

9/12/24 Thursday

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More FDNY Members Died From 9/11-Related Illnesses Than Those Killed in Attack

Wednesday marks the 23rd anniversary of the 9/11 attacks when terrorists hijacked US passenger jets and crashed them into the Twin Towers in New York City, causing the buildings to collapse and killing thousands.

On the day that the Twin Towers fell in New York, 343 members of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) were killed, officials said. However, the FDNY has added the names of 32 more individuals who died from health issues they developed from their rescue efforts at the World Trade Center, which brings that number's total to more than 360.

The number of officials who died while working to rescue victims on the day of 9/11 is now less than those who have died since then, due to Ground-Zero-related illnesses. A department spokesperson said the names added include firefighters, paramedics, EMTs, civilian employees and the chaplain of the department, [AXIOS](#) reported.

"As we do every year, we will reflect on the 343 members who died that day, and we will be sobered in knowing that those insurmountable losses did not end at the World Trade Center site," Fire Commissioner Robert S. Tucker said during a ceremony.

"Instead, we have seen our members become sick because of time they spent working in the rescue and recovery."

The 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) provides funding for those who suffer from illnesses related to the September 11 attacks. The VCF said it has awarded \$12.8 billion to over 56,600 claimants since former President Obama allowed the fund to be reactivated in 2011.

During a [news conference](#), Lieutenant Jim Brosi, the president of the FDNY Uniformed Fire Officers Association, said he is pushing for the support of the 9/11 Responder and Survivor Health Funding Correction Act of 2024 which would make changes to the World Trade Center Health Program and is estimated to provide additional funding through 2033.

While the VCF provides financial compensation to those with 9/11-related illnesses, enrolling in the WTC Health Program does not register a 9/11 victim with the VCF. They are separate programs, and the WTC provides medical monitoring and treatment for responders and survivors. Therefore, it seems that survivors must go through two separate [programs](#) to receive proper treatment.

Brosi said the most recent victim was buried last Saturday, and was a person diagnosed with terminal cancer less than a year ago.

"Less than a year ago he was on full duty riding on a fire truck and within a 12-month period he was buried," Brosi said. "A young person: early 50s, active, healthy, vibrant... and in less than 12 months was taken. That's the part you won't see in a statistic."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said that an estimated [400,000](#) people were exposed to toxic contaminants as well as risk of physical injury in the days, weeks and months following the attacks.

On the [morning](#) of September 11, 2001, four planes flying over the eastern US were seized simultaneously by a group of terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda.

They used the planes as giant missiles and targeted the Twin Towers (at 8:46 Eastern Time and 9:03), the Pentagon, and perhaps the Capitol Building in Washington, DC - however, the passengers of the fourth plane fought back and the jet made a deadly crash in a field in Pennsylvania at 10:03. During the attacks, approximately 3,000 people lost their lives with most of them being in New York. The youngest victim was just two years old.

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Two State Solution Not on the Table: IDF Assault Continues, Israel Will Not 'Leave Lebanon Alone'

Over the course of Israel's 11-month war assault on Gaza, the school has already been bombed several times. The assault also came just a day after Israel bombed a tent camp for displaced Palestinians in the al-Mawasi designated humanitarian zone, which killed at least 40 people. Israel has reportedly bombed a school which housed displaced Palestinians. The bombing on Wednesday in the central Gaza district of Nuseirat, killed at least 18 people including six UNRWA staff members, [The Guardian](#) reported.

Leila Hatoum, a Lebanon-based journalist, economist, and geopolitical analyst joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) on Thursday, and gave a critical account of the increased aggression between Hezbollah and the IDF.

"We speak to Palestinians most of the time, real people, not fake accounts, right? And most of them, they are beyond a two-state solution, they don't want that anymore. They have lost loved ones, they have lost friends and they have lost people they know of. They know of - I've lost two people in Gaza whom we were trying to save for the past 11 months. ... and his wife was with them. They were killed by an Israeli ... and their three little children lived after them," the journalist said.

"I couldn't believe it, I had to send him a message on his phone like, tell me this is not true that you didn't die. It took me about 48 hours to just register that he passed away and I won't be able to speak to him."

"So, imagine Palestinians who lost direct family members. The children who are amputees now in Gaza, the disabled ones, the ones who lost all their family members, extended family members. They have nobody left in life except for them. Sometimes you have families that are completely wiped out of the registrar, there's nobody else from that family and extended family. Do you think the Palestinians will agree to a two-state solution with those? If few Palestinians agree to it, the majority won't. But, then again, it's the Palestinians' decision to tell you what they aspire for going forward."

On Wednesday, about 40 projectiles crossed from Lebanon into Israel, [Sputnik](#) reported citing the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The IDF said that their air force then struck several Hezbollah movement military infrastructure sites in southern Lebanon and a Hezbollah launcher. Tensions between Israel and Lebanon have been escalating since hostilities in the Gaza Strip first began in October of last year.

“...I would consider it a cautious calm with a tit-for-tat that's happening and it's increasing time by time. But preparation for the biggest escalation that we're going to see in this region going forward. I mean, remember, the Israelis are not that stupid. They are stupid, but they're not that stupid,” Hatoum explained. “They are waging wars in their southern areas and central areas. So we're talking about Gaza. We're talking about the West Bank. Until they finish with those soft sides, as we call them, they're not going to turn towards the northern front, which is South Lebanon.”

“...there have been several attempts from Jordan towards the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank against the Israelis. The most recent one was the Allenby Bridge crossing incident, shooting incident, where one Jordanian Palestinian, actually Jordanian Bedouin Arab, managed to shoot and kill three Israeli occupation forces police. And that's basically called a lone wolf operation that threatens the borders between Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territories where the Israelis have a military presence over there,” she added.

“What did we see? The Israelis took it as an excuse to go and take over the Western side of the Jordan River, what we call the Jordan Valley. And they were pushing the Jordanians basically to increase their presence on the Eastern side of the bank. And this is what's happening, what has been happening over the past few days following the incident,” the analyst said. “We've seen [Israel] increase the intensity of their air raids to tell the Lebanese, ‘we're here.’ Once that front opens, then you'll see basically the NATO powers, including the US, coming in to help the Israeli entity forces with this matter.”

Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel held a meeting with Hamas representatives in an attempt [to convince Hamas to loosen its demands for a ceasefire deal](#), Sputnik reported on Wednesday. One of the demands negotiators are pressuring Hamas to drop, is the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. However, a senior Israeli official has reportedly said that he does not believe the meeting in Doha will have an impact on ceasefire negotiations. But Netanyahu has also recently been accused of [torpedoing](#) a potential US-backed ceasefire deal by changing the terms, which he has done previously.

“So, 22 years, 24 years ago, Saudi Arabia through King Abdullah, at the time he was the crown prince, he suggested through the Arab League that there would be a peace process, land for peace, and it was basically a two-state solution. Palestinian states on the lands of 1967 versus peace. The Israelis refused that, and they continued to refuse it for almost 22 years afterwards,” Hatoum explained.

“Hamas back in 2017, 2016, they had a charter and they said, we do agree to a Palestinian state on the lands of 1967 until we reach a final agreement and final peace. But, they didn't agree to just a two-state solution on the lands of 1967. At the end of the day, they said, ‘why would we want to agree to two parts of a land that are smaller than what we originally owned in this region?’”

“The Israelis, unfortunately, it's not sad, because we know that they are monsters, continued to breach international [law], continued to kill Palestinians, and they never stopped since then. And they have killed over 41,000 Palestinians aside from injuring over 90,000. That's the numbers that go out officially, right? But it's more than that in reality,” she added.

“...there will be no more two-state solution. It's no more on the table. The ones who are pushing for it now are the European Union and some basically Western states and Saudi Arabia,

because Saudi Arabia believes that it's role to push for what it pushed for 24 years ago. That's it," she added. "Now it's not feasible at all because of the number of deaths and the scale of monstrosity that the Israelis have shown towards the Palestinians."

The Israeli Foreign Ministry has urged US congressional members to persuade South Africa [into stopping its case at the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#), Sputnik reported. Africa has argued that the state is violating its obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention due to its violent assault in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli diplomats threatened South African diplomats who are currently working in the US and told them that "continuing their current actions like supporting [the Palestinian movement] [Hamas](#) and pushing anti-Israeli moves in international courts will come with a heavy price" and could prompt them to suspend Washington-Pretoria trade relations.

"So what we expect is that the Israelis will continue with their monstrosity. Netanyahu needs this ongoing war to stay in power. For once they finish with the West Bank, as I said, they will turn towards the Northern Front. The Northern Front is the hardest for the Israeli entity because Hezbollah is not only well trained, but it's the most armed among all of the resistance groups in the region and they know their enemy very well," Hatoum said.

"They have fought against the Israelis. They have beat the Israelis in the past. So the Israelis, basically, if they expand that front, they will be dragging the Americans to it. But I don't see it happening before October or November," she added.

"Hezbollah has been geared up for war not from now, from 2006 because in 2000, after the Israelis withdrew from Lebanon, they said we expect the Israelis to retaliate for their failure. They did that in 2006 and in 2006 they failed again. So, Hezbollah is geared for another major war that's happening and it's happening now. Only a blind person can see that the Israelis will not leave Lebanon alone," the analyst noted.

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'Complicity in Genocide': US Politicians Favor Israeli Donors Over International Law

Less than a week after the IDF shot and killed the 26-year-old activist, the military group bombed a tent camp for displaced Palestinians in the al-Mawasi designated humanitarian zone, killing at least 40 people in the process. A day later they bombed Nuseirat, which killed 18 people including six UNRWA workers.

