

9/13/24 Friday

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UK PM Allegedly Failed to Disclose Gifts Given to Wife From Wealthy Donor - Report

Between the 2019 general election and July 1, Starmer declared £76,000 worth of entertainment, clothes and other free items from donors, the Financial Times had previously reported.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer is under fire after he allegedly broke a parliamentary rule, in which he failed to declare gifts of clothing for his wife from multimillionaire Labor Party donor Waheed Alli. The former investment banker and donor purportedly paid for a personal shopper for Victoria Starmer, 50, the former solicitor and wife of the UK's new PM.

According to reports, the prime minister did not declare his wife's gifts in the register of the MP's [interests](#). The 62-year-old sought out parliamentary authorities on Tuesday and made a late declaration after he was given "updated advice" on what he needed to register, [The Sunday Times](#) reported.

"We sought advice from the authorities on coming to office. We believed we had been compliant, however following further interrogation this month, we have declared further items," Downing Street said.

According to the report, Starmer, 62, now faces an investigation after he neglected to disclose the gifts his wife had received. Alli is the former chairman of Asos, an online fast-fashion retailer, and his wealth is estimated to stand at £200 million, the report details.

Alli previously caused controversy when he somehow managed to acquire a No 10 security pass, shortly after Starmer was elected, and used it to host about 50 donors and other guests at a party there. The entrepreneur, who co-created the television series Survivor, has given nearly £1 million to the Labor party over the past two decades. The party's headquarters were also involved in helping organize the delivery of Mrs. Starmer's luxurious gifts.

The fashion mogul reportedly gifted the Labor leader nearly £19,000 worth of work clothes and glasses, and spent £20,000 on accommodation for the new prime minister while he was running for office, as well as roughly the same amount on "private office" costs. All of these gifts were disclosed by Starmer, apart from the gifts his wife received.

Mrs. Starmer has since rejected free products that were offered to her including clothes, jewelry and make-up, the report said. Meanwhile, Starmer's completed register of interests is scheduled to be published some time next month.

Starmer's misstep is a poor reflection of the principles he ran on, including his promise to clean up UK politics by cutting out cronyism; the prime minister made consistent attacks against former Prime Minister Boris Johnson for his reliance on donors.

In 2021, Sputnik reported that Angela Rayner, the Deputy Prime Minister of the UK and Secretary of State for Housing, received four times as many donations as her Conservative MPs whom she had accused of political sleaze. At the time, when she was Labor deputy leader, one of her donors was reported to be Alli, amongst other big ticket donors.

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Some UK Families Lack Beds, Food, and Struggle With Black Mold - Survey

The report said that many parents “alluded to giving their bed to their child” or otherwise shared a bed with their child, while some said the whole family was forced to sleep on the floor.

A child’s charity in the UK has found that those struggling with poverty in the country are left sleeping on the floor because they can’t afford beds, are struggling to heat and power their homes, and that some family structures are feeling strained by the cost of living crisis.

[Buttle UK](#), a charity organization that has been assisting children and young people in need since 1953, surveyed 1,567 of the families it supports. They found that most of their respondents had skipped a meal, while half said they did not have beds for everyone in their household to sleep in, [The Guardian](#) reported citing the survey.

“My kids are sleeping on the floor; I have 2 teenagers, one who is just in remission from leukemia and still unwell. My other boy has bad feet and back pain, so it’s hard to walk,” said one survey respondent.

Parents told the charity organization that they would often go hungry to ensure their children could still eat; “They themselves often went completely without, reporting the dire effects on their health and wellbeing.”

Many families also told the survey that black mold has become endemic in their home and that it has been difficult to shift due to cold and damp conditions. The mold has become such an issue for these families that it affects their furnishings, clothing, and the health of their children.

The charity organization has called on the UK government to make several changes that would help alleviate poverty amongst children and their families in the UK, including: increasing universal credit payments, introducing new health strategies, and a complete “overhaul” of NHS children’s mental health services.

They are also asking that the government lift the [two-child benefit](#) limit which was introduced by a Conservative government seven years ago and has since become one of the UK’s single greatest drivers of childhood poverty, experts say. The benefit does not allow parents on universal credit claiming benefits to request support for a third child born after April 2017.

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China-Africa Forum: 'Africa is Not Alone Anymore'

Chinese media branded the summit as the “biggest diplomatic event” organized by Beijing in recent years, as the country has become the largest bilateral trading partner of sub-Saharan Africa, with the total trade volume having reached \$282 billion in 2023.

The ninth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing highlighted China’s continued efforts to partner up with the continent, Chatham House reported. Fifty-one African heads of state were present for the summit on September 6, which Chatham noted was “many more than are scheduled to speak at the UN General Assembly this month”.

Koffi Kouakou, an African analyst and research fellow at the Center for African China Studies at the University of Johannesburg, joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) to discuss the growing partnership between China and the second-largest continent in the world. Kouakou noted that Africa is "matter[ing]" due to the overwhelming interest that foreign countries - especially countries in the West - have shown the oftentimes overlooked continent.

"[It was a] very successful gathering in Beijing last week, and I think the 50 billion US dollars is for the next three years. Some people are saying, wait a minute, it's not enough, but it is a substantial amount of resources that China has opened," the analyst said. "And one key issue that the Chinese have made clear, and of course energy is one, but development and energy are very close to each other, is what they call the Global South Modernization Project."

Stopping short of offering broad-based debt relief at the Summit, China instead pledged \$50.7 billion in credit lines and funding for the next three years, with an emphasis on trade and investment partnerships. [Chatham](#) noted that China's reluctance to offer the continent debt cancellation most likely reflects domestic financial constraints and "global economic uncertainty". However, the article notes that this could be a more sustainable as well as mutually beneficial strategy.

"And, it's a big issue now, and, as you know, China's been on this modernization. And, for them, and for the Global South, modernization doesn't mean Westernization. It's a very important element because what the result of Western modernization has done to the rest of the world is get a lot of these countries very poor, struggling. They can't get development going," Kouakou explained. "They really want an alternative to the progress that they wanna see, and mainly China is leading it, and that's what made this FOCAC."

"China's strategy has two big levels. The first one is at continental level. So this is what FOCAC is all about. But the Chinese are smart. They know that they can't do it only big at their continental level. They also have to deal with what's called bilateral levels. So they talk to each other's countries," he added.

