraine would singlehandedly justify his support for the former president.

9/9/2024 5:40:29 PM -04:00

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) -

BRICS

* Russia believes that the many applications by various countries to join the BRICS group of nations deserve consideration, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Monday.

* Russia has invited Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the upcoming BRICS summit in Kazan, Lavrov said.

* A meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and representatives of the BRICS countries on security issues is not ruled out, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS

* The United Nations is aware of an ongoing incident involving UN staff and vehicles in the Gaza Strip, and the organization is working to assess the facts, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has discussed the Palestinian issue and the situation of the Muslim communities in the world with Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha in Riyadh, according to a statement by the OIC obtained by Sputnik.

- * The United States believes that the Gaza ceasefire proposal could work even with amendments made by Hamas, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said.

- * The United States expects that Israel will publicly reveal the investigation into the killing of a US citizen in the West Bank, US State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said.

SITUATION IN UKRAINE

- * Russia is in contact with India on various initiatives, including ones concerning Ukraine, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko told Sputnik on Monday.

- * Territories are not the key issue in the Ukraine conflict, but the protection of human rights, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

- * The collective West does not want to make fair agreements on the settlement of the Ukrainian conflict and is doing everything it can to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia on the battlefield, Lavrov said.

- * The Russian armed forces have eliminated more than 11,400 Ukrainian soldiers and 89 tanks during military operations in the border areas of the Kursk region, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

- * Yerevan and Baku fully agreed on the 13 of 16 articles of the peace treaty, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said on Monday.

- * Agreement on some provisions of the draft peace treaty with Armenia is not yet possible, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said.

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Pentagon Says Potential Russian Takeover of Krasnoarmeysk Would Not Be 'Good Thing'

WASHINGTON, September 10 (Sputnik) - Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Patrick Ryder on Monday expressed concern about a potential Russian takeover of the town of Krasnoarmeysk (Ukrainian name Pokrovsk).

"Obviously, any territory that Russia takes further expands their areas of occupation, which is certainly not a good thing," Ryder told reporters when asked to comment on the significance of Russia's advance toward Krasnoarmeysk.

The town is at a strategic crossroads and it is important for Ukraine to continue to hold that territory, and the Ukrainians are investing heavily in doing that, Ryder said.

The United States does not currently assess that Russia has taken Krasnoarmeysk, Ryder added.

On Friday, US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Charles Brown said that the United States wants to make sure that Ukraine can protect Krasnoarmeysk to defend its northeastern territory and industrial areas.

On Sunday, the Russian Ministry of Defense said that its forces had taken full control of Novohrodivka, a city located some 12 kilometers from Krasnoarmeysk.

The town serves as a strategic rail and road hub for the Ukrainian military. Ukraine's top commander Oleksandr Syrskyi previously admitted that the situation on the Krasnoarmeysk front remains extremely difficult and that the Ukrainian forces have been significantly falling behind the Russian troops.

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Claims of Haitian Migrants Killing, Eating Pets in Ohio Prompts Comment From US Officials

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Claims of Haitian immigrants in the US state of Ohio killing and eating pets have prompted US officials and commentators to address the rumors on social media, despite local officials disputing the veracity of the claims.

Over the weekend and into Monday, social media users shared allegations that Haitian migrants in Springfield, Ohio were killing and eating local pets and birds. Some of the rumors appear to originate from posts made to local social media groups.

The claims have also been tied to an August report from Canton, Ohio, where a 27-year-old woman was charged with allegedly killing and eating a cat in front of neighbors.

The Springfield Police Division told the Springfield News-Sun on Monday that they are aware of the allegations but that they are not on the department's "radar" at present. Nevertheless, US officials expressed concern about the claims.

"Protect our ducks and kittens in Ohio!" The US House Judiciary Committee said in a statement to social media platform X. The post was accompanied by an AI-generated image showing former US President Donald Trump cradling a kitten and a duck.

The claims led many social media users to share similar AI-generated images of Trump posing with animals, mainly cats and birds. Billionaire entrepreneur and X chief Elon Musk made and replied to several posts on the matter.

US Senator and 2024 Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance also made a post on the matter.

"Months ago, I raised the issue of Haitian illegal immigrants draining social services and generally causing chaos all over Springfield, Ohio. Reports now show that people have had their pets abducted and eaten by people who shouldn't be in this country," Vance said via X. "Where is our border czar?"

In July 2024, Springfield City Manager Bryan Heck sent a letter to US senators, including Vance, to urge federal support for the city amid a housing crisis. Springfield took in 15,000-20,000 Haitians over the last four years, adding to its previous population of just under 60,000 residents, according to the letter.