[Aysenur Eygi](#), a US citizen and American Turkish activist was fatally shot by Israeli forces in the West Bank on September 6. The 26-year-old was protesting alongside several other activists when she was shot in the head in the village of Beita, near Nablus. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it was "very likely" that she was struck "unintentionally" by one of their soldiers. The IDF also claimed that the 26-year-old was shot during a "violent riot" as the army sought out the "key instigator". But the Washington Post reported that their investigation found Eygi was shot more than a half-hour after the height of the confrontations and "some 20 minutes after protesters had moved down the main road" which was more than 200 yards away from IDF soldiers.

Robert Fantina, an activist and author, joined Sputnik's [Critical Hour](#) to discuss the killing of Eygi as well as the US' unwavering support of those responsible for her death.

"[Eygi] was about two football fields away from most soldiers. So, someone had to get close enough to her to shoot her. And, she was shot in the head, and the IDF or the government is saying, 'oh, this was accidental.' How do you accidentally shoot someone in the head?

Someone who was unarmed and was a significant distance away?" Fantina asked.

"And the only reaction is, 'please don't do it again?' And, her family is demanding an independent investigation, which the US isn't interested in doing. US government officials are saying Israel is doing their investigation. 'They've done it. They have come up with this finding. It was an accident. So, sorry. Close the book on this,'" the analyst explained.

"These are things that are bringing anger against the Zionist state," Fantina said. "The way to dissipate that anger is to stop doing the things that are making people angry. The way to bring safety and security to Israel is to follow international law. But that isn't what Netanyahu and his racist government are looking for. They want to own all of what is currently Palestine."

"And if they have to kill all the Palestinians to do it, they're perfectly happy doing that," he added. During the presidential debate on Tuesday between US Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump, Harris was asked by an ABC News moderator about the "40,000 Palestinians" who are now dead [though, the number is estimated to be higher], and the "nearly 100 hostages" that remain. When asked how she would break the stalemate were she became president, the VP reiterated what she has said in the past.

"Israel has a right to defend itself. We would. And how it does so matters. Because it is also true far too many innocent Palestinians have been killed. Children, mothers. What we know is that this war must end. It must end immediately, and the way it will end is we need a ceasefire deal and we need the hostages out," Harris repeated.

Yet, the US has failed to secure a ceasefire deal, and continues to treat Israel as one of its top allies. In [August](#), the State Department announced that Washington would provide Israel with \$3.5 billion to spend on US weapons and military equipment. But what is most perplexing about Harris' response is that a pivot to end US support of Israel would allow her to easily win her seat in the Oval Office, as was expressed by an opinion piece published in [Common Dreams](#) which cited US voter polls.

"[US politicians are] all looking out for their next election and who's going to finance it. If AIPAC does it, or if AIPAC supports their opposition, as happened to Cory Bush and Jamal Bowman. They lost their primaries because pro-Israeli lobbies sank millions of dollars into their opponents' campaigns. But is this what's important? Is this the reason people are elected to the US Senate and House of Representatives to be reelected?"

"The election between Harris and Trump is said to be very close by all polls. She needs to do something that would differentiate herself in a major way from him," Fantina explained. "And, by saying that she was going to stop all arms shipments to Israel, unless, until that country stops the genocide, that would be a major shift from Trump. Trump at the debate said that she hates Israel. This is not the case. Obviously, she bows down to Israel like every other, or almost every other politician in the US."

"But, genocide is happening. International laws are being violated in the most obscene ways on a daily basis," he said. "The US is complicit in genocide, and many, many US voters are aware of that. She could clarify for them what she would do to stop US complicity in genocide."

Iran has not backed down from its promise to retaliate against Israel for the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, and Israel does not appear to be backing down from its assault on Palestinian territory – quite the opposite. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have reportedly been expanding their assault on Palestinian territory by increasing violent [raids](#) in the occupied West Bank since late August.

Sputnik's Garland Nixon suggested during the interview that Israel seems to be trying to "pull the US into a war with Iran" which could "destroy the world economy and possibly go nuclear". "How and why Iran became this big bad wolf to the US is beyond comprehension. The Iranian government is basically minding its own business. It certainly is supporting its allies, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, as the US supports its allies," Fantina explained. "Iran has every right to do that. And yet, it doesn't threaten the US in any way. It doesn't threaten Israel until Israel threatens Iran."

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IDF assault continues, Israel will not 'leave Lebanon alone'

Israel has reportedly bombed a school which housed displaced Palestinians. The bombing on Wednesday in the central Gaza district of Nuseirat, killed at least 18 people including six UNRWA staff members, The Guardian reported. "So what we expect is that the Israelis will continue with their monstrosity. Netanyahu needs this ongoing war to stay in power. For once they finish with the West Bank, as I said, they will turn towards the Northern Front. The Northern Front is the hardest for the Israeli entity because Hezbollah is not only well trained, but it's the most armed among all of the resistance groups in the region and they know their enemy very well," said Leila Hatoum, a Lebanon-based journalist, economist, and geopolitical analyst joined Sputnik's Fault Lines. On Wednesday, about 40 projectiles crossed from Lebanon into Israel, Sputnik reported citing the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The IDF said that their air force then struck several Hezbollah movement military infrastructure sites in southern Lebanon and a Hezbollah launcher. Tensions between Israel and Lebanon have been escalating since hostilities in the Gaza Strip first began in October of last year. "...there will be no more two-state solution. It's no more on the table. The ones who are pushing for it now are the European Union and some basically Western states and Saudi Arabia, because Saudi Arabia believes that it's role to push for what it pushed for 24 years ago. That's it," she added. "Now it's not feasible at all because of the number of deaths and the scale of monstrosity that the Israelis have shown towards the Palestinians."

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'Morons Running our Country': China Policy Demonstrates Depth of Incompetence of US Political Class

"Bashing China is just a cheap shot that gives them political points," said one analyst, claiming US hostility towards the Asian superpower hasn't served the American public well.

China featured heavily in last night's debate between former US President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, but the United States' failure to enact coherent policy relating to the Asian superpower is uniquely illustrative of the failings of its political class.

That's according to journalist and international business consultant George Koo, who joined [Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Wednesday](#) to discuss how the US has failed to break its dependence on the manufacturing powerhouse.

"All tariffs will do is that the American public, the American consumer, the American taxpayer will simply pay a lot more for whatever they need and whatever they need to buy," said Koo, referring to heavy taxes on Chinese goods levied under the Trump administration and maintained by his successor US President Joe Biden.

"Everything that they're going to be buying – a lot of it anyway – is going to be made in China and they will pay the price for being made in China with higher tariffs," he continued. "It's not free money that Trump keeps bragging about. It's going to come from the American public's pocketbook, and it's going to raise the cost of living."

Host Garland Nixon commented on the superficial nature of many topics discussed during the event, noting that neither candidate fully explained the nature of tariffs to viewers. Nixon claimed Trump and Harris addressed the American public as if they were children, failing to offer anything of substance for people with a deeper understanding of the issues in question.

"They indeed treat the American public as uneducated, as unwashed, as ignorant, as unquestioning," Koo agreed. "But one of these days they're going to wake up and they're going to say, 'hey, this is full of baloney.' And we're going to have to throw these bums out."

"Bashing China is just a cheap shot that gives them political points," he continued, claiming that US lawmakers treat the public with no more respect than Trump and Harris. "Trade between the US and China, as a matter of fact, has not lessened to any degree since the tariff war started. What is consequential is that we are paying more for made-in-China goods."

Koo cited support for US chipmaker Intel as one major failing of the trade war. The United States has granted the company billions in subsidies only for it to continue to lose its once-dominant position as a manufacturer of semiconductors.

The analyst claimed the US public still does not understand the extent to which "China can exert their own barrier and sanctions and trade barriers on America," warning that the country has significant leverage with which to retaliate against punitive measures. "When that happens – it's beginning to happen already, by the way – we're going to be out of luck."

"China has been very careful, very slowly and gradually picking areas where they will do it. And, eventually, the American public will understand that there's a pain they're feeling [that] is coming from Washington and it's a direct consequence of the unwillingness to collaborate and to cooperate at all because of cheap political points that we can gain by taking shots at China."

"China is getting out from under the so-called decoupling in the name of 'de-risking' by building their Belt and Road [Initiative], building the BRICS alliance, doing their global trade," Koo noted.

"They are now the number one trading country with practically everybody in the world. Even the EU countries are feeling the sting of American policies that hurt their economy. And they're gradually – Spain, Italy, among them – seeing that it makes a lot more sense to be working with

China and taking advantage of the Belt and Road project than trying to go it alone or trying to cast their lot with the United States.”

"China has no intention of challenging the United States, or of replacing the US," [claimed](#) the Chinese government during the height of the US-China trade war in 2019. But it added that "the US is unable to force China's hand and even less likely to halt China's development. The US cannot maintain its strength by attempting to contain and suppress other countries, or by transferring its own domestic stresses outward."

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Russia Repels 'Fool's Crusade' in Kursk Region as Ukraine Redeploys Troops to Donbass

One security analyst commented on Moscow's discipline in maintaining "operational silence" as it moves to eject Ukrainian troops from its territory.

Volodymyr Zelensky surprised observers in early August when he announced that Ukraine had launched a risky incursion into Russia's Kursk region.

The maneuver began on August 6 when at least 1,000 Ukrainian troops attacked the Russian border using tanks and armored vehicles. Coming amid discussion among Ukraine's Western allies of allowing the country to launch strikes deep within Russian territory, the audacious operation briefly created favorable headlines for the Kiev regime after months of steady losses as Russia continued to push westward towards the Dnepr River.