Prof. Alexis Habiaryemye from the University of Johannesburg spoke to Sputnik about the summit, and suggested that China has become the major, if not the main, trading partner for the majority of African countries thanks to the "actual win-win outcomes of the Sino-African trade as opposed to exploitative trade with Western trade partners that established monopolies over natural resources in secret military cooperation arrangements with former colonial powers." The professor then suggested that trade between African countries and the West "is usually structured as extractive monopolies intended to keep Africa down and unable to produce anything else than raw materials for Western corporations." And added that China can also offer more "affordable products" with a higher "value-for-money ratio."

"...one of the most important events that took place the past couple of months is that the three now have consolidated the alliance of this region between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger across the board. They're looking at development issues, energy sovereignty. And, as you know, Mali and especially Burkina Faso are now, they've received the help of Russia to build nuclear power plants there for them for energy," he added.

"...it also plays into the geopolitical logic that Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger are not alone anymore. And, President Putin of Russia has made it clear, anybody who touches these three countries will touch him."

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Biden Admin Pleads Lawmakers to Include \$5.8bn Ukraine Aid Extension in Spending Bill

Almost \$6 billion in US funding for aid to Ukraine is set to expire by the end of the month, however congressional lawmakers may extend the Pentagon's authority to send weapons to Kiev, US officials said.

The Biden administration has asked Congress to include an extension for funding for Kiev, in an already lengthy continuing resolution lawmakers are trying to pass to avoid a government shutdown before the end of the month. The temporary spending bill would keep US government agencies and programs operating for six months when the new budget year begins on October 1.

But if that fails, a desperate US Defense Department will look into other options, though it was not reported what those other options would be. US officials told [AP News](#) that about \$5.8 billion in presidential drawdown authority (PDA) - which allows the Pentagon to send stocked weapons to Ukraine - is set to expire and essentially has a "use it or lose it" deadline for September 30. "We have \$5.9 billion left in Ukraine Presidential Drawdown Authority; all but \$100 million of which will expire at the end of the fiscal year," Maj. Gen. [Pat Ryder](#), the Pentagon press secretary, told [The Hill](#). "The Department will continue to provide drawdown packages in the near future and is working with Congress to seek an extension of PDA authorities beyond the end of the fiscal year."

While PDA allows the Pentagon to ship out older military equipment and refill stocks with new equipment, assistance to Ukraine can only be given in increments of hundreds of millions of dollars so the US does not "empty" Pentagon stocks.

A congressional aide told [The Hill](#) that there may be some legal challenges in trying to allocate all \$5.8 billion at once, as Biden administration lawyers are worried there might not be "an authority to permit transfers of munitions that are not currently in stock, or considered in surplus".

The spending bill already has another piece of legislation that is tied to it as well; the SAVE Act is legislation that requires those who are voting to submit proof of citizenship. This requirement is something that is universally opposed by Democrats and some Republicans, considering that it could complicate the national voter registration process before a major election.

GOP lawmakers have also stressed that the bill continues spending at levels they think are [excessive](#), and some Republicans also want Congress to return to passing their 12 annual spending bills separately as opposed to single, larger pieces of legislation which encompass a wide range of issues under one bill.

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Government Shutdown Part II

Following a six-week summer recess, US lawmakers returned to the Capitol on Monday to face a charged landscape as the country prepares for the presidential election in November. But the more urgent issue at hand is the need to avoid a government shutdown.

On Wednesday, US House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) pulled a temporary government funding bill off the House floor hours before a planned vote after he was met with dissent within his own party, [Business Insider](#) reported.

"No vote today because we're in the consensus-building business here in Congress. With small majorities, that's what you do," Johnson told reporters outside the House chamber. "We're having thoughtful conversations, family conversations within the Republican conference and I believe we'll get there."

The temporary spending bill would [keep US government agencies and programs operating](#) for six months when the new budget year begins on October 1. However, it is tied to the SAVE Act; legislation that requires those who are voting to submit proof of citizenship. This requirement is something that is universally opposed by Democrats and some Republicans, considering that it could complicate the national voter registration process before a major election.

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Former President Donald Trump, who still holds a strong influence over the Republican party, has encouraged right-wing lawmakers to do exactly as the house speaker did, and prevent any legislation from passing if the SAVE Act is not a part of that legislation. But lawmakers have just over two weeks to avert a government shutdown, and are most likely anxious to do so, as they wish to return to their campaign trails in the lead-up to a major election.

"If Republicans in the House, and Senate, don't get absolute assurances on Election Security, THEY SHOULD, IN NO WAY, SHAPE, OR FORM, GO FORWARD WITH A CONTINUING RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET," Trump posted on his social network, Truth Social.

Congress ran into the same problem last year, and just narrowly avoided a shutdown. At the time, the Republican party appeared to be divided between MAGA Republicans (Trump loyalists) and more traditional, conservative Republicans. Former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) was pushed out of his role as a result.

Biden Admin pleads lawmakers to include \$5.8bn Ukraine aid extension in spending bill.

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The Hill that there may be some legal challenges in trying to allocate all \$5.8 billion at once, as Biden administration lawyers are worried there might not be “an authority to permit transfers of munitions that are not currently in stock, or considered in surplus”.

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Americans Sentenced in Congo Coup Plot, Recalling History of US Interference in Africa

The United States has been implicated in a number of regime change operations throughout the continent in the name of protecting Western interests.

Light is being shed on the bloody history of US interference in Africa as a pair of American citizens are being tried for their role in a failed overthrow of the leader of one of largest countries on the continent.

Tyler Thompson and Marcel Malanga, along with a number of British, Belgian, Canadian and Congolese accomplices, were [sentenced](#) Friday for their part in the audacious coup plot against Democratic Republic of the Congo President Felix Tshisekedi. The pair were charged with a number of offenses, including terrorism, murder, criminal association and illegal possession of weapons.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against Thompson and Malanga, although the defendants are set to appeal the sentence. The DRC reinstated the death penalty earlier this year as the country is plagued by attacks by armed groups, although the country has yet to carry out a death sentence.