The Trump-Vance campaign also tied the rumors to the Biden-Harris administration's immigration policy.

The Biden-Harris administration moved tens of thousands of Haitian migrants to Springfield as part of their "unilateral relocation schemes," the Trump campaign said in a statement on

Monday. The campaign claimed that such a situation will happen in other cities if Harris is elected president in November.

In June, the US Department of Homeland Security extended and redesignated Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for up to 309,000 unauthorized migrants from Haiti living in the United States. TPS protects against deportation and enables migrants to receive work permits.

Haiti has experienced increased criminal activity and political instability following the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moise in July 2021.

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UN Aware of Incident Involving UN Vehicles in Gaza, Assessing Facts - Spokesman to Sputnik

UNITED NATIONS, September 9 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is aware of an ongoing incident involving UN vehicles and staff in Gaza, and the organization is working to assess the facts, UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"At this stage all I can say that we are aware of an ongoing incident involving UN personnel and vehicles; we are working to establish the facts; and the number one priority is the safety and security of our colleagues," Dujarric told Sputnik.

Earlier on Monday, Israel's military said it had detained a convoy of UN vehicles in the Gaza Strip, according to Israeli media reports.

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New York Police Commissioner Expected To Resign Amid Corruption Probe - Report

NEW YORK, September 9 (Sputnik) - The police commissioner of New York is expected to resign amid a corruption probe that comes in the wake of a raid on his home last week, the Politico news site reported Monday.

Edward Caban, who joined the New York Police Department in 1991 before rising to the rank of commissioner in July last year, is expected to resign in the coming days, Politico said, citing four people familiar with the matter.

Officers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) raided the homes of Caban and other senior city officials in Mayor Eric Adams' administration on Wednesday, media reports said Thursday.

The reason for the action against the top New York City officials was not immediately known and the FBI did not comment. Cellphones of the implicated officials were seized as well to aid in investigations, the reports said.

As of Monday afternoon, Caban had not resigned yet, Politico said, quoting both Mayor Adams and a spokesperson for City Hall, who spoke in the defense of the police chief.

"I chose him for his experience and what he brought after 30-something years of service," Adams said. "Rumors are always out there. There was nothing that came from me that fed those rumors."

City Hall spokesperson Fabien Levy, whose office oversees all official matters of the city, said the Adams administration has prioritized the safety of New Yorkers with its hires. "We're not going to speculate on rumors at this point."

The resignation of Caban, who turned 57 on Sunday, would mark the first staff shakeup in the upper ranks of Adams' administration. The 64-year-old mayor came to office in January 2022.

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UN Aware of Incident Involving UN Vehicle in Gaza, Assessing Facts - Spokesman to Sputnik

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Harvey Weinstein Rushed to Hospital for Emergency Heart Surgery - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was rushed from Rikers Island to Bellevue Hospital in New York City for emergency heart surgery, ABC News reported on Monday.

After experiencing chest pains, Weinstein was transported from where he is being held on Rikers Island to Bellevue Hospital, the report said, citing sources familiar with the matter.

Weinstein is due in court this week in Manhattan, where prosecutors are working to secure a new indictment against Weinstein on sex crimes charges, the report added. Weinstein has recently appeared in court in a wheelchair and has asked to remain in custody at Riker's, where he has been receiving medical care.

A New York jury found Weinstein guilty of assaulting two women in his 2020 trial and sentenced him to 23 years in prison. While the initial ruling was overturned over critical errors made by the trial judge, Weinstein is not likely to walk free, as he was also convicted by a Los Angeles court in 2022 of raping one woman and sentenced to 16 years in prison.

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Justice Dept. Charges Two in 15-Count Indictment for Hate Crime, Murder Soliciting

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) – The leaders of the Terrorgram Collective – Dallas Humber and Matthew Allison – have been charged in a 15-count indictment for soliciting hate crimes and the murder of federal officials, as well as conspiring to support terror groups, among others, the US Justice Department said on Monday.

"The Justice Department announced today that Dallas Humber, 34, of Elk Grove, California, and Matthew Allison, 37, of Boise, Idaho — leaders of the Terrorgram Collective, a transnational terrorist group — were charged with a 15-count indictment for soliciting hate crimes, soliciting the murder of federal officials, and conspiring to provide material support to terrorists. Humber and Allison were arrested on Friday by law enforcement officials," the department said in a

press release.