But the incursion may have been designed simply for political consumption in the West rather than as a legitimate attempt to turn the tables in the Russo-Ukraine conflict, suggest some observers, with Kiev sacrificing valuable troops and equipment in its struggle to control a tiny patch of Russian territory. Security analyst Mark Sleboda joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines program Wednesday](#) to discuss Ukraine's presence in the Kursk region, which Moscow has significantly repelled in recent days.

"Russia has evidently, very quietly, in the last three days – we're going on the fourth day now – begun at last a major counteroffensive in the Kursk region," said the international relations expert. "The Kiev regime... weren't talking about this at all because they don't like the results. And Russia, they often keep operational quiet. We've known that, right?"

"But we got the word today in the last 24 hours – and we've received a fair amount of geolocation and other evidence – that Russian forces have begun a major counteroffensive in the Kursk area, at least from the north, probably from the west and, perhaps, from other directions as well," said Sleboda.

The security expert has [previously commented on Moscow's discipline](#) in maintaining "operational silence," which it demonstrated during its liberation of the important city of Avdeyevka earlier this year. The Russian Ministry of Defense studiously avoided commenting on events in the city as Russian troops executed their successful operation, taking care not to give Kiev and its Western backers any information about what was in store.

Ukraine has often taken a very different approach, Sleboda noted, such as during 2023's failed counteroffensive which was followed by eight months of hype in Western media. The country

released “movie-quality trailers,” the analyst noted, attempting to build excitement for the operation in the Western press.

The unusual strategy suggests the importance of Kiev’s propaganda war alongside its conventional one: politicians have struggled to make the political case for continuing to fuel the proxy conflict as polling shows the Western public has increasingly turned sour on the idea. Anti-establishment parties across the ideological spectrum have meanwhile seen a surge in support across Europe – most recently in Germany – as voters question the wisdom of continued economic and military backing for Ukraine.

“[Russia] have already recovered 10 settlements,” Sleboda reported. “Roughly in terms of the number of settlements and the area recovered, about 10% of the total Kursk incursion just went away in the last three days. We didn’t even know it happened until it had already happened. And, of course, by all accounts it’s still extending on.”

“By the reports that are coming in from the Russian forces now they’re meeting very little resistance, very little effective resistance,” he continued. “The Kiev regime forces there have no vehicles left. Russia has already decimated the vehicles they brought in, out in the open, exposed in the last month of the Kursk incursion. And that the [Ukrainian] troops there are demoralized.”

“[Ukraine] don’t have any fortifications or big high-rise buildings or factories to hide in because these are podunk, scarce settlements in a forested area, and that’s all they got. It’s not Eastern Ukraine. It’s not the same terrain, which is part of the reason why this whole Kursk [region] incursion was a fool’s crusade to begin with.”

The heads of US and British intelligence agencies [spoke](#) with trademark braggadocio during an event in London Saturday of Ukraine’s flagging offensive, attempting to portray the gambit as a masterstroke with the potential to change the course of the conflict. MI6 chief Richard Moore called the incursion a “bold” act with the potential to “change the game,” while CIA director William Burns labeled it a “significant tactical achievement.”

“We’ll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false,” [declared](#) former CIA director William Casey in 1981, offering a candid and unvarnished encapsulation of the organization’s quest to mislead its own people during the height of the Cold War. Forty years later, the agency’s task remains much the same as hundreds of thousands of young Ukrainians are sacrificed on the altar of Western realpolitik.

“The Kiev regime has begun withdrawing forces from Kursk [region] in the last week and sending them back to the Donbass, sending them to, in particular, Pokrovsk and Selidovo out of panic. So Russia says, ‘well, we’ve gotten all we really need out of this,’” Sleboda noted.

“[Ukraine] don’t have any more Western vehicles for us to destroy, and they’re pulling troops out. Time to wrap this baby up. And that appears to be what they’re doing.”

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‘No More Ukrainians’: Is the West Attempting to Destroy Kiev Demographically?

Millions of Ukrainian citizens speak Russian and maintain political sympathies towards Moscow. Is the West working to prevent them from becoming reintegrated with their historical motherland?

Russia's proposed European security agreement in December 2021, bombastically referred to by Western sources as an "ultimatum," represented one final good faith attempt on the part of Moscow to foreclose the possibility of war with Ukraine.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published two draft treaties seeking to halt NATO's steady march eastward. The military alliance has provoked concern in Moscow since its establishment in 1949 and especially since the ascension of West Germany to the bloc in 1955, which spurred the creation of the Warsaw Pact.

The Warsaw Pact was famously dissolved as the Cold War drew to a close in 1991 but NATO – anchored by the reunified German state responsible for the 20th century murder of 27 million Soviet citizens – lives on, expanding its influence and territorial reach every few years.

"I would really like to see some documents from that [June 2021] summit in Geneva between Putin and Biden, because I think something happened there to trigger the Russian action towards proposing that security agreement in December of 2021 and preparing for the possibility of an armed conflict," said Serbian-American journalist and translator Nebojsa Malic. The analyst joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown program Thursday to share a provocative theory about the US-backed Ukraine proxy war on Russia.

"Something was said at that summit that nobody's talking about, but I'm very, very curious," said Malic, referring to the final meeting between the Russian and American heads of state before the outbreak of the proxy conflict. "Why are they doing this? I had a somewhat off-the-wall theory a couple of days ago that it all goes back to the [hypothesis] of [former US National Security Advisor] Zbigniew Brzezinski and his whole theory that without Ukraine, Russia can't be an empire."

"Everybody assumed that this meant territory," the journalist continued. "But what if Washington has actually realized that Ukraine can't possibly win this and never could and are basically trying to deny Russia Ukraine as a resource – both land, oil riches, resources, whatever – but most importantly people."

"What if the actual endgame is making sure that Ukraine is wiped out demographically?"

The true number of Ukrainian troops lost over 30 months of fighting has remained obscured in mainstream media as Kiev wages a propaganda war to attempt to maintain the support of the Western public. But analysis earlier this year [placed Kiev's casualties at close to half a million](#), a number that has only grown since Russian Defense Ministry Sergei Shoigu [expounded on the subject in April](#).

Observers say the war is possibly the bloodiest the world has seen in decades as Western countries continue to fund the anti-Russia crusade. Meanwhile, Ukrainian civilians have [suffered an epidemic of drowning deaths](#) as citizens attempt to escape the draft by swimming to freedom across the country's border with Romania and Hungary.

Malic suggested the elimination of an entire generation of Ukrainians is not a tragic but unavoidable consequence of the war for Western military planners, but rather the point of the war, with the protracted conflict robbing Moscow of the human capital otherwise gained by its liberation of eastern regions.

"This is an incredibly cynical and sinister perspective," Malic conceded. "But... when you eliminate the impossible, anything else, no matter how improbable, must be the truth. Because that's the only explanation that comes to my mind at this stage, because they are either complete imbeciles and are literally fighting a completely unwinnable war, or they figure out the war has been unwinnable and their objective is to actually have no more Ukrainians at maximum and bleed the Russians."

"They've sort of said things along those lines themselves over the past two, three years," he noted. "So it's not out of the realm of possibility. I mean, if I were a sinister supervillain trying to accomplish this, this is how I'd go about it."

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Israel Exists to Help West Loot, Dominate Middle East – Analyst

Although modern defenders of Israel justify its existence under the pretense of "Jewish self-determination" or "decolonization," the state's ideological forebears clearly articulated Zionism as a colonial project.

Issued by the British government in 1917, the Balfour Declaration is often considered to mark the beginning of Western support for the establishment of the modern state of Israel.

The pronouncement, notorious among Palestinians and their supporters, committed the United Kingdom to the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in the Levant. Some Zionists viewed the creation of Israel as a progressive act necessary to combat rising prejudice in Europe, but historians have pointed out the nakedly antisemitic [motivations](#) of Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, who sought to appease a British public wary of rising Jewish immigration to the UK.

Although the West has cloaked its support for Israel in the decades since in the language of liberal antiracism its motivations are far from altruistic, argues political activist Joti Brar. The vice chair of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Marxist Leninist joined [Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Thursday](#) to discuss the United States' ironclad backing of the country as it continues its deadly military operation in the besieged Gaza Strip.

"We see the desperation, despite the fact that this genocide is going on in the full glare of public scrutiny," said Brar. "The balance of power has totally shifted away from them... And therefore, if they want to survive, they've got to find another way forward."

"But the truth is, another way forward can't be found because as far as the truth about Israel is concerned, Israel is an outpost of Anglo-American imperialism in the Middle East to control the region's resources," she continued. "They need that there. It's their armed base in the middle of the Arab world to control the Arab world and to be able to keep the loot flowing."

Although modern defenders of Israel justify its existence under the pretense of "Jewish self-determination" or "decolonization," the state's ideological forebears clearly articulated Zionism as a colonial project.

"You are being invited to help make history," [wrote](#) the ideology's founder Theodor Herzl in a 1902 letter to Cecil Rhodes, the notorious namesake of the white supremacist African republic of Rhodesia. "It doesn't involve Africa, but a piece of Asia Minor; not Englishmen but Jews..."

How, then, do I happen to turn to you since this is an out-of-the-way matter for you? How indeed? Because it is something colonial.”

Jewish migration to Palestine rose sharply after the Balfour Declaration was issued, with violent paramilitary gangs arising from within the transplanted population. Terrorist groups such as Lehi and Irgun attacked the country’s indigenous Palestinian population, forming the basis of the Israel Defense [sic] Forces after the establishment of the ethno-supremacist state in 1948. Israel has pushed the territory’s non-Jewish inhabitants to the margins since then, presiding over what [numerous international organizations](#) have [classified](#) as an apartheid state.