The pair of Americans joined a group of dozens of paramilitary fighters who descended upon the home of Congo’s parliamentary speaker Vital Kamerhe in the early hours of May 19 before heading to the presidential residence. The group was repelled by the Congolese military after a spurt of gunfire as Malanga’s father Christian Malanga livestreamed the incident. The elder Malanga and five others were shot dead after resisting arrest, according to Congolese officials. US government officials are following Thompson and Malanga’s case although, notably, the United States has not determined that the two are wrongfully convicted.

Evidence has not yet emerged of a US intelligence connection to the coup attempt, but the DRC has attempted to maintain a sovereign and independent diplomatic path in recent years. In March, [Russia announced its approval](#) of a draft military cooperation agreement with the country; the two nations have also explored collaboration in trade, investment, and humanitarian concerns.

“Why do they want to judge us when it comes to Africans?” asked President Tshisekedi in May, [rebuffing attempts by the Biden administration](#) to pressure African countries against maintaining ties with Russia. “One should not judge us. We have the right to the friends we want and we are friends to all those who want to be our friends... Russians want friendship with Africa, DR Congo, why should we refuse?”

Governments across Africa have also [moved to sever ties with Ukraine](#) in recent months as the Kiev regime has been implicated in support for terrorism across the continent.

The US has a long history of [interference](#) across Africa and in the Congo in particular, where the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) worked with the country's former colonial master Belgium to [capture and kill the DRC's first prime minister](#) Patrice Lumumba in 1960.

Lumumba has since been honored as a martyr of the anti-imperialist and pan-Africanist cause, [including within Russia](#), which is respected across Africa for its role in supporting anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements during the 20th century. Lumumba drew the ire of Western intelligence agencies after he sought friendship with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev after being repeatedly rebuffed by the West.

Diplomatic cables have also [revealed](#) that the United States was aware of the 1987 coup plot against Burkina Faso's revolutionary President Thomas Sankara, an incident in which the US and France have long been suspected of playing a role. Sankara railed against the influence of US-backed financial institutions in Africa such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which he accused of neocolonial pillaging across the continent. He also stood in solidarity with liberation movements in Palestine, Grenada, South Africa and Nicaragua.

The United States would work closely with Sankara's successor, President Blaise Compaoré, who was more amenable towards the Reagan administration's favored neoliberal economic policies. Compaoré resumed cooperation with the IMF and World Bank and ruled Burkina Faso for 27 years before finally being removed from office during a 2014 uprising.

Sankara's influence has [enjoyed a revival recently](#) throughout the African continent, with South Africa's Economic Freedom Fighters party citing him as a primary influence.

"Imperialism is a system of exploitation that occurs not only in the brutal form of those who come with guns to conquer territory," said the former leader. "Imperialism often occurs in more subtle forms: a loan, food aid, blackmail. We are fighting this system that allows a handful of men on Earth to rule all of humanity."

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US at Mercy of Neoconservative 'Death Wish' Amid Dearth of Responsible Leadership

The future of humanity lies in the hands of US President Joe Biden, according to one analyst, an historically hawkish figure within the Democratic Party.

US Vice President Kamala Harris raised eyebrows last week when her 2024 presidential campaign received one highly unusual vote of confidence.

Former Republican Vice President Dick Cheney, often considered the hawkish power behind the throne during George W. Bush's stint in the White House, revealed he would be voting for Harris in November in an announcement made by his daughter, former Congresswoman Liz Cheney.

The unexpected cross-party endorsement – unthinkable during the highly-partisan early 2000s – represented the latest sign that Harris is consolidating support from the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party. Cheney joins hawkish figures such as Cindy McCain and Iraq War architect Bill Kristol who have thrown their lot in with the Democrats in recent years amid former President Donald Trump's chaotic leadership of the GOP.

The development promises to boost Harris's support from moderate Republicans but also speaks to the lack of ideological diversity among America's foreign policy establishment argues Peter Kuznick, a professor of history and director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at American University. Kuznick joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines program Friday](#) to discuss prospects for peace as the United States backs military operations in Ukraine and Palestine's Gaza Strip.

"It is kind of stunning that we are actually on the brink of a third world war and it's not being discussed by everybody everywhere," said Kuznick, who co-authored the documentary film series *The Untold History of the United States* with director Oliver Stone. "During the Cold War we respected each other's red lines. And when the Soviets crossed America's red line in 1962 and put those missiles in Cuba, the world stopped and we figured out a way."

"But Kennedy and Khrushchev did everything they could, and they still realized that they had lost control, which is why right after the Cuban Missile Crisis ended, largely by luck, Khrushchev wrote a letter to Kennedy and said, 'from evil, some good must come,'" Kuznick highlighted.

"The good is that now people have felt more tangibly the... burning flames of thermonuclear war and have a more clear realization of the threat looming over them if the arms race is not stopped," [wrote](#) the Soviet leader in his famous missive to the young US president. Khrushchev proposed disarmament, a nonaggression treaty between NATO and the Warsaw Pact and the elimination of "everything in our relations capable of generating a new crisis."

Kennedy, although not willing to go so far, still understood the world had only narrowly avoided nuclear armageddon. He took steps to permanently reduce tensions, establishing new channels of communication between the US and Russia and declaring that the two world superpowers must never again allow tensions to escalate in such fashion.

"Khrushchev said, 'what difference would it make if we're communist or capitalist or Christians or Jews or Muslims or Buddhists?'" Kuznick noted. "'What difference would it make if there's a war? Who could tell us apart after we're all dead?'"

"It looks like we have a collective death wish for the human species right now," the historian lamented. "It's, to me, horrifying. The world rests in the hands, in many senses, of Biden, who's really not all there and has very hawkish instincts. He's an old cold warrior and initially denies every new weapon system that the Ukrainians ask for but then caves into the pressure. And it looks like he's already caved into the pressure again on using the ATACMS missiles to strike deep inside of Russia."

"And the fact that the Democrats are so happy to embrace Dick Cheney of all people – they have turned into the new neocons!" Kuznick claimed. "When it comes to foreign policy, they may even be more hawkish... So we don't have any adults in the room right now. There's no Jack Kennedy."

"It's part of a lesson which is why we have to wake people up and mobilize because this is just too dangerous, too precarious a situation to allow this to keep going the way it's going."