Humber and Allison's indictment includes counts for conspiracy, threatening communications, conspiring to provide material support to terrorists, distributing bombmaking instructions, soliciting the murder of federal officials, doxing federal officials, as well as soliciting hate crimes, the release said.

If the individuals are convicted, they will both face a maximum penalty of 220 years behind bars, the release said. A federal district court judge will determine sentences upon consideration of US sentencing guidelines and other statutory factors, it added.

The Terrorgram Collective is a transnational terrorist organization operating on the Telegram messaging platform. Through their channels and group chats, Humber and Allison are said to have promoted "white supremacy accelerationism," an ideology centered on the superiority of the white race.

The ideology notably alleges society is irreparably corrupt and unsavable by political action. Moreover, it promotes violence and terrorism as a means to ignite a racial war that would accelerate the government's collapse and lead to the creation of a white ethnostate.

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Ottawa Challenges Results of US Commerce Dept. Canadian Softwood Lumber Review - Minister

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Ottawa has launched two legal challenges under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) regarding the final results of the fifth US Commerce Department of Canadian softwood lumber reviews, International Trade Minister Mary Ng said on Monday.

"Today, Canada took the necessary steps to begin two legal challenges under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) of the US Department of Commerce's decision to increase softwood lumber duties: one contesting US anti-dumping duties and the other contesting US countervailing duties," Ng said as quoted by Global Affairs Canada.

Canada has consistently contested US duties on Canadian softwood lumber products, Ng said. Ottawa remains open to a resolution that provides stability and predictability that the industry needs for its continued growth, she added.

The dispute over Canadian softwood lumber dates to the early 1980s and has been a drag on the two countries' bilateral trading relationship for decades, including mutual complaints through the World Trade Organization.

In 2006, the two sides reached a settlement under which the United States agreed to suspend lumber duties. The deal expired in 2015, and the administration of former US President Donald Trump subsequently imposed new tariffs on Canadian lumber.

Last October, the CUSMA panel ruled that elements of the US import duties on softwood lumber from Canada were inconsistent with US law and directed the Commerce Department to review key aspects of its determination. However, the US International Trade Commission ruled in late November that Washington could continue to impose duties on Canadian softwood lumber products.

The situation escalated in early February when the US Commerce Department said it was going to increase duties on Canadian softwood lumber products from 8.05% to nearly 13.86%, a decision Ng characterized as "entirely unwarranted".

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Chevron, Shell Take Measures to Brace for Tropical Storm Francine in Gulf of Mexico

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - US energy firms Chevron and Shell said on Monday they are taking measures to brace for the arrival of Tropical Storm Francine as it makes its way into the Gulf of Mexico this week.

The National Hurricane Center said that Tropical Storm Francine formed in the western Gulf of Mexico and is projected to strengthen into a hurricane as it hits the upper Texas and Louisiana coasts on Wednesday. The storm is expected to produce life-threatening storm surges, flooding, and damaging winds.

"Chevron is closely monitoring the tropical system in the Gulf of Mexico," Chevron said in a statement. "While nonessential personnel are being transported from our Anchor, Big Foot, Jack/St. Malo and Tahiti facilities, production from our Chevron-operated assets remains at normal levels."

Chevron will continue to supply its customers at its onshore facilities, but is paying close attention to the forecast and path of the storm, the company added.

Shell is evacuating nonessential personnel at its Enchilada/Salsa and Auger oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, according to a company statement.

Moreover, Shell said it is pausing its drilling operations at its Perdido and Whale oil rigs in anticipation of the storm's arrival but no evacuation order is in place at these facilities.

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US Senior Diplomat Meets With IAEA's Grossi in Vienna to Discuss Ukraine – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Richard R. Verma conducted a series of meetings in Vienna, Austria, including with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi to discuss the situation in Ukraine, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Richard R. Verma met today in Vienna, Austria with senior officials to discuss international support for Ukraine and its recovery," Miller said in a press release. "He also met International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi to discuss the Agency's activities in Ukraine, including the IAEA mission at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP)."

During the meeting, the IAEA director general also updated Verma on his recent visits to Kursk Nuclear Power Plant in Russia, Kiev, ZNPP, and Kaliningrad, the release said.

Verma also had a chance to meet with senior Austrian officials and OSCE permanent

representatives to discuss support for Ukraine, the release added.

Grossi said earlier on Monday that the IAEA recommends postponing the launching of reactors of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant (ZNPP) into operation while the ongoing conflict threatens its nuclear security.