“Oil remains the single most important commodity in the world today,” noted Brar. “It is the most important source of energy for the world, for industry and for war and it is the most geopolitically significant asset for that reason. And without controlling the oil and being able to loot it at rock bottom prices in the way that they do because of their colonial position in the region, then imperialism would be in massive trouble. What’s left of their economies would be collapsing.”

“And so you see this really existential identification of Western imperialism with Israel, which to a lot of people seems to make no sense. They can’t see why they don’t just let Israel fight its own battles and fight and die or live and die according to its own abilities. Why are they all jumping in? Why is Zionism so important to the West?”

“The reason is it’s their tool for controlling the region and the region’s resources,” Brar explained. “Without those resources they’re going to be in really, really big trouble.”

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‘Morons running our country’: China policy demonstrates depth of incompetence of US political class

China featured heavily in last night’s debate between former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, but the US failure to enact coherent policy relating to the Asian superpower is uniquely illustrative of the failings of its political class.

“All tariffs will do is that the American public... will simply pay a lot more for whatever they need and whatever they need to buy,” said journalist and international business consultant George Koo on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program, referring to heavy taxes on Chinese goods that have remained in place under the Biden administration.

“Everything that they’re going to be buying – a lot of it anyway – is going to be made in China and they will pay the price for being made in China with higher tariffs,” Koo clarified.

“Bashing China is just a cheap shot that gives [US lawmakers] political points,” he continued.

“Trade between the US and China, as a matter of fact, has not lessened to any degree since the tariff war started. What is consequential is that we are paying more for made-in-China goods.”

Koo cited support for chipmaker Intel as one major failing of the trade war. The US has granted the company billions in subsidies only for it to continue to lose its once-dominant position as a semiconductor manufacturer.

Koo claimed the US public does not yet understand that "China can exert their own barrier and sanctions and trade barriers on America," warning that the country has significant leverage with which to retaliate against punitive measures. "When that happens – it's beginning to happen already, by the way – we're going to be out of luck."

"China has no intention of challenging the United States, or of replacing the US," claimed the Chinese government during the height of the US-China trade war in 2019. But it added that "the US is unable to force China's hand and even less likely to halt China's development. The US cannot maintain its strength by attempting to contain and suppress other countries, or by transferring its own domestic stresses outward."

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Russia repels 'fool's crusade' in Kursk region as Ukraine redeploys troops to Donbass

Security analyst Mark Sleboda joined Sputnik's Fault Lines program to discuss Ukraine's presence in the Kursk region, which Moscow has significantly repelled.

"Russia has evidently, very quietly, in the last three days... begun at last a major counteroffensive in the Kursk region," said the expert. "We got the word today in the last 24 hours... that Russian forces have begun a major counteroffensive in the Kursk area, at least from the north, probably from the west and, perhaps, from other directions as well."

"[Russia] have already recovered 10 settlements," Sleboda emphasized. "About 10% of the total Kursk incursion just went away in the last three days... [Ukraine] don't have any fortifications or big high-rise buildings or factories to hide in because these are podunk, scarce settlements in a forested area, and that's all they got. It's not Eastern Ukraine. It's not the same terrain, which is part of the reason why this whole Kursk [region] incursion was a fool's crusade to begin with."

As the US public increasingly turns against the proxy war and politicians like German Chancellor Olaf Scholz face consequences at the polls for their bellicosity, observers speculate the incursion was designed for political consumption in the West, attempting to revive popular support for the conflict at the cost of thousands of lives.

"The Kiev regime has begun withdrawing forces from Kursk [region] in the last week and sending them back to the Donbass, sending them to, in particular, Pokrovsk and Selidovo out of panic. So Russia says, 'well, we've gotten all we really need out of this,'" Sleboda noted. "[Ukraine] don't have any more Western vehicles for us to destroy, and they're pulling troops out. Time to wrap this baby up. And that appears to be what they're doing."

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'No more Ukrainians': is the West attempting to destroy Kiev demographically?

Serbian-American journalist Nebojsa Malic joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown program to share a provocative theory about the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

"What if Washington has actually realized that Ukraine can't possibly win this and never could and are basically trying to deny Russia Ukraine as a resource – both land, oil riches, resources, whatever – but most importantly people," said Malic. "What if the actual endgame is making sure that Ukraine is wiped out demographically?"

The true number of Ukrainian troops lost over 30 months of fighting has remained obscured in mainstream media as Kiev wages a propaganda war to attempt to maintain the support of the Western public. But analysis earlier this year placed Kiev's casualties at close to half a million. Meanwhile, Ukrainian civilians have suffered an epidemic of drowning deaths as citizens attempt to escape the draft by swimming to freedom across the country's border with Romania and Hungary.

Malic suggested that the elimination of an entire generation of Ukrainians is not a tragic but unavoidable consequence of the war for Western military planners, but rather the point of the war, with the protracted conflict robbing Moscow of the human capital otherwise gained by its liberation of eastern regions.

"This is an incredibly cynical and sinister perspective," Malic conceded. "[But] that's the only explanation that comes to my mind at this stage, because they are either complete imbeciles and are literally fighting a completely unwinnable war, or they figure out the war has been unwinnable and their objective is to actually have no more Ukrainians at maximum and bleed the Russians."

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Israel exists to help West loot, dominate Middle East – analyst

Although the West cloaks its support for Israel in the language of liberal antiracism its motivations are far from altruistic, argued political activist Joti Brar on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program.

"We see the desperation, despite the fact that this genocide is going on in the full glare of public scrutiny," said Brar. "Israel is an outpost of Anglo-American imperialism in the Middle East to

control the region's resources. They need that there. It's their armed base in the middle of the Arab world to control the Arab world and to be able to keep the loot flowing."

Issued by the British government in 1917, the Balfour Declaration is often considered to mark the beginning of Western support for the establishment of the modern state of Israel. The pronouncement committed the UK to the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in the Levant.

Although modern defenders of Israel justify its existence under the pretense of "Jewish self-determination" or "decolonization," the state's ideological forebears such as Zionism founder Theodor Herzl clearly described it as a European colonial project.

"Oil remains the single most important commodity in the world today," noted Brar. "Without controlling the oil and being able to loot it at rock bottom prices in the way that they do because of their colonial position in the region, then imperialism would be in massive trouble."

"So you see this really existential identification of Western imperialism with Israel... The reason is it's their tool for controlling the region and the region's resources."

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US Forces Kill IS Operative in Midst of IED Attack Against Coalition Troops in Eastern Syria - Central Command

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Canadian Defense Minister 'Optimistic' Ottawa to Join Expanded AUKUS

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – Canadian Defense Minister Bill Blair told Reuters on Friday he is "optimistic" about Canada joining an expanded AUKUS defense partnership.

"There have been important discussions about processes and platforms on a project-specific basis on where other nations, including Japan and ourselves, might participate," Blair said in an interview in Tokyo. "I would respectfully wait until they've come to their determination, but I'm very optimistic."

The minister noted that there had been important discussions about processes and platform on a project-specific basis that might include the participation of Canada or Japan.

On Monday, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Ottawa was interested in joining pillar two of the AUKUS trilateral defense partnership. The premier said that his government has had "excellent" conversation with founding member states and added that talks on the matter would continue.

AUKUS is a trilateral defense partnership announced by the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia in September 2021. The first pillar of the partnership concerns the creation of an

Australian fleet of nuclear submarines using US and UK technology.

The second pillar involves the development of a range of technologies, including underwater robotics, quantum electronics, cybersecurity and electronic warfare capabilities, hypersonic weapons and defense mechanisms against them.

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United Airlines Plans to Offer Free Starlink Service On Flights – Report

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – United Airlines plans to offer free Starlink internet service onboard its fleet in order to gain a competitive edge over rival airlines, The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday.

The airline will begin testing the service early next year, aiming to equip its first passenger flights with Starlink the same year.

It believes Starlink will offer more reliable internet onboard, especially during long-haul international flights that fly over ocean and remote areas.

Starlink has also entered into agreements with other airlines, such as Qatar Airways, but United Airlines would be its largest such customer.

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US to Impose 100% Tariffs on Chinese Electric Vehicles, 50% on Solar Cells – USTR

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – The United States will impose 100% tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, 50% on solar cells and semiconductors, and 25% on steel, aluminum, electric vehicle batteries and key minerals, the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) said on Friday.

“With respect to tariff increases, the President directed increases on the following products: ... Electric vehicles – Increase rate to 100% in 2024, ... Solar cells (whether or not assembled into modules) – Increase rate to 50% in 2024, Lithium-ion electrical vehicle batteries – Increase rate to 25% in 2024, ... Steel and aluminum products – Increase rate to 25% in 2024,” the USTR said in a notice in the Federal Register.

The US also will impose 50% tariffs on semiconductors in 2025, as well as a 25% tariff on certain critical minerals in 2024.

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Raytheon, DRS Share \$165M In Contract to Make Infrared Imaging Spare Parts - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Raytheon and DRS Network & Imaging Systems are sharing a \$165 million Defense Logistics Agency contract to produce Second Generation

Forward Looking Infrared system spare parts, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Raytheon Company [of] McKinney, Texas and DRS Network & Imaging Systems [of] Melbourne, Florida are sharing a ... \$165 million ... contract ... for production of Second Generation Forward Looking Infrared Block 1 B kit spare parts," the release said on Thursday.

Work on the contract is scheduled to take five years with a completion date of September 11, 2029, the Defense Department said.

The work will be overseen by the Defense Logistics Agency Land and Maritime contracting activity based at Aberdeen Proving Ground in the US state of Maryland, the Defense Department said.