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Navy Faces Breakdown in Discipline, Effectiveness as US Military Stretched Thin

A lack of manpower is increasingly causing problems across the US armed forces, with most services failing to meet recruiting goals for several years.

“Are they stopping the Houthis? No. Are they gonna continue? Yes.”

Such was President Joe Biden’s response earlier this year when asked about the effectiveness of the US Navy’s strikes on Ansar Allah in the Red Sea.

The armed group, which maintains control of a slice of western Yemen, has blocked Israeli ships from the crucial sea route since late last year in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. The United States along with its British ally has since attempted to defeat the Houthis’ blockade, causing the group to expand it to US and UK-flagged ships as well.

Biden is well known for his tendency towards verbal gaffes but the comment [made headlines](#) as a particularly poignant encapsulation of the futile US effort. Reports indicate that the use of drones, as elsewhere, has upended conventional wisdom, with the United States’ expensive equipment outmaneuvered via low-cost unmanned aircraft.

But the US Navy’s failure to adapt to the modern realities of asymmetric warfare is not the only way it is falling short, according to numerous critics. Author and 30-year veteran of the US Defense Department Michael Maloof joined [Sputnik’s Political Misfits program Friday](#) to discuss the breakdown in discipline and effectiveness of the service.

“In August USNI, the US Naval Institute News, reported that the military sealift command, which operates the logistics ships that refuel and supply naval ships, might have to sideline 17 support ships for a lack of manpower,” noted host Michell Witte. “It is not clear what this would do to the Navy’s readiness, but I don’t think our official position is that these are 17 totally superfluous ships.”

A lack of manpower is increasingly causing problems across the US armed forces, with most services failing to meet recruiting goals for several years. The crisis has spurred the US to respond in a number of ways, primarily by loosening requirements for Americans to enlist. Military planners are seeking to reduce the manpower ostensibly required across a number of positions amid [a major restructuring of the armed forces](#) to fight an anticipated war with Russia and China in the Pacific region.

“If you cannot provide the logistics for your ships they’re dead in the water,” said Maloof, a former senior security policy analyst in the office of the Secretary of Defense, arguing that the shortage of supply vessels represents a major problem for the service. The Navy is attempting to respond to the crisis in part by extending the length of time service members are on duty during each rotation, leading to exhaustion and diminished readiness.

But the Navy has also been plagued by disciplinary problems, with an embarrassing story emerging recently about the commander of a destroyer who was relieved of duty after displaying a rifle with a backwards-mounted scope on Instagram. “The image brought the Navy considerable ridicule on social media,” [noted](#) one report.

Meanwhile the Navy Times reported a story earlier this month about more than a dozen chiefs and senior chiefs conspiring to install an unauthorized Wi-Fi system on a littoral combat ship – a serious security risk.

“It’s a sign of an overall breakdown of discipline and focus and attention,” said Maloof. “It also shows a very serious lack of strategic thinking and a breakdown in discipline, as I said, for those

[routers] to be put on that ship. It was really a security breach and the chief, whoever she was that was involved in and responsible for that, should not have been downgraded, she should have been fired.”

“During the Reagan administration we had a 600-ship Navy,” the analyst noted. “As of May of 2024 the Navy is down to 296 battleforce ships and it's only by 2030 they hope to come back up to 300, which is only half of what we had during the Reagan years in the '80s... Consider that we have actually increased our commitments around the world. In fact, they haven't diminished, they've increased and we're now fighting multi-front conflicts all at once now.”

“When I was at the Pentagon we were looking at force projections that allowed for a two-front war. Well, that's gone. It's gone, which shows that we're just overcommitted... We're fighting now with one arm tied behind our back. That means that we're making commitments in very heated areas of the world just with half of what we had 20, 30 years ago.”

“We need better strategic thinking on just what our priorities really are in this world,” Maloof concluded. “Because we're fighting everybody's wars now and we're depleting our own supplies by providing weapons to proxies and it's affecting our own readiness as a consequence.”

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Hillary Clinton Derides Palestinians, College Students in Leaked Excerpts From New Book

The former secretary of state claimed pro-Palestine protesters lacked an understanding of the history of the Middle East, an attack she made earlier this year on liberal cable television channel MSNBC.

Former US Senator and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sparked controversy this week when leaked excerpts from her upcoming book criticized pro-Palestine campus protesters and Palestinian political leadership.

Clinton described a Columbia University campus “tense with shock and grief” after Hamas’s October 7 attack on Israel last year. The former first lady has lectured on the Ivy League campus since January 2023 and described seeking advice from the university’s School of International and Public Affairs Dean Keren Yarhi-Milo, who grew up in Israel and served as an intelligence officer in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Clinton also described a tense environment during classes after the event, claiming she was “troubled” by a student who asked why Hamas is considered a terrorist organization but the IDF is not. The IDF has killed an estimated 41,118 Palestinians amid its military operation in Gaza and [traces its roots to self-avowed Zionist terrorist groups](#) such as Lehi, Irgun, and Haganah.

The former secretary of state also claimed campus protesters lacked an understanding of the history of the region, an [attack](#) she made earlier this year on liberal cable television channel MSNBC.

“A lot of young people... don’t know very much at all about the history of the Middle East, or frankly about history, in many areas of the world, including in our own country,” Clinton chided in comments that provoked significant criticism on social media.

A group of students [walked out](#) of Clinton's class at Columbia in November to protest the school's response to pro-Palestine activism on campus, while earlier this year demonstrators [disrupted](#) her appearance at her alma mater Wellesley College.

Opinion surveys show a significant age [divide](#) on perceptions of the Palestine-Israel conflict in the United States, with younger Americans – increasingly including young Jews – more likely to express sympathy for the Palestinian cause. Some 48% of people from 18 to 29 years old say Israel is intentionally killing civilians, while 55% [oppose](#) further US aid to Israel. There is broad [support](#) among the age group for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

Clinton also took the opportunity in her new book to repeat a common line of attack against former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, whom she blames for the failure of peace talks organized by her husband former President Bill Clinton at Camp David in 2000. But Arafat had warned Clinton that “the two sides were not ready” before finally agreeing to take part in the discussions after the former president assured him he would not be blamed if talks failed. “Clinton put enormous pressure on Arafat to come [to the peace talks],” recalled international relations scholar John Mearsheimer of the discussions. “Arafat said, ‘I’ll go to Camp David, but I want to be clear that I don’t think this is going to work out, and if it doesn’t work out, I don’t want you to blame me. In other words, I don’t want you to stab me in the back.’”