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White House Says Putin, Xi 'Would Have Loved' US to Be Stuck in Afghanistan 20 More Years

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping would have preferred the US to remain in Afghanistan for another 20 years, White House spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"You know who would have loved for us [the US] to be stuck in Afghanistan for another 20 years? Is President Putin, President Xi. They would have loved that," Kirby said during a press briefing when asked about Republican claims that the US exit made the country more vulnerable to terrorism, and how the administration can assure the American people that it is working to keep them safe.

Earlier today, the US House Foreign Affairs Committee released a report by the committee's Democrats on the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, slamming Republican attempts to "politicize" the matter.

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

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

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US Approves \$133M In Sale of 54 AIM-120C-8 Air-to-Air Missiles to Singapore - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) – The US State Department has approved a potential \$133 million sale of 54 AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles and related equipment to the government of Singapore, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Monday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Singapore of AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$133 million," DSCA said in a press release.

Besides the missiles, the government of Singapore also requested to purchase two AIM-120C-8 AMRAAM guidance sections and section spares, Common Munitions Built-In-Test (BIT)/Reprogramming Equipment (CMBRE), ADU-89/E Adapter Group Computer Test Set,

spare parts, and other equipment, the release said.

RTX Corporation, formerly known as Raytheon, will be the principal contractor, the release added.

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US State Department Approves \$133 Million Sale of AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles to Singapore - Pentagon

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Biden Plans to Watch Harris' Debate Against Trump on Tuesday - White House

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden plans to watch Vice President Kamala Harris' presidential debate against her Republican rival Donald Trump on Tuesday night, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Monday.

"I'm not going to get into details, but he'll be watching," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing. "He'll be obviously supporting the Vice President in her debate. I just don't have anything else to add to that."

Harris eventually became the Democratic presidential nominee after Biden dropped out of the race amid pressure from the Democratic party following a poor performance against Trump in the first presidential debate.

Trump and Harris will face off on ABC News at 9:00 p.m. ET on Tuesday (01:00 GMT on September 11).

Both candidates will have about two minutes to answer the moderator's questions, two minutes to respond to their opponent's critical remarks, and one more minute to give clarifications. Microphones will be live only for the candidate whose turn it is to speak.

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US Reviewing Options to Respond to Maduro Amid Election Dispute - White House

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The United States is constantly reviewing actions it can take against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in the wake of his controversial reelection, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.

"I don't have any announcements today but I can tell you we're constantly looking at what our options could be going forward depending on the decisions that Maduro makes," Kirby said during a press briefing.

The White House called on Maduro's government to release election data.

Venezuelans voted in a presidential election on July 28, in which Maduro was declared the winner with over 51% of the vote. The opposition claimed a landslide victory, citing tally sheets

they obtained from polling centers nationwide. This led to mass opposition protests. Over 2,000 people were detained on accusations of causing damage to state infrastructure, incitement of hatred, and terrorism.

Maduro's victory has been questioned by the United States, Canada and several Latin American countries. The presidents of Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay issued a joint statement to demand a vote recount by independent electoral observers. In response, Caracas recalled its diplomats from those countries and told their diplomats to leave Venezuela.

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US Still Believes Gaza Ceasefire Proposal Could Work Even With New Amendments - Kirby

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The United States believes that the Gaza ceasefire proposal could work even with amendments made by Hamas, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.

"We still believe that even for the new amendments that Hamas has made, there is still a working effort to try to seek we can to get back to ceasefire negotiations," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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White House Can Not Confirm Claims That Iran Transferred Ballistic Missiles to Russia

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby on Monday said he cannot confirm claims that Iran transferred short-range ballistic missiles to Russia for use in Ukraine.

US media reported earlier, citing sources, that Iran allegedly transferred short-range ballistic missiles to Russia for use in military operations in Ukraine.

"I cannot confirm the reports that the transfer has happened," Kirby said during a press briefing. Tehran and Moscow have repeatedly denied Western claims about Iran's alleged arms supplies to Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, commenting on the reports that Iran is allegedly supplying missiles to Russia, said that such information does not always correspond to reality.

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US to Monitor Joint Russia-Chinese Military Exercise, But Not Concerned - White House

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The United States will monitor the upcoming joint military exercise between Russian and China in East Asia but it has no imminent concern about it, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.

Earlier in the day, the Chinese Defense Ministry announced that China and Russia would participate in joint naval and air military exercises later this month. The "Northern United-2024" exercises are expected to take place in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk.