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US Navy Extends Lockheed Martin Contract For Trident II Sub-Launched ICBMs - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin Space has received a more than \$67 million contract extension from the US Navy to continue Trident II (D5) submarine-launched ballistic missile production and support services, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Lockheed Martin Space of Titusville, Florida, is awarded a \$67,439,798 ...modification ...contract for Trident II (D5) missile production and deployed systems support," the release said on Thursday.

Most of the work on the project will be carried out in Magna, Utah; Culpepper, Virginia and Denver, Colorado, the defense Department said.

The Strategic Systems Programs office in Washington, DC will oversee the work as its contracting activity, the defense Department said.

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Biden Taking Action to Close Trade Loophole Abused By Foreign Companies - Official

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is taking action to close a trade loophole that has allegedly been abused by foreign companies and will have a major impact on goods from China, a senior US administration official told reporters.

US lawmakers recently called on President Joe Biden to tighten regulations on the de minimis US trade law that allows shipments valued at \$800 or less enter the United States with little scrutiny. This trade provision has reportedly served as a key loophole for China's e-commerce companies like Shein and Temu, which has stirred up concerns that it may harm the US economy and public safety.

"The administration is starting a regulatory process to curtail de minimis overuse and abuse," the official said during a conference call. "These actions would seek to remove de minimis eligibility for products subject to trade enforcement actions under Section 301, section 201, and

section 232, bringing consistency across our US trade laws since approximately 70% of Chinese Textile and Apparel imports are subject to section 301 tariffs."

This step will drastically reduce the number of shipments entering the United States through the de minimis exemption, the official added.

The Biden administration will also propose a rule to require more information from foreign shippers and ensure consumer safety standards are met, and will work with Congress to pass legislation this year for comprehensive de minimis exemption reform, according to the official.

The official explained that the de minimis rule is allegedly abused by foreign companies because of the lack of US oversight, leading to unsafe products and illicit substances avoiding scrutiny.

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US Navy Orders Georgia Tech to Expand Work on Swarming Combat Drones - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Georgia Tech Applied Research Corporation has been awarded a \$84.7 million US Navy contract for Heterogeneous Autonomy Prototyping and Execution to expand swarming autonomy from unmanned vehicles, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Georgia Tech Applied Research Corporation [in] Atlanta, Georgia is awarded a ... contract for the Heterogeneous Autonomy Prototyping and Execution effort," the Defense Department said on Thursday.

The contract aims to explore the expansion of swarming autonomy from attritable, autonomous unmanned vehicles to allow for diversity in sensor modalities and swarm systems, the Defense Department said.

"The focus of this research will be on achieving the program objectives by developing, demonstrating, testing and refining the swarming capabilities," the Defense Department said.

The research will be performed in Atlanta, Georgia over the next three years and is expected to be completed in September 2027, the release said.

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us to increase tariffs on semiconductors to 50% in 2025 - ustr

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us to impose 100% tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, 50% on solar cells, 25% on steel, aluminum, ev batteries and key minerals - ustr

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Trump Again Calls Out Biden for Not Talking to Putin in Years to End Ukraine Conflict

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump reiterated his concern during a campaign rally in Arizona that President Joe Biden has not made an effort to speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin in more than two years to try to resolve the conflict in Ukraine.

"Do you think he [Biden], you think he lies awake at night turning and tossing on finding a way to stop the horrible war between Russia and Ukraine? I don't think so. He hasn't spoken to Putin in years. I will get that war settled as president-elect," Trump said on Thursday.

US leadership around the world seems "non-existent" at this point, Trump added.

Trump first mentioned his concern about the lack of communication between Biden and Putin during the presidential debate with Democratic nominee Kamala Harris on Tuesday night.

The Republican presidential nominee said at the debate that he is confident he can bring Putin and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the negotiating table to begin work on a peace plan.

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White House Says Launching New Task Force to Coordinate AI Policy Across Government

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The White House is launching a new Task Force on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Datacenter Infrastructure to coordinate policy across the government, the White House said in a statement.

"Led by the National Economic Council, National Security Council, and the White House Deputy Chief of Staff's office, the interagency Task Force will provide streamlined coordination on policies to advance datacenter development operations in line with economic, national security, and environmental goals," the statement said on Thursday, following a meeting of the White House Roundtable on US leadership in AI Infrastructure.

The task force will work with AI infrastructure leaders to prioritize AI datacenter development to reflect the importance of such projects to US national security and economic interests, the statement said.

The task force will also build on recent efforts to pinpoint matters where legislative action is needed to change or bolster federal authorities to support AI datacenter development, the statement added.

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Georgia Court Scraps 2 Counts Against Trump in Election Subversion Case - Order

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee, who is presiding in the election subversion case against Donald Trump and co-defendants, ordered that three charges be removed from the indictment, including two charges against the former US president, according to a court filing.

"Because counts 14, 15, and 27 lie beyond this State's jurisdiction and must be quashed, the Defendants' motions to dismiss the indictment under the Supremacy Clause are granted in part. Any other arguments based on the Supremacy Clause not specifically addressed in this Order are denied," the filing said on Thursday.

The court threw out from the 35-count indictment the charges related to Trump's role in an alleged conspiracy to file false documents (counts 15 and 27).

This is the second time McAfee has quashed counts in the case against Trump and the other co-defendants. In March, he ordered the dismissal of six counts - 2, 5, 6, 23, 28 and 38 - from the then 41-count indictment, arguing that they lacked sufficient details.

On August 24, 2023, Trump was arrested on election interference charges, booked and released on bail from the Fulton County Jail. On that day, Trump also posted his first message on the social media platform X since 2021 and shared his mugshot.

As part of the case, Trump was charged with 13 counts related to exerting pressure on local officials to change in his favor the results of the 2020 US presidential election.

In June, the Georgia Court of Appeals paused the Superior Court of Fulton County's proceedings in the case until it rules on an effort to disqualify the prosecutor, District Attorney Fani Willis, after McAfee refused to grant Trump's motion to dismiss her.

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White House launching new Task Force on AI Data center Infrastructure to coordinate policy across government - statement

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ANALYSIS - Trump Proposal to End Ukraine Conflict Offers Hope to Achieve Ceasefire if Reelected

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's dramatic pledge to work with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy to end the ongoing conflict if he is re-elected in November could achieve a ceasefire in the ongoing struggle, experts told Sputnik.

Trump pledged in his Tuesday night debate with Democratic presidential candidate and US Vice President Kamala Harris that if re-elected, he would not wait until his inauguration in January but would immediately engage with Putin and Zelenskyy to end the conflict.

Retired US Army Lt. Col. and former Eurasia Group Vice President Earl Rasmussen said Trump would have the best opportunity to help settle the conflict or at least pursue a cease fire.

"It is a challenge, but I do think Trump could achieve a ceasefire and the start of negotiations.

Potentially, I could see a cease fire and perhaps a start of potential negotiations," Rasmussen said.

Harris, on the other hand, made clear in the debate she would continue to support the war, thereby increasing the dangers of global conflict and even thermonuclear war, he said.

"Vice President Harris, based on her statements, would continue down the rabbit hole into a very dangerous place," Rasmussen said.

In contrast, Trump would attempt to open a dialogue with both parties as well as with the European Union, and also would see funding for Ukraine significantly reduced if not stopped, which would likely result in a resolution to the conflict, he said.

Any resolution of the conflict would most likely require a new government in Ukraine but a complete resolution and a lasting peace would be more difficult to achieve, Rasmussen acknowledged.

"Could Trump succeed? ... In addition to the Ukrainians, we would need to corral the Europeans into going along with any strategy," Rasmussen said.

It would be an enormous challenge for Trump to get Zelenskyy and Putin to agree to talk to each other and to persuade them both to moderate their positions, he said.

"On what terms could he leverage his influence even before taking office to convince either or both men to agree to a settlement? This, I cannot see happening," Rasmussen said.

However, fear of losing US support could influence Zelenskyy or his successor in Kiev to take a more moderate line, and the threat of withdrawal of funding would cause some discussion and perhaps open an avenue for negotiations, he said.

REESTABLISHING DIALOGUE AND TRUST - A KEY TO PROGRESS

"I think it would be necessary to open a dialogue directly with Russia and to be open to the current situation as well as open to discussing security guarantees," Rasmussen said.

Also, there were many powers that were invested quite heavily in Ukraine as both political and corporate interests that could throw up roadblocks to ending the war, he cautioned.

"The United Kingdom and the current EU leadership will be a challenge to entice as well as is the US Congress," Rasmussen said.

Also, Trump would have to struggle with the deep distrust Biden and his policies had engendered in Russia by the reckless support for the Kiev regime and obsession with keeping the war going, he said.

"Unfortunately, I think we have our hands in too deep and it is a little late in the game.

Additionally we have betrayed prior agreements, thus the trust is lacking between Russia and the West," Rasmussen said.

Therefore, Trump would have a difficult struggle to achieve his goal of reestablishing peace and hence many are not too optimistic, especially because Washington insiders and interests would work overtime to prevent any new understanding with Moscow, he said.

"Our foreign policy structure is controlled by arrogant neoconservatives and Russophobes. Hence, while discussions and perhaps a back-channel dialogue may be initiated, I think it is unlikely that any positive traction would be made and even after a change in administrations there will be many attempting to block such an initiative," Rasmussen said.

Trump might need to resort to back-channel discussions and negotiations, along with draft agreements negotiated with Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the European Union, he suggested.

"Certain EU country leaders may play a role in supporting efforts. Just opening a dialogue and being open to all parties and concerns would be positive," Rasmussen said.

Trump needed to be aware that Russia would certainly demand key concessions to assure its own security, including assurances to not place missiles in Ukraine, reverse the decision to place nuclear weapons in Europe, re-establish treaties the United States walked away from and support a neutral Ukraine, he said.

Rebuilding trust is key, which the Biden administration has essentially destroyed.