“So they went to Camp David, they negotiated,” he continued. “It was a very dysfunctional negotiating process... And of course, the negotiations failed, right? Camp David broke up and, of course, Bill Clinton stabbed Arafat in the back. He blamed Arafat for the failure. And the story that Hillary is now telling is the story that Bill told after Camp David failed.”

“If you talk to most supporters of Israel in the United States today, they’ll tell you that story every time. It’s a story that’s constantly repeated. And Hillary now repeating it will just give more ammunition to Israel’s supporters to make the argument that ‘we’d all be living happily ever after had it not been for Arafat,’ which is another way of saying ‘if it hadn’t been for those evil Palestinians.’”

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

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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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■ Americans sentenced in Democratic Republic of Congo coup plot, recalling history of US interference in Africa

Tyler Thompson and Marcel Malanga, along with a number of British, Belgian, Canadian and Congolese accomplices, were sentenced for their part in the audacious coup plot against Democratic Republic of the Congo President Felix Tshisekedi. The two were charged with a number of offenses, including terrorism, murder, criminal association and illegal possession of weapons.

The pair of Americans joined a group of dozens of paramilitary fighters who descended upon the home of Congo’s parliamentary speaker Vital Kamerhe in the early hours of May 19 before heading to the presidential residence. The group was repelled by the Congolese military after a spurt of gunfire as Malanga’s father Christian Malanga livestreamed the incident.

US government officials are following Thompson and Malanga’s case although, notably, the US has not determined that the two are wrongfully convicted.

Evidence has not yet emerged of a US intelligence connection to the plot, but the DRC has attempted to maintain an independent diplomatic path in recent years. In March, Russia announced its approval of a draft military cooperation agreement with the country; the two nations have also explored collaboration in trade, investment, and humanitarian concerns.

“We have the right to the friends we want and we are friends to all those who want to be our friends,” said President Tshisekedi in May, rebuffing attempts by the US to pressure African countries against maintaining ties with Russia.

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US at mercy of neoconservative 'death wish' amid dearth of responsible leadership

"People have felt more tangibly the... burning flames of thermonuclear war and have a more clear realization of the threat looming over them if the arms race is not stopped," wrote Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in a famous missive to US President John F Kennedy in the days after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The continued existence of humanity was secured through the cooperation of those two remarkable leaders, notes professor of history and director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at American University Peter Kuznick. But the academic questions whether the current US president would perform similarly in such a scenario.

"It looks like we have a collective death wish for the human species right now," Kuznick lamented. "It's, to me, horrifying. The world rests in the hands, in many senses, of Biden, who's really not all there and has very hawkish instincts. He's an old cold warrior and initially denies every new weapon system that the Ukrainians ask for but then caves into the pressure."

"And it looks like he's already caved into the pressure again on using the ATACMS missiles to strike deep inside of Russia."

"The fact that the Democrats are so happy to embrace Dick Cheney of all people – they have turned into the new neocons!" Kuznick claimed, referring to the former Republican Vice President's recent endorsement of Kamala Harris. "When it comes to foreign policy, they may even be more hawkish... So we don't have any adults in the room right now. There's no Jack Kennedy."

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Hillary Clinton criticizes Palestinians, college students in leaked excerpts from new book

Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sparked controversy this week when leaked excerpts from her upcoming book criticized pro-Palestine campus protesters.

Clinton described a Columbia University campus "tense with shock and grief" after Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel. The former first lady has lectured on the Ivy League campus since January 2023 and described seeking advice from the university's School of International and Public Affairs Dean Keren Yarhi-Milo, who grew up in Israel and served as an intelligence officer in the Israel Defense Forces.

Clinton also described a tense environment during classes after the event, claiming she was "troubled" by a student who asked why Hamas is considered a terrorist organization but the IDF

is not. The IDF has killed an estimated 41,118 Palestinians amid its military operation in Gaza and traces its roots to self-avowed Zionist terrorist groups such as Lehi, Irgun, and Haganah.

The former secretary of state also claimed campus protesters lacked an understanding of the history of the region, an attack she made earlier this year on liberal cable television channel MSNBC.

“A lot of young people... don’t know very much at all about the history of the Middle East, or frankly about history, in many areas of the world, including in our own country,” Clinton chided in comments that provoked significant criticism online.

Clinton also took the opportunity to repeat a common line of attack against former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who she blames for the failure of peace talks organized by her husband former President Bill Clinton in 2000.

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Biden After Trump’s Second Assassination Attempt Says US Secret Service ‘Needs More Help’

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Monday following the second assassination attempt on Donald Trump that the Secret Service “needs more help” in order to fulfill its duty to protect presidential candidates.

“The [Secret] Service needs more help, and I think Congress should respond to their needs,” Biden told reporters.

The second assassination attempt on Donald Trump occurred on Sunday at the Trump International Golf Club West Palm Beach while the former president was playing golf. Police said Secret Service agents opened fire on the alleged assassin, who was hiding in the bushes. The man fled the scene but was later apprehended. An AK-47-style rifle was found at the scene, along with two backpacks and a GoPro camera. The FBI has joined the investigation, and US authorities are treating it as an assassination attempt.

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US Not Planning to Impose Restrictions for Travelers From Africa Due to Mpox – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – The United States does not plan to impose mandatory vaccination orders or other restrictions for travelers from Africa due to the mpox outbreak, the US State Department’s Global AIDS Coordinator and Senior Bureau Official for Global Health Security and Diplomacy John Nkengasong said on Monday.

“The US currently does not plan to put in place travel restrictions for people traveling from Africa. That is really a rumor,” Nkengasong told reporters when asked to comment on whether the US had imposed travel restrictions or would consider mandatory vaccinations.

Nkengasong pointed out that the US is committed to partnering with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where the epicenter of the outbreak was identified, and other states in fighting the disease.

"The US government plans to continue deepening partnership and collaboration with in support of the DRC and the neighboring countries," he added.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared in August the mpox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.