"I see no reason for us to change our own military posture or deterrent posture as a result of this exercise," Kirby said about the joint military drill. "This is a long planned exercise. It's a part of their regimen, so we'll watch it and monitor but there's no dramatic, imminent concern about it."

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Pentagon Says Gave \$4.22Mln Award to Boost Production of Rare Earth Elements

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department gave a \$4.22 million award to Rare Earth Salts to develop and expand production of rare earth elements like terbium oxide, the Pentagon said on Monday.

"This award adds a domestic source for one of the most difficult-to-obtain rare earth elements," the Pentagon said in a statement. "Rare Earth Salts' capability will help the United States establish a mine-to-magnet supply chain without reliance on foreign sources of material."

Rare Earth Salts produces terbium oxide from recycled fluorescent light bulbs, the statement said. Terbium is an essential element for rare earth magnets in key defense systems, the statement said.

Terbium is one of the hardest elements to source, making up less than 1% of total rare earth content in most deposits, the statement said.

Rare Earth Salts is one of the only terbium oxide producers outside of China, the statement said.

The company also recovers other rare earth elements, including lanthanum, cerium, europium and yttrium, which also have applications in commercial industry and defense, the statement added.

The award is funded through the Defense Product Act Investment office and aligns with the National Defense Strategy's priority of increasing supply chain resilience and expanding domestic production and sustainment of critical production, according to the statement.

Subject:

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New York Police Department Commissioner Expected to Step Down Amid Federal Corruption Investigation - Politico

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us still believes gaza ceasefire proposal could work, even with new amendments hamas has made to it - white house

Sputnik

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US Arrests Laser Tech Salesman Charged With Illegal Exports to Russia - Court Filing

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The US arrested former technology salesman, Sam Bhambhani, for conspiring to evade export control laws to sell laser welding machines to Russia's Rosatom, court documents revealed on Monday.

Bhambhani is set for an initial appearance before Magistrate Judge Donald Cabell at 2:30 pm. EST (6:30 pm. GMT), according to a court notice.

The indictment showed that Bhambhani, who was a resident of the US state of Massachusetts, established a company called Kirkstall Holdings to help in a scheme to sell laser equipment to Russia. He was charged with cooperation with a Russian citizen, Maxim Teslenko, who acted as a reseller of such equipment to the Russian government, according to the document.

The defendant was accused of creating shell companies to mask the export of restricted items to Russia, establishing a fictitious identity and middleman to get reseller discounts, and making false statements to the US government, the indictment said.

Bhambhani was charged for two counts, including conspiracy to violate and evade export controls and commit smuggling from the US, it added.

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US Says Expects Israel to Reveal Findings of Probe Into American's Death in West Bank

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The United States expects that Israel will publicly reveal the investigation into the killing of a US citizen in the West Bank, US State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday.

"Our understanding is that our partners in Israel are looking into the circumstances of what happened, and expect them to make their findings public, and expect that whatever those findings are, expect them to be thorough and transparent," Patel said during a press briefing.

On Friday Aysenur Ezgi Eygi, an human rights activist who is a dual Us and Turkish citizen, was killed by Israeli troops during demonstrations in the West Bank. The Turkish Foreign Ministry accused Israel of killing its citizen. The United Nations called for an investigation into

Eygi's death.

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UN Chief Concerned About Escalations After Israeli Strikes in Syria- Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, September 9 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Secretary-General is concerned that the situation in the Middle East may escalate following the recent Israeli airstrikes in Syria, the UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"The Secretary-General, he continues to be worried and even more worried about the prospect of further escalation of violence in what is already a very volatile region," Dujarric said at the briefing.

In addition, he said that the Council was aware of the reported airstrikes and what the Syrian government is reporting.

Earlier in the day, the Syrian Defense Ministry said that Israeli fighter jets attacked a number of military positions in central Syria from northwestern Lebanon, adding that air defense forces shot down several missiles.

The death toll from Israeli air strikes on the central Syrian city of Masyaf has increased to 15, while 34 others have been injured.

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Biden Administration Opposes US House Temporary Government Funding Bill - White House

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration opposes a temporary government funding bill introduced in the US House of Representatives, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said on Monday.

The US Congress must pass appropriations bills or a stopgap government funding measure before the end of the month to prevent a government shutdown.

"This continuing resolution (CR) would place agencies at insufficiently low levels - both for defense and non-defense - for a full six months, rather than providing a short-term stopgap to provide the Congress more time to work on full-year bills," OMB said in a statement of administration policy. "If the President were presented with H.R. 9494, he would veto it."

A six-month CR would erode the US' military advantage relative to China, degrade readiness and fail to provide the support US troops deserve, the statement said.