"Trump's biggest challenge will be his own allies and our own government," Rasmussen concluded.

American University in Moscow President Edward Lozansky agreed Trump would make a sincere effort to negotiate an end to the Ukraine conflict but pointed out that the former president's track record while in office did not inspire confidence in him among Russian policymakers.

"Trump indeed, could try to end this conflict, but judging from his failure to improve US-Russia relations during the first term, sending lethal weapons to Ukraine, which even [previous president Barack] Obama hesitated to do, and imposing a huge number of anti-Russia sanctions, the chances that his plan to stop the war will be acceptable to Moscow are negligible," Lozansky said.

Trump had unwisely yielded to pressure from war hawks in making such moves, albeit under pressure from the Deep State and against his gut, but it is still there, he said.

Lozansky suggested that the only way for the Deep State to ease pressure on Russia would be if Moscow agreed to turn against China or at least declared neutrality in the US-China conflict.

"But Russia obviously wouldn't go for it," Lozansky said.

Nevertheless, Trump, unlike Biden or Harris, at least, would try to reestablish peace and security in Europe and around the world, he said.

"Still, with Trump, we will have at least some minimal weak hopes for peace, and at this point, there is no one else around," Lozansky concluded.

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US Senator Daines Says Introduced Bill to Ban Import of Essential Minerals From Russia

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - US Senator Steve Daines announced that he introduced legislation to ban the import of essential minerals from Russia, following a decision by Montana's Stillwater Mine to lay off 700 employees.

"Joe Biden and Kamala Harris failed to protect Montana jobs. Rather than relying on our own Montana mines to provide palladium, the Biden-Harris administration is allowing critical mineral imports from Russia, which is costing Montana jobs and funding Russia's unjust war against Ukraine," Daines said in a statement on Thursday.

The legislation would ban the import of minerals such as platinum, palladium, copper, nickel and zinc from Russia until the conflict in Ukraine ends, the statement said.

Montana is home to the only platinum and palladium mine in the United States and is the top

producer of copper, the statement said. The layoffs at the Stillwater Mine are attributable to the Biden administration allowing the imports of critical minerals from Russia, the statement added. There is no reason why the US should import critical minerals that it can produce domestically, according to the statement.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The NATO member states are not just discussing the possible use of Western long-range weapons by Ukraine deep inside Russia but are also deciding whether to get directly involved in the Ukrainian conflict, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday.

* The G7 countries have not yet agreed on the terms and parameters in order to provide Ukraine with \$50 billion from the frozen Russian assets, International Monetary Fund spokesperson Julie Kozack said.

MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS

* The Israeli troops have completed the elimination of the Palestinian movement Hamas' brigade in Rafah, killing more than 2,000 members and destroying some 13 kilometers (8 miles) of underground tunnels in the area, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Thursday.

* US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said she thinks the United Nations has an "Israel problem."

* Oman has good relations with Russia and appreciates Moscow's stance on the Palestinian issue and its support for granting rights to the Palestinian people and establishing an independent Palestinian state, Oman's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa Alharthy told Sputnik.

BRICS

* Russia is waiting for a confirmation through diplomatic channels that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian will attend the upcoming BRICS summit in Kazan, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday.

* Expanding international cooperation should be welcomed, International Monetary Fund spokesperson Julie Kozack said in comments on Turkey's bid for membership in the BRICS group of nations.

* The Kremlin is not planning to move the BRICS summit from the city of Kazan to another city amid Ukrainian drone attacks and preparations for the summit continue, Peskov said.

* Russian President Vladimir Putin said that he expects to discuss issues of bilateral cooperation with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a separate bilateral meeting within the framework of the BRICS summit in Kazan.

INDIA-RUSSIA TALKS

* The special privileged strategic partnership between Russia and India is gaining momentum and developing at a pace agreed upon at the highest level, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday.

* Putin proposed to the Indian side to hold a separate bilateral meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 22 on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan.

* Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Kumar Doval told Putin about the content of contacts between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kiev, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday.

IMF

* The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is making a trip to Russia for Article IV consultations in the coming weeks because the economic situation in the country is more settled now, IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack said on Thursday.

* The IMF said that it is premature to comment whether Ksenia Yudaeva may become Russia's new executive director at the IMF because the election process is still underway.

RUSSIAN BORDER REGIONS DEVELOPMENTS

* The Russian military has eliminated more than 12,500 Ukrainian soldiers and 101 tanks during operations in the border areas of the Kursk region, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Thursday.

* The Ukrainian military created in the portions of Russia's Kursk region that it has invaded facilities similar to concentration camps, where it forcibly drove civilians who did not want or could not leave the territory, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a report seen by Sputnik.

Subject: * TOP * STORY *

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White House Says It Cannot Confirm Biden-Zelensky Meeting on UNGA Week

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) – The White House cannot confirm that a meeting between US President Joe Biden and Volodymyr Zelenskyy will take place during the UN General Assembly (UNGA) session next week, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Thursday.

“At this time, I cannot confirm any details or specifics of UNGA week,” Jean-Pierre told reporters.

She promised that the White House would share scheduling details closer to the General Assembly.

Jean-Pierre also emphasized that the US goal is to ensure that Ukraine has everything it needs to regain its territory.

UK media reported on Monday that Biden will meet with Zelenskyy on the margins of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly next week.

The summit is expected to be Zelenskyy's last chance to convince Biden to reconsider his

opposition to Ukraine using US-supplied weapons to strike deep into Russia, according to the report.

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Mercury Leak Clean Up at US Nuclear Site Will Take 20 Years, Cost \$3.2Bln - Report

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - An enormous leak of more than 350 tons of mercury released during nuclear weapons production at a site in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, will take nearly 20 years to clean up at a cost of at least \$3.2 billion, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) said in a report.

"The Department of Energy said that about 700,000 pounds - or 350 tons (317,500 kilos) - of mercury were released during nuclear weapons production at its site in Oak Ridge, Tennessee," the report said.

Mercury contamination is a health and environmental hazard, the report said.

"The Department of Energy estimates that mercury cleanup at this site could cost at least \$3.2 billion and take until 2043," the report said.

The Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management oversees the cleanup of mercury contamination at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Tennessee and it has identified mercury contamination there as the greatest environmental risk at the site, the report added.

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China Spends Nine Times as Much as US on Global Infrastructure - GAO Official Report

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - Over the past decade starting in 2013, China has invested more than nine times as much in creating and advancing global infrastructure, especially in poorer nations, than the United States has, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) admitted in a report on Thursday.

"From 2013-2021, China provided \$679 billion for infrastructure projects in transportation, energy, and three other sectors, while the US provided \$76 billion in the same sectors," the report said.

Almost all of the development was carried out as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the world's largest infrastructure finance program, the GAO said.

The BRI "has funded roads, ports, and other projects around the world, and has expanded China's influence," the report said.

China's infrastructure projects had some benefits for host countries, the GAO admitted, but the report also claimed that it contributed to unsustainable debt and other issues.

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UN Welcomes Progress Made in Libya Talks, Hopes Final Agreement Will Be Reached - UNSMIL

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United Nations welcomes the advances made in talks between the House of Representatives and the High Council of State on the Central Bank of Libya and hopes the parties will reach a final agreement, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) said on Thursday.

"The mission welcomes the progress achieved on the principles, criteria and timeline that should govern the interim period leading to the appointment of a new governor and board of directors for the Central Bank. However, it regrets that the two parties have yet to reach a final agreement," UNSMIL said via the social media platform X.

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Gold Price at Record High of \$2,600 Before Anticipated Federal Reserve Interest Rate Cut

NEW YORK, September 12 (Sputnik) - Gold hit a record high price of nearly \$2,600 an ounce on Thursday as the Federal Reserve looks likely to make by next week the first US interest rate cut in more than four years.

US gold futures for delivery in December settled at \$2,580.60 per ounce on the Comex division of the New York Mercantile Exchange after peaking at \$2,587.25.

Gold usually trades in the opposite direction to the dollar, which has lost 4% of its value since the end of June.

The US currency has tumbled on expectations that the Fed will cut interest rates by at least 25 basis points at its September 18 meeting and could reduce up to 75 basis points more before the year is done.

The last time the Fed cut rates was in March, when it dropped 100 basis points right after the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. It has added 525 basis points since then, leaving the door open for a long and extended easing once it sees fitting conditions.

At its current momentum, gold could exceed before the year-end the \$2,700 price target set by investment bank Goldman Sachs for early 2025.

Indeed, some analysts said they think the run-up in gold may not see a hard stop until the precious metal gets to \$3,000 an ounce. "Just because gold is at a new record high does not mean it can't go a lot higher," Michael Armbruster, co-founder and managing partner of the California-based brokerage Altavest, said in comments carried by MarketWatch.

Gold is one of the best-performing commodities for 2024, gaining more than 23%. In comparison, oil, represented by benchmark Brent crude, is down more than 6% on the year.

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Harris Says Voters Deserve Another Debate Between Her And Trump

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) — Vice President Kamala Harris said on Thursday that she believes voters deserve another debate.

"I believe we owe it to the voters to have another debate," Harris said during a campaign rally in Charlotte.

Earlier today, former US President Donald Trump said that he will not participate in another debate against Harris. Trump claimed that polls "clearly show" he won the debate against Harris and compared the vice president to a fighter asking for a rematch after losing.

On September 10, Donald Trump and Kamala Harris clashed in their first debate aired by ABC News. A CNN poll of debate watchers found that 63% believed Harris outperformed Trump. The US presidential election will be held on November 5.

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White House Won't Speculate on Putin's Warning Against Direct Involvement in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Thursday that she would not speculate about Russian President Vladimir Putin's statement that NATO is considering entering a direct conflict with Russia as it mulls giving Ukraine permission to make long-range strikes deep into Russia.