Mpox, also known as monkeypox, is a rare infectious disease that is also transmitted between people. It is usually a mild disease that most people recover from within a few weeks, but some may have complications. The initial symptoms of mpox include fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, enlarged lymph nodes, chills and fatigue. A rash may develop, often starting on the face and then spreading to other parts of the body.

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Biden After Trump's Second Assassination Attempt Says US Secret Service 'Needs More Help'

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DeSantis Says Florida Will Conduct Own Investigation Into Trump Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said on Sunday that the State of Florida would conduct its own investigation into an alleged assassination attempt on former US President Donald Trump.

Earlier on Sunday, US Secret Service agents opened fire on a gunman that was 300-500 yards (270-450 meters) away from Trump at a golf course in Florida. Law enforcement detained a man in connection with the incident.

"The State of Florida will be conducting its own investigation regarding the attempted assassination at Trump International Golf Club," DeSantis said on X.

People deserve the truth about the alleged assassin and how he was able to get within 500 yards of the former president and current Republican presidential nominee, DeSantis said.

US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene identified the alleged assassin as Ryan Wesley Routh, although the suspect's identity has not been publicly confirmed by law enforcement.

Routh is "obsessed" with the conflict in Ukraine, Greene said. The congresswoman shared posts from social media accounts believed to belong to Routh, including a post from May related to getting invitations for soldiers to fight on behalf of Ukraine.

Trump also survived an assassination attempt at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania in July.

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US Congresswoman Greene Says Trump's Attempted Assassin 'Obsessed' With Ukraine Conflict

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene said on Sunday that the man who allegedly attempted to assassinate former US President Donald Trump at one of his golf clubs in Florida was obsessed with the conflict in Ukraine.

"The man that tried to assassinate [Trump] today is named Ryan Wesley Routh... he's obsessed with the Ukraine war, which is funded by the US," Greene said on X.

However, US law enforcement officials have yet to confirm the identity of the alleged assassin. Greene shared images of social media posts that appear to originate from Routh, including a post from May related to getting invitations for soldiers to fight on behalf of Ukraine.

An account on X that appears to belong to Routh posted multiple statements in favor of US support for Ukraine since February 2022. The account also posted contact information, including the email address "aid.in.ukraine@gmail.com."

Greene noted that Routh had posted contact information multiple times and had questioned for whom he works.

Earlier on Sunday, US Secret Service agents opened fire on a gunman who was positioned 300-500 yards (270-450 meters) away from Trump with a rifle and a scope.

Police detained the man near the scene of the incident, which is being investigated as an assassination attempt. Trump was the target of another assassination attempt in July at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

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Russian Forces Find Map of US Base in Captured Ukrainian Bradley

(Adds details in paras 2-4)

DONETSK, September 14 (Sputnik) - Russian soldiers have discovered a map of the US military base at Fort Irwin, which the US military forgot in one of its Bradley fighting vehicles that it transferred to Ukraine that was later captured in the Kupyansk area, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

At Fort Irwin, US soldiers are practicing in conditions simulating the area of the Russian special operation, and the base is recruiting "actors" with knowledge of the Russian language to participate in these exercises, according to the document obtained by Sputnik.

Sputnik has found online ads seeking Russian-speaking individuals for the Fort Irwin training center. The Check Defense company is looking for "role-play professionals," who can replicate cultural nuances and assist the US Defense Department.

Applicants must have excellent oral and written skills in both English and Russian. Roles include local authorities, national security forces, refugees and hostile combatants. The ads also invite candidates fluent in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Korean and Pashto.

Fort Irwin is one of the largest military training centers in the United States located in the Mojave desert in California, where soldiers train to operate armored vehicles as part of brigades.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the United States has supplied Kiev with more than 300 Bradley vehicles. A significant number of them have been destroyed by the Russian forces on the battlefield in Ukraine.

The Kremlin has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev, saying it would lead to further escalation of the conflict. In April 2022, Russia sent a diplomatic note to all NATO countries on the issue of arms supplies to Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned that any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine would become a legitimate target for Russia.

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Russian Forces Find Map of US Base in Captured Ukrainian Bradley - Sputnik Reporter

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Trump Vow to End Ukraine Conflict Likely Accelerating US Military Plans - Ex-Pentagon Aide

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump's claims that he will settle the conflict between Ukraine and Russia as soon as he is elected may already be accelerating US military plans toward that end, former Pentagon analyst and retired US Air Force Lt. Colonel Karen Kwiatkowski told Sputnik.

In his first debate against vice president Kamala Harris, Trump vowed to immediately end the Russia-Ukraine conflict if elected president in November. Trump vowed to even "get it done" before taking office as president-elect. Trump's running mate, Senator JD Vance, in an interview on Thursday, said the plan would entail Russia retaining the land they have and the establishment of a demilitarized zone.

"In talking about the ease and speed at which he will 'end the war' in Ukraine, Trump has already leveraged a race to the end by the current administration," Kwiatkowski said. "By advancing an idea of a quick end, he has already driven the deep state to accelerate its own planning, primarily to ensure public and private money flows for resource redevelopment, extraction, and military bases are all primed and in place before Trump arrives."

The US-fostered war in Ukraine has run its course in terms of Washington's main objectives, including its bid to reduce Russian power and influence and boost the rationale for NATO spending.

"The US and NATO are largely tapped out in terms of conventional ability to prosecute the war against Russia via Ukraine, and Ukraine herself is also logistically and economically exhausted," she said.

Despite the rhetoric from the neocons and Harris herself, Kwiatkowski believes the Biden administration is already trying to wind down the war, reducing support and posturing for peace, in step with similar intentions from Germany and other NATO allies this month.

The plan, Kwiatkowski added, could entail Russia retaining what they have plus extensive security guarantees, and Poland, Romania, and Lithuania getting compensated for their loyalty. The US will continue activities in the region, she added, including the establishment of bases.

"The US intends to continue building massive bases like Camp Bondsteel not only in Romania and Poland, but in the newly established and depopulated wastelands of eastern Ukraine, and this goes hand in hand with other economic exploitation," Kwiatkowski said.

The US plan to build up Eastern Europe would be agreeable to Western Europe, "which does not want US installations, test ranges, and military biolabs in their own countries," Kwiatkowski said.