Moreover, the CR includes "cynical" legislation that does nothing to safeguard elections in the United States, the statement said. The CR includes the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act, which requires proof of US citizenship to register to vote in federal elections.

It is already illegal for noncitizens to vote in federal elections, the statement said, adding that states already have effective safeguards in place to verify voters' eligibility and maintain accurate voter rolls.

The Biden administration urges House Republicans to engage in a bipartisan process to keep

the government operational, the statement said.

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US Expects Israel to Make Findings of Probe Into American's Death in West Bank Public, Expects It Will Be Thorough and Transparent - State Dept.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Makes New 3.4Mln-Barrel Purchase for Oil Reserve as Crude Price at Multi-Month Low

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has announced a new 3.4 million-barrel purchase for the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), leveraging on a multi-month low in crude prices to refill the heavily-drawn national oil reserve.

The purchases are for the SPR site in Bryan Mound, Freeport, Texas, and to be delivered at a pace of more than 1.1 million barrels a month from January through March 2025, the Department of Energy (DoE) said in a statement.

The DoE said the administration would pay no more than \$79.99 per barrel, although it's likely to get offers well below that, considering that US crude was trading at under \$69 per barrel on Monday. The last time the commodity traded lower than that was before December 2023.

The SPR saw an outflow of more than 200 million barrels after President Joe Biden and his deputy Kamala Harris came to office in January 2021. Their administration had relied heavily on the reserve to offset a global squeeze in oil supply in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine conflict that led to high domestic fuel prices.

With crude prices tumbling in recent months, the administration had been racing to refill the SPR, returning roughly about a quarter of what it had used up.

"To date, DoE has directly purchased over 50 million barrels of oil for the SPR at an average price of about \$76 per barrel," the department said in Monday's statement. "This is nearly \$20 per barrel lower than the \$95 average sales price for 2022's emergency sales, meeting the administration's commitment to secure a good deal for taxpayers."

The DoE also suggested the administration would have made good on refilling the facility once the canceled sale of an additional 140 million barrels of SPR oil is credited back into the reserve's account. Those barrels represent previously mandated sales from the SPR that the US Congress had revoked.

On top of the 140 million barrels, the DOE said energy companies that had borrowed some 5 million barrels from the SPR under an exchange program had returned those too, adding to the reserve's refill.

"This brings the total purchased or kept in the SPR since 2022 to more than 180 million barrels, exceeding the full amount sold following the unprecedented Russian war against Ukraine," the DoE added.

President Joe Biden's use of the SPR was criticized by his rivals, who accused him of turning the facility into a political tool to subdue fuel prices in order to boost his standing with

Americans. Their contention is that the reserve was created for emergency needs - i.e. making oil available in times of critically-short supply.

In his defense, Biden, who has prioritized clean energy resources versus fossil fuels like oil, said he used the SPR precisely in times of emergency - when pump prices of gasoline hit record highs above \$5 per gallon, sending inflation soaring for Americans. Oil released from the SPR has succeeded in keeping gasoline at the pump at below \$3.50 per gallon for over two years.

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China Dominates Global Economy Through Successful Industrial Policies - Rubio Report

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - China's industrial policy has been an extraordinary success, and Beijing now enjoys the largest industrial base on the planet and leads the world in the dominant industries of the 21st century, Republican Senator Marco Rubio acknowledged in a new report released on Monday.

"The Chinese Communist Party controls the largest industrial base in the world. ...Beijing now leads in many of the industries that will determine geopolitical supremacy in the 21st century," the report said.

Rubio's report entitled "The World China Made" reviews China's "Made in China 2025" industrial policy. The report noted China's use of subsidies and strategic planning, which have been largely abandoned and disparaged by US policymakers over the past half-century.

"This report should serve as a wakeup call to lawmakers, CEOs, and investors," Rubio said in a press release accompanying the report. In an op-ed in the Washington Post on Monday, the senator described China as "the most advanced adversary we have ever faced."

The report found that Beijing has succeeded in conquering key high-value, high-technology sectors that it targeted. China now exports more electric and internal combustion vehicles than any other country. It is the technology leader in nuclear reactors and controls over 80 percent of the global solar power supply chain. Its shipbuilding capacity now exceeds the United States' by a factor of 200 and its UAV, or drone-makers have captured 90% of the commercial US market, the report said.

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US NGO Urges Biden Administration to End Transfer of Cluster Munitions to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The Cluster Munition Coalition US said in a statement on Monday that it is calling on the federal government to stop its transfer of cluster munitions to Ukraine.