"I am not going to get into hypotheticals," Jean-Pierre said during the press briefing when asked about Putin's remarks about a change in policy on long-range strikes. "I am not going to get into internal policy deliberations from here."

NATO countries are not only discussing the possible use of Western long-range weapons by Kiev, but are also deciding whether to get directly involved in the Ukrainian conflict, Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier on Thursday.

Ukraine is unable to strike deep into Russian territory without Western help, and it needs satellite intelligence and air missions to do so, Putin said.

The direct involvement of Western countries in the Ukrainian conflict would change its nature, and Russia would be forced to make decisions based on the threats created by it, the president added.

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US Backs 2 UNSC Seats For Africa, One For Small Island Developing States - US Envoy to UN

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) — US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Thursday supported the idea of creating two permanent UN Security

Council (UNSC) seats for African countries and one for small island developing states.

"The United States supports creating two permanent seats for Africa on the council,"

Thomas-Greenfield said during a Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) forum.

Thomas-Greenfield said that the current system of non-permanent seats limits African nations from fully contributing to the UNSC's work.

"The United States supports creating a new elected seat on the Security Council for small island developing states," Thomas-Greenfield added.

Last month, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the UN Security Council needs a "permanent voice" for Africa among its ranks. Guterres called it unacceptable that the body in charge of the world's security "lacks a permanent voice for a continent of well over a billion people," which makes up 28% of the membership of the United Nations.

However, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said that to preserve the UN Security Council's authority, its membership must remain limited. He further explained that a UN Security Council with 25 to 30 members would struggle to function effectively.

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Trump Says Will Not Participate in Another Debate Against Harris

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he will not participate in another debate against US Vice President Kamala Harris, following their debate on Tuesday evening.

"There will be no third debate," Trump said via Truth Social.

Following the Tuesday debate, the Harris campaign called for another debate with Trump in October.

Trump claimed that polls "clearly show" he won the debate against Harris and compared the vice president to a fighter asking for a rematch after losing.

However, a Reuters/Ipsos poll released Thursday found that 53% of respondents who at least heard something about the debate thought that Harris won. Less than one-quarter of respondents, 24%, thought that Trump won, the poll report said.

Nevertheless, Trump called the debate performance his best ever, despite believing that it was "three on one" due to the moderators' interventions.

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Biden Admin. Okays Israel's Planned \$165M In Buy Of US Tank-Related Hardware

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has decided to greenlight a planned Israeli purchase of US military tank equipment for nearly \$165 million that is to be delivered in three years, the Pentagon said in a statement Thursday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to

the Government of Israel of Heavy Duty Tank Trailers and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$164.6 million," the Defense Security Cooperation Agency under the Department of Defense said. It added that the US Congress had been notified of the possible sale.

The statement added that the equipment will improve Israel's capability to meet "current and future threats" in the defense of its borders.

"The United States is committed to the security of Israel, and it is vital to U.S. national interests to assist Israel to develop and maintain a strong and ready self-defense capability," the Pentagon said, adding: "This proposed sale is consistent with those objectives. Israel will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces."

Deliveries of the tank hardware are estimated to begin in 2027, the statement said.

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US Not Announcing Policy Change on Ukrainian Strikes Deep Into Russia - State Dept

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United States is not prepared to announce any change to its restrictions on Ukraine carrying out long-range strikes deep into Russia, State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Thursday

"I don't have any policy to announce and I am certainly not going to speculate," Patel told CNN.

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US 'Thinks' United Nations Has An Israel Problem - US Envoy To UN

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) — US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Thursday said that she thinks the United Nations has an Israel problem.

"I think that we have an Israel problem in the UN," Thomas-Greenfield said during a Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) forum when asked if the UN has an Israel problem.

Thomas-Greenfield went on to elaborate that the United Nations has had a disproportionate focus on Israel, saying that even before the October 7 situation, Israel had been a regular subject of the UN's agenda.

No other country in the world has had a monthly meeting on the council's agenda for decades, suggesting an unfair focus on Israel in the UN, and "it is problematic," Thomas-Greenfield added.

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UPDATE- USS Theodore Roosevelt Aircraft Carrier Ends Extended Deployment in Mideast - Official

(Update with details in paras, 4,5)

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group has ended its weeks-long deployment to the Middle East, a US official told Sputnik on Thursday.

The US aircraft carrier had deployed to the Middle East along with the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group as a show of force amid threats of a large-scale Iranian retaliatory attack against Israel.

"The Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike group is currently in the US Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility," the official said.

Defense Department spokesperson Patrick Ryder said in later remarks that the departure of the carrier strike group from the Mideast does not indicate the United States is becoming less worried about a potential Iranian attack.

"We're going to continue to take that threat very seriously and we're going to continue to maintain a robust presence in the Central Command and European Command," Ryder told reporters.

The US Defense Department has underscored that the United States remains postured to support the defense of Israel and US assets in the Middle East amid the current unrest in the region.

The United States had positioned approximately 18 warships, including the two aircraft carriers, around the Middle East region as a means to deter a potential Iranian attack on Israel.

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Harris Leads Trump By 5 Points After US Presidential Debate - Reuters/Ipsos Poll

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris has re-established her lead against former president Donald Trump in the 2024 race for the White House, this time by five points, after a debate this week between the two candidates, according to a poll by news service Reuters and marketing research firm Ipsos.

In Tuesday night's ABC News-hosted presidential debate, 59-year-old Democrat Harris and 78-year-old Republican Trump had a fiery duel before some 67 million viewers. In the first popularity snapshot since then, the Reuters-Ipsos poll showed Harris having a 47% probability of winning the November 5 election, versus Trump's 42%.

It was the highest advantage Harris has had over Trump since she replaced President Joe Biden at the top of the Democratic Party ticket after he dropped his bid for reelection on July 21, following a disastrous debate with Trump.

Harris narrowed the Democratic Party's poll deficit within weeks of taking the reins from Biden, leading Trump marginally for most of the past month though the two have also been neck-and-neck in some polls, with the Republican having the edge at times.

The Reuters-Ipsos poll published on Thursday surveyed 1,690 US adults nationwide, including 1,405 registered voters. It had a margin of error of around three percentage points for registered voters.

Elaborating on the responses received to the various questions asked, Reuters and Ipsos said 53% of voters who watched the debate thought Harris had won while 24% said Trump appeared

victorious. The rest said they had not watched or had no opinion on which candidate might have done better. Some 52% of the respondents thought Trump had stumbled and didn't appear sharp, while 21% said the same of Harris.

Also, fewer Republicans gave Trump a thumbs-up for his performance versus Democrats who cheered Harris' showing. Only 53% of Republican voters in the poll said they thought Trump had won the debate, compared with 91% of Democrats who said their candidate was the victor. At a deeper level, some 31% of Republicans said neither candidate won the face-off while 14% gave Harris the edge over Trump.

The Democrat also received higher marks from voters when asked which of the two candidates carried themselves better at the debate. Harris looked more dignified, according to 56% of voters versus 24% who thought similarly of Trump. Also, 49% thought Harris "seemed like someone who would listen to me and understand my concerns," compared to 18% who saw Trump that way.

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US Does Not Give African Countries 'Ultimatum' on Choosing Russia, China as Partners

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United States does not give African countries an ultimatum on which other countries to choose as security partners, US Africa Command chief General Michael Langley said on Thursday.

"When we've engaged with our African partners, we don't give them an ultimatum of who to choose for a security partner," Langley said during a press briefing, when asked about Russian and Chinese influence on the continent.

However, the US wants an understanding of its initiatives and how countries can cooperate to achieve shared objectives, Langley said.

Langley said that many of his efforts to come into alignment with countries on how to approach challenges have been "distorted" by misinformation and disinformation.

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US, UK Discuss Lifting Long-Range Missile Data Restrictions for Ukraine - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United States and the United Kingdom are considering allowing Ukraine to deploy British cruise missiles utilizing US navigational data to conduct long-range strikes inside Russia, Bloomberg reported on Thursday, citing people familiar with the matter.

Officials are weighing whether the White House could grant permission to Ukraine to use British Storm Shadow missiles - precision-guided, air-launched missiles with a range of more than 250 kilometers - in cross border attacks, the report said.

The Storm Shadows fly low at high speeds before reaching their targets and utilize a

combination of inertial navigation systems and Global Positioning Systems in addition to terrain-reference navigation.

Though the missiles are British, the satellite navigation is controlled by the US Defense Department. The United States currently restricts the use of its hardware, barring Ukrainians from striking into Russia using US technology.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned against permitting Ukraine to strike into Russian territory on the grounds that Ukraine would require the assistance of NATO specialists to carry out such strikes, the report said.

However, Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky has continued to increase his appeals to the collective West to have the restrictions lifted. US and UK officials have said they are considering ways to lessen the current restrictions on Ukraine's use of Western weapons.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during his visit to Kiev that he was listening to Ukrainian requests on deep strikes inside Russia.

Russia has warned that arms supplies to Kiev would prolong the Ukraine conflict without changing its outcome while hindering attempts at peace, and make NATO member states a party to the conflict.

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UN Welcomes Progress Made in Libya Talks, Hopes Final Agreement Will Be Reached - UNSMIL

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United Nations welcomes the advances made in talks between the House of Representatives and the High Council of State on the Central Bank of Libya and hopes the parties will reach a final agreement, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) said on Thursday.

"The mission welcomes the progress achieved on the principles, criteria and timeline that should govern the interim period leading to the appointment of a new governor and board of directors for the Central Bank. However, it regrets that the two parties have yet to reach a final agreement," UNSMIL said via the social media platform X.