TRUMP'S OPTIONS

Steps Trump could take in the meantime include announcing cabinet posts to the State Department, CIA and the Defense Department, such as experts like retired US Army Colonel Douglas MacGregor and Professor Jeffery Sachs, among others, the former Pentagon analyst said. Trump could also establish back channels with Russia and Ukrainian leaders, Kwiatkowski said.

The reason Trump has not done this, she added, is to prevent the reactionary neoconservative cry of "Russia! Russia! Russia!" The Biden team is already attempting to shut up these potential appointees, probably for this reason, Kwiatkowski said.

"Should Trump name his 'Ukraine team' now, it may, or may not, be able to get in front and outmaneuver the deep state operatives who are already moving to end this phase of the US-Russia proxy war on terms agreeable to its own devious and imperial objectives in that part of the world," Kwiatkowski said.

If Trump is elected, in January 2025 he will be presiding over an already Western-accepted reduction of Ukraine, she argued. He can end US war support to Ukraine, which will end most of the active fighting, and bring in new Ukrainian leadership, Kwiatkowski said.

However, to "end" the war that way, Trump will have to promise that already planned investment in rebuilding Ukraine remains on the table to sell a peace program to the "neoconservative-leaning and heavily Democrat Congress," Kwiatkowski said.

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Boeing Starliner Problems Were Trials Sent By God - US Astronaut Butch Wilmore

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - The Boeing Starliner's many engineering problems that have stranded its two-person crew on the International Space Station (ISS) for what will be an eight month stay were trials sent by God to endure, learn from and overcome, US astronaut Barry "Butch" Wilmore told his audience in a press conference.

"We are trained to [exercise] resiliency... You have to go with what the Good Lord gives you," Wilmore said in his press conference from the ISS on Friday.

Wilmore acknowledged there had been problems with the Starliner, which suffered five of its 28 maneuvering thrusters failing on its June 5 flight to the space station along with five separate helium leaks.

"We've got lessons learned that we'll go through. There are things to change that need to change. We found things that we were not comfortable with. There are other tests and assessments that need to be done," he said.

Wilmore and his Starliner crew colleague Sunita "Sunni" Williams are now scheduled to return to earth as part of the current Crew 9 ISS rotation in February 2025.

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Four IS Leaders Among 14 Killed in Joint Raid With Iraqi Forces on August 29 - CENTCOM

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - Four leaders of the Islamic State (IS, outlawed in Russia) terrorist group were among 14 IS members killed during a joint operation between US and Iraqi forces in Western Iraq in late August, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

"As part of the on-going post-raid assessment, CENTCOM can confirm that four ISIS leaders were killed including: Ahmad Hamid Husayn Abd-al-Jalil al-Ithawi, responsible for all operations in Iraq, Abu Hammam, responsible for overseeing all operations in Western Iraq, Abu-'Ali al-Tunisi, responsible for overseeing technical development, and Shakir Abud Ahmad al-Issawi, responsible for overseeing military operations in Western Iraq," CENTCOM said on Friday.

The raid served to disrupt and degrade the Islamic State's ability to plan, organize, and carry out attacks in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, CENTCOM added.

CENTCOM previously said 15 IS fighters were killed by US forces and Iraqi Security Forces during the raid.

According to CENTCOM, the militants were armed with numerous weapons, grenades, and explosive "suicide" belts. Several US troops were reportedly injured during the operation but no deaths were reported.

There were no civilian casualties, CENTCOM noted.

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White House Makes No Announcement on Backing Ukraine Long-Range Fires After Starmer Visit

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - The White House made no announcement about approving Ukraine's use of Western-supplied weapons for deep strikes inside Russia following the meeting between President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer earlier in the day, according to the White House readout of the meeting.

"The leaders had an in-depth discussion on a range of foreign policy issues of mutual interest," the White House said on Friday. "They reaffirmed their unwavering support for Ukraine as it continues to defend against Russia's aggression."

The White House makes no further mention of Ukraine in the press release, but before the bilateral meeting, Biden told reporters he and his UK counterpart would discuss Kiev's request for permission to use Western-supplied missiles for deep strikes inside Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned the West of approving Ukraine's use of Western-supplied weapons for deep strikes inside Russian territory, adding that any such decision would be considered the entering of NATO into a direct conflict with Russia.

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White house did not announce any decision on providing Ukraine weapons for long-range strikes into Russia following meeting between Biden, Starmer

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Trump Won't Sell Shares In Media Stock Which Has Plunged To Record Low

NEW YORK, September 14 (Sputnik) - Former US president Donald Trump said on Friday he will not dilute his stake in the media company associated with his name, saying the ability to reach people mattered to him more than the money he could get from cashing out.

"A lot of people think that I will sell my shares. I'm not going to sell my shares," Trump said, referring to his personal holdings in the Trump Media & Technology Group Corp, which trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the DJT symbol that takes after his initials.

Trump said he started the company as a way to get his voice out after he was banned almost simultaneously from the Twitter and Facebook social media platforms in January 2021 for the storming of the US Capitol building by his supporters in events that followed his 2020 election loss.

Twitter, rebranded X, allowed Trump back in a few months ago after its new billionaire owner Elon Musk voiced support for the former president's campaign to recapture the White House in the November elections. While Trump acknowledged that he was unlikely to experience another

booting from the platform under Musk, he said he still wanted his own media brand.

"It works so well ... I use it as a method of getting out my word," he said, referring to DJT's Truth Social app, which is at the heart of the company. "It's my voice. The reason I built it is because I don't want to have my voice shut down, I use it as a method of getting out my word ... It works so well."

DJT's stock price hit a record low of \$15.30 per share this week, tumbling 70% from the March high of \$79.38 when it made its debut.

The plunge was in response to the diminishing turn in Trump's political fortunes of late, as well as the approaching end-September date that will allow him to cash out his personal holdings of some 115 million shares in the company, which can net him about \$1.7 billion.

Trump dismissed any notion that he would dilute his holdings in the company. "I don't need the money," he said. "I didn't do it [build the company] for the money."

Republican Trump's standings in the 2024 presidential election appeared to take a blow this week as the Reuters-Ipsos poll showed him trailing his Democrat challenger, Vice President Kamala Harris, by five points.