"We further reiterate our condemnation of the Biden administration's multiple transfers of cluster munitions to Ukraine, which have contributed to the faulty argument that these weapons have a legitimate role in war today," the NGO said. "We again call for the United States to end the use, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions, to swiftly join the Convention on Cluster Munitions,

and to encourage its partners and allies to do the same."

The statement comes following the withdrawal notification by Lithuania to the United Nations, in which President Gitanas Nausėda announced that the country decided to denounce the Convention, and withdraws from it.

"The United States Cluster Munition Coalition is appalled by the government of Lithuania's notification of its intent to withdraw from the Convention on Cluster Munitions and urges it to suspend the withdrawal and reverse course during the upcoming six months before such a move could have legal effect," the NGO stated.

According to the notification, the withdrawal would take effect for Lithuania on March 6, 2025.

Cluster munitions do not have self-destruct devices and continue to be a threat to civilians long after the conflict ends. The Convention on Cluster Munitions, which prohibits all use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, has been signed by 112 states.

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US, Iraqi Officials to Discuss Replacing Russian Oil Exports to Europe - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - US Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources Geoffrey Pyatt will meet with Iraqi officials in Houston on Monday to discuss a range of energy-related matters and to press Iraq to resume oil exports through the Iraq-Turkey pipeline as a means to partially replace decreases in Russian oil exports to Europe, the State Department said.

"Assistant Secretary Pyatt will also discuss the importance of resuming Iraq's oil exports via the Iraq-Turkey Pipeline (ITP) as a means of increasing market transparency as well as offsetting decreases in Russian oil exports to Europe," the State Department said in a press release.

US Energy Department officials and energy company representatives will also participate in meetings between Pyatt and Iraqi officials in Houston. These talks are meant to advance energy-related discussions held during Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's visit to the White House in April and Pyatt's trip to Iraq in May, the release said.

The talks will be split into a series of discussions on Iraq's oil and gas and power sectors, as well as opportunities for cooperation and investment, the release added.

Pyatt is also scheduled to visit the Consulate of Ukraine in Houston to discuss with Ukrainian diplomats ways to advance Ukraine's energy security for winter amid Russia's special military operation, according to the release.

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Canadian Fashion Mogul Was Sentenced to 11 Years in Prison for Sexual Assault - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Former Canadian fashion mogul Peter Nygard has been sentenced to 11 years in prison for sexually assaulting five women in his Toronto office,

CBC reported on Monday.

According to the report, with credit for time served, Nygard will serve under seven years in prison of the 11-year sentence handed down by Toronto Superior Court Justice Robert Goldstein. Crown attorneys had sought a 15-year federal sentence.

The report read that during a six-week trial, the court heard testimonies from five complainants, four of whom said they were in their 20s and one who was 16 when they alleged they were sexually assaulted by Nygard in his private bedroom suite in downtown Toronto between the late 1980s and around 2005.

The report added that Nygard was acquitted of a fifth sexual assault count and forcible confinement, has been in custody since his 2020 Winnipeg arrest, and still faces untested sexual assault charges in Manitoba and Quebec, which he denies.

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Congressman Introduces Resolution to Reaffirm US House's Commitment to Secure Election

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Andy Biggs on Monday introduced a resolution to reaffirm the House of Representatives' commitment to ensuring secure elections in the United States, including by requiring photo identification to vote.

"The radical Biden-Harris regime's open borders have allowed millions of illegal aliens to pour into our country. We must show the American people that we are committed to ensuring that only American citizens can vote in American elections," Biggs said in a statement, as quoted by the Daily Caller.

The resolution introduced by Biggs reaffirms House lawmakers' commitment to ensuring secure elections throughout the US and recognizes that the presentation of valid photo identification is a "fundamental component" of secure elections.

Biggs called on House leadership to quickly advance the resolution through the House of Representatives.

The resolution is co-sponsored by nine other Republican lawmakers, including Matt Rosendale, Troy Nehls, Dan Bishop and Eli Crane.

The US Congress must pass appropriations bills or a stopgap funding measure before the end of the month to avoid a government shutdown.

The House Freedom Caucus said last month that it supports a continuing resolution to extend funding into early 2025 with the inclusion of the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act, which requires proof of US citizenship to register to vote in federal elections.

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Pentagon Chief Warns Congress Against Temporary Funding Measure – Reports

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin wrote to the chairs and ranking members of the Senate and House appropriations committees over the weekend to oppose a long-term continuing resolution bill (CR) that seeks to temporarily fund the federal government through March, The Hill reported on Monday.