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UPDATE - New York Mayor Names Tom Donnelly as Police Chief as Predecessor Quits Amid FBI Probe

(Updates with more details, background in paras 3-14)

NEW YORK, September 12 (Sputnik) - New York City Mayor Eric Adams on Thursday named former US national security official and long-term crime fighter Tom Donnelly as head of the New York Police Department (NYPD), saying the city's previous police chief Edward Caban had resigned amid a probe opened against him by the FBI.

"A short time ago, I accepted the resignation of the NYPD Commissioner Edward Caban," Adams said in a live streamed announcement. "He concluded that this is the best decision at this time, and I respect his decision and I wish him well."

Adams said Donnelly would take over as "interim" police commissioner. An interim appointment typically precedes an official one in New York.

"Tom is an experienced law enforcement professional who has worked at the local, state, federal and international levels," Adams added.

The resignation of Caban and the appointment of Donnelly is the latest in a week of events developing in New York, since the raid on the homes of the former commissioner and other high-ranking officials in Adams' city administration on September 4 amid reports of a FBI investigation against corruption.

The FBI has also targeted New City deputy mayors Phil Banks and Sheena Wright, along with Timothy Pearson - a senior Adams aide - and Terence Banks, a former official of the Metropolitan Transport Authority and brother of Deputy Mayor Banks.

The FBI did not comment on the matter but media reports have attempted to provide some context to the investigation by citing previous troubles faced by the officials targeted by the bureau.

For instance, deputy mayor Banks had abruptly resigned as department chief of the NYPD in 2014 amid a federal bribery investigation in which agents allegedly uncovered evidence that he had accepted thousands of dollars in free meals and sports tickets.

Prior to last week, the home of Brianna Suggs, a top fundraiser for the Adams mayoral campaign, was reportedly raided in November 2023. The FBI was reportedly investigating whether the campaign conspired with the Turkish government and others to funnel money into its coffers.

Since Adams took office in January 2022, he had also raised concerns for appointing many of his close friends to top positions in the city, the reports said.

Adams' mayoral campaign had been in the news for ignoring multiple requests from city regulators to disclose the identities of more than 500 supporters who provided \$300,000 in contributions. That aside, the mayor has faced criticism on various issues, including the deaths of at least 26 prisoners over changes he approved to the confinement policy at New York penitentiaries.

Adams did not respond to any of these in his speech Thursday, focusing instead on the qualities of Donnelly and outgoing commissioner Caban.

Donnelly previously headed the FBI's national threat center as well as the FBI-NYPD joint terrorist task force, among holding other functions. He was also the co-case agent investigating the 1993 bombing of New York's twin towers and attacks on US embassies in Africa and the US warship Cole in Yemen.

Adams said that crime in New York had dropped during 13 of the 14 months of Caban's tenure. Adams also said that the outgoing commissioner was responsible for removing more than 18,000 illegal guns from the city and had presided over the lowest number of robberies recorded in New York for a month, as well as the lowest number of shootings.

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libyan parties have not yet reached final agreement on central bank crisis - un mission in libya

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USS Theodore Roosevelt Aircraft Carrier Ends Extended Deployment in Mideast - Official

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group has ended its weeks-long deployment to the Middle East, a US official told Sputnik on Thursday. The US aircraft carrier had deployed to the Middle East along with the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group as a show of force amid threats of a large-scale Iranian retaliatory attack against Israel.

"The Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike group is currently in the US Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility," the official said.

Earlier this week, Defense Department spokesperson Patrick Ryder said that the United States remains postured to support the defense of Israel and US assets in the Middle East amid the current unrest in the region.

The United States had positioned approximately 18 warships, including the two aircraft carriers, around the Middle East region as a means to deter a potential Iranian attack on Israel.

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US Convicts 4 Americans for Conspiring to Act as Illegal Agents of Russia- Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - A jury in the United States convicted four US citizens of conspiring to act as illegal agents of the Russian government, the US Justice Department said on Thursday.

"A jury today convicted Omali Yeshitela, 82, Penny Hess, 78, Jesse Nevel, 34, all of St. Louis, and Augustus C. Romain Jr., 38, of Atlanta, of conspiracy to act as agents of a foreign government," the Justice Department said in a statement.

From at least May 2015 until July 2022, Hess and Nevel agreed to act on behalf of Russia in the United States, the statement said.

Hess, Nevel and Yeshitela were leaders of the African People's Socialist Party (APSP) or components thereof, the statement said.

Romain was also a high-level leader of APSP but left in November 2018 to form a group in Georgia dubbed the Black Hammer, the statement said.

Moscow resident Aleksandr Ionov founded and served as president of the Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia, which is funded by the Russian government, the statement said. Ionov directed the defendants to take several actions in the US, the statement added.

Each defendant faces up to five years in prison, the statement said. A sentencing date has not

yet been set, according to the statement.

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US, UK Continued Military Resistance to Houthis Blocks Progress to End Conflict - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - The continued military resistance from Washington and London in the Red Sea impedes efforts to bring an end to the conflict with the Ansar Allah movement, whose members and supporters are also known as Houthis, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Thursday.

"Of paramount importance, among other things, is bringing an end to the military operations in the Red Sea," Polyanskiy said during a UN Security Council meeting on Yemen. "This, however, is being impeded by the focus of the US and UK on continuing to mount a military resistance against Ansar Allah."

The Western allies have chosen to engage in military activities instead of searching for a solution to the Palestinian conflict, which is the reason why the Houthis continue their endeavors, he added.

The Houthis have declared their support for a free Palestine and voiced their intention to target any ships connected to Israel. The Houthis have emphasized they are not interfering with the freedom of navigation in the region and are not targeting vessels from other countries.

Following the attacks, some cargo companies have decided to suspend shipments through the Red Sea. The United States and its allies are working to pressure the Houthis to stop attacking maritime vessels off the coast of Yemen.

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New York Mayor Names Tom Donnelly as Police Chief as Predecessor Quits Amid FBI Probe

NEW YORK, September 12 (Sputnik) - New York Mayor Eric Adams on Thursday named former national security official and long-term crime fighter Tom Donnelly as the new police chief after his predecessor Edward Caban resigned amid an FBI probe against him.

"A short time ago, I accepted the resignation of the NYPD Commissioner Edward Caban. He concluded that this is the best decision at this time and I respect his decision and I wish him well," Adams said. "To ensure crime keeps going down in our city today, I'm taking immediate action in appointing Tom Donnelly as interim police commissioner. Tom is an experienced law enforcement professional who has worked at the local, state, federal and international levels."

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Canada Awards KNDS Deutschland \$1.5Bn Leopard 2 Sustainment Contract – Ministry

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) – The Canadian Government has awarded KNDS Deutschland a C\$2 billion (US\$1.5 billion) contract for the sustainment of the German-made Leopard 2 family of vehicles over the next six and a half years, Public Services and Procurement Canada said on Thursday.

“Today, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Public Services and Procurement, and the Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of National Defence, announced that the federal government has awarded a contract to KNDS Deutschland GmbH & Co. KG (KNDS) for the long-term sustainment of the Leopard 2 Family of Vehicles (FoV),” the ministry said in a news release.

The C\$2 billion contract will be valid for an initial period of six years and seven months and includes four option periods that could potentially extend the agreement until March 2036, the statement said.

KNDS Deutschland will also be establishing a Regional Maintenance Centre that is set to be located close to Edmonton, Province of Alberta. The company will also assume business activity in Canada as part of the Industrial and Technological Benefits Policy, the statement continued.

Ottawa further ensured an economic commitment from KNDS, the statement said. Accordingly, the company will create or maintain 295 “well-paying” Canadian jobs yearly and contribute an annual C\$32.5 million to the country’s GDP for the first contract term.

The Leopard 2 FoV is the Canadian Armed Forces's main battle tank and includes Armored Engineer Vehicles and Armored Recovery Vehicles. Canada currently operates 103 units in five variants which are expected to remain in service until 2035.

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Imposing Tariffs, Non-Tariff Barriers Increases Risks, Undermines Trading System - IMF

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - Imposing tariffs and using non-tariff barriers in international trade would cause risks of retaliation and undermine the multilateral trade system, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday.

"Unilateral responses through tariffs, nontariff barriers and domestic content provisions are the wrong solutions," the IMF said in a new report.

Such measures increase the risks of retaliation and policy uncertainty. They also undermine the multilateral trading system, weaken global supply chains and increase geo-economic fragmentation, the report said.

The IMF urges the authorities to cooperate in supporting the international trade order and multilateral organizations.

"Governments should come together to strengthen WTO [World Trade Organization] rules and norms in these areas," the report said.

The IMF emphasized the global economy continues to face longstanding and recently exposed gaps in international trading rules, shaped by developments such as the emergence of global value chains, the global importance of economies in which the state plays a central role, and the

urgent challenge of climate change, the report added.

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Biden May Allow Ukraine to Strike Russia With British, French Long-Range Missiles -Reports

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is considering allowing Ukraine to launch long-range missiles on Russian territory using British Storm Shadow and French Scalp missiles, The Times reported on Thursday, citing sources in the know.

While Biden is not yet ready to lift restrictions on strikes deep inside Russia with US long-range missiles, he is willing to accommodate his British and French allies who support the decision, the report said.

According to the report, Biden is expected to discuss the issue of strikes inside Russia with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer during their upcoming meeting on Friday, but it remains unclear whether any announcements on the matter will be made.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said earlier on Thursday that Russia has no doubt that the West has already made the decision to lift restrictions on the use of its long-range missiles by Kiev against Russia.

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ny mayor adams nameS tom donnelly as new nypd chief after COMMISSIONER CABAN steps down AMID FBI INVESTIGATION