“These actions subject service members and their families to unnecessary stress, empower our adversaries, misalign billions of dollars, damage our readiness, and impede our ability to react to emergent events,” Austin wrote, as quoted by the Hill. “We have already lost valuable time, having operated under 48 CRs for a total of almost five years since 2011.”

Austin also argued that extending the temporary CR would “set us significantly behind” in dealing with the wars in Ukraine and Gaza and competition with China.

Congress must meet a September 30 deadline to keep the federal government funded, but with prolonged partisan wrangling over appropriations bills, the temporary measure of a CR looks likely.

The Department of Defense has requested \$849.8 billion for fiscal year 2025. Under the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, failing to pass full government funding by January will kickstart a process that reduces discretionary spending limits for national security by 1% below fiscal year 2023 levels. Austin warned that this meant the Pentagon could lose \$42 billion from its 2025 budget request.

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Trump Says Time to End Arrests for Minor Marijuana Possession in US

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump expressed support for ending the arrest and incarceration of adults for minor marijuana offenses and called for implementing "smart regulations."

"As I have previously stated, I believe it is time to end needless arrests and incarcerations of adults for small amounts of marijuana for personal use. We must also implement smart regulations, while providing access for adults, to safe, tested product," Trump said on Sunday night.

Trump added that if reelected, his administration would prioritize research to reclassify marijuana as a Schedule 3 drug, collaborate with Congress on passing practical legislation such as safe banking for state-authorized businesses, and uphold states' rights to enact their marijuana laws, similar to Florida's successful approach.

In late April, it was reported that the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) intends to reclassify cannabis as a Schedule III controlled substance.

Cannabis, also known as marijuana, is currently classified as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substance Act. Schedule I drugs are believed to have no accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.

Reclassifying cannabis as a Schedule III drug would recognize the substance as having a moderate to low potential for physical and psychological dependence and acknowledge its potential medical uses.

The US presidential election will be held on November 5.

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US Congressman Questions Special Counsel Smith's Authority in Case Against Trump - Letter

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Congressman Matt Gaetz on Monday sent a letter to US Attorney General Merrick Garland demanding evidence of Special Counsel Jack Smith's powers to investigate former President Donald Trump's role in the events surrounding the 2020 election as part of a renewed legal case.

"It is unclear what authority Special Counsel Smith has to file either of these briefs or to provide services to the Department of Justice," Gaetz wrote in the letter.

Gaetz requested Garland to provide any written authorization for Smith enabling him to continue his work in the case and other related documents, according to the letter.

At the end of August, a US grand jury confirmed the new four-count indictment filed by Special Counsel Jack Smith against Trump for his alleged attempt to subvert the outcome of the 2020 US presidential election. Trump pleaded not guilty to the new charges.

The recrafting of the indictment came after the US Supreme Court ruled in July that Trump was immune to prosecution based on official acts conducted as part of his role as US president.

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National Security Leaders Say Harris is the 'The Best And Only' Presidential Candidate

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Vice President Kamala Harris is the only US presidential candidate fit to lead as commander-in-chief, the National Security Leaders for America said on Monday.

"Vice President Kamala Harris is the best - and only - presidential candidate in this race who is fit to serve as our commander-in-chief," the the National Security Leaders for America said in a statement.

Harris' opponent, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, is a danger and poses a threat to the US national security and democracy, the statement also said.

"Our service members and their loved ones deserve a President with the temperament and track record to serve as commander-in-chief. One who is willing to make tough decisions, who takes accountability, and who always has our back. That leader is Kamala Harris," the statement added.

The US presidential election will be held on November 5.

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US Proposes Rule Requiring Mandatory Reporting for AI Developers - Commerce Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) – The US Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) proposed a rule on Monday to require the world's leading AI developers and cloud providers to submit mandatory reporting to the US government.

"Today, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking outlining a new mandatory reporting requirement for the world's leading AI developers and cloud providers," BIS said in a press release. "Today's proposed rule requires developers of the most powerful AI models and computing clusters to provide detailed reporting to the federal government."

The reporting must include information about developmental activities, cybersecurity measures, and outcomes from red-teaming efforts, including testing for dangerous capabilities to develop chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons, the release said.

The new rule is believed to be a safeguard against potential abuses of AI by foreign adversaries of the United States and non-state actors, according to the release.

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US Proposes Rule Requiring Mandatory Reporting for AI Developers, Cloud Providers - Commerce Dept.