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Blinken Discusses Expanding Trade, Energy Ties With Armenian Prime Minister - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan discussed bolstering ties between the United States and Armenia on trade and energy, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"Secretary Blinken and Prime Minister Pashinyan discussed the expanding US-Armenia relationship, including cooperation on energy, trade and investment, and education," Miller said in a statement on Friday.

The two officials spoke on a telephone call held on Thursday, the statement said.

Blinken and Pashinyan also reaffirmed the importance of a "durable and dignified" peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the statement added.

Blinken welcomed progress between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including on a border delimitation regulation agreement, according to the statement.

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Biden on Putin's Warning of Direct Conflict Says Doesn't Think Much About Russian Leader

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden, when asked about Russian President Vladimir Putin's warning of a possible direct conflict between NATO and Russia, said he doesn't think much about the Russian leader.

"I don't think much about Vladimir Putin," Biden said Friday when asked about the Russian leader's red line.

Putin is warning that the United States and NATO are risking direct involvement in a war with

Russia if they lift restrictions placed on Ukraine's use of Western-supplied long-range weapons that prevent strikes deep in Russian territory.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer is reportedly in Washington on Friday to try to persuade Biden to greenlight approval for Ukraine's use of long-range weapons, but the White House said earlier that no change in this US policy should be expected after the bilateral meeting.

Earlier this week, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump criticized Biden for not making an effort to talk to Putin in more than two years to try to resolve the Ukraine conflict. Trump claims that he will be able to broker a peace plan immediately if he wins the presidential election in November.

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UK Prime Minister Says Coming Months in Ukraine Conflict Will be 'Crucial'

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the coming weeks will be a crucial period in the Ukraine conflict and underscored the importance of supporting Kiev's needs.

"I think the next few weeks and months could be crucial," Starmer said alongside President Joe Biden at the White House on Friday. "Very, very important that we support Ukraine in this vital war of freedom."

Biden said he and Starmer will discuss important matters related to Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific region, and the Middle East, including ongoing Gaza hostage and ceasefire talks.

US media reported that Starmer's visit to Washington is to urge Biden to support long-range fires deeper into Russian territory. The UK reportedly wants to allow Ukraine to use long-range Storm Shadow missiles to hit targets deeper in Russian territory, but it is unable to because these missiles have US technology and require permission from the US government for any such strikes.

The White House said earlier that no change in US policy should be expected following the meeting on Friday between the US and UK leaders.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned the West of approving the use of Western-supplied weapons for deep strikes inside Russian territory, adding that any such decision would be considered the entering of NATO into a direct conflict with Russia.

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US Navy Orders Eight More Oil Refueling Ships to Serve Surface Fleet - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has awarded the National Steel and Shipbuilding Company in San Diego a more than \$6.75 billion block contract to build eight T-AO 205 John Lewis class oil refueling ships, the Defense Department announced in a press release.

"National Steel and Shipbuilding Company [of] San Diego, California, is awarded a

\$6,754,785,160 ... block buy contract for detail design and construction of eight T-AO 205 John Lewis class fleet replenishment oiler ships (T-AO 214 through 221)," the release said on Friday.

More than half of the work on the eight ships will be performed in San Diego with the rest at various locations across the United States and in Mexicali, Mexico (6%), the release said.

"Fiscal 2024 shipbuilding and conversion (Navy) funds in the amount of \$780 million will be obligated at time of award and will not expire at the end of the current fiscal year," the release added.

The Naval Sea Systems Command in Washington, DC is the contracting activity for the project, according to the release.

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Trump Says Voting for Harris is Voting for War With Russia, Bringing Back Military Draft

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - A vote for US Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election is a vote in favor of war with Russia, former US President Donald Trump said.

"A vote for Comrade Kamala Harris is a vote for war with Russia," Trump said on Friday via Truth Social.

Trump has repeatedly said that the conflict in Ukraine would not have happened if he were reelected as US president in 2020. Trump has also said that he would work to end the conflict if elected in 2024.

Moreover, a vote for Harris is a vote for bringing back a military draft in the United States, Trump said.

Trump said that a vote for him is a vote for prosperity and peace.

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Stranded Starliner Pilot Wilmore Files US Election Voting Papers From ISS - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - US astronaut Barry "Butch" Wilmore, whose eight to 10-day planned mission on the International Space Station (ISS) turned into an eight-month tour of duty because of problems with Boeing's over-budget and long-delayed Starliner, fulfilled a civic commitment by sending in his voting papers application for the November US presidential election, the veteran spacefarer said in a broadcast press conference.

"I sent down my application to vote today," Wilmore told his audience in the press conference on Friday. He also exhorted the American public to fulfill their civic duty and carry out their voting obligations in the national presidential election between incumbent Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump on November 5.

Astronaut Sunita "Sunni" Williams, another veteran US Navy pilot who partnered with Wilmore in flying the Starliner to the ISS, said she and Wilmore watched their spacecraft leave the space station and depart for Earth without them from the ISS viewing cupola with mixed feelings.

"It's risky and that's how it goes in this business. To be honest I was so happy to see it land with no problems. I had my fingers crossed," she said.

Wilmore said the whole experience of being shifted from a less than two-week mission to a longer than eight-month one with no warning had again confirmed to him the value of cultivating an attitude of resiliency and making the most of unexpected developments in life.

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Boeing's 30,000 Manufacturing Workers Go on Strike Landing Company in Deeper Crisis

(Updates with more details, background in paras 2-18)

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - More than 30,000 manufacturing employees of Boeing laid down their tools on Friday in the first strike in 16 years, landing the company that is already wallowing in \$60 billion debt and multiple safety issues into a deeper crisis.

Boeing shares hit a near two-year low as Fitch Ratings warned of a possible downgrade of the company's credit status in the event of an extended workers' strike.

Boeing's stock, a proxy of its credit standing, ended down almost 4% on the day and 40% on the year, at just below \$157 per share. Earlier on Friday, it fell to \$155.60 -- its lowest since a November 2022 bottom of \$141.54.

Fitch cautioned that if the strike dragged on with no conclusion in sight, Boeing may have to access new liquidity sources to adhere to its cash targets. That could bring more strain on a company that has already lost \$8 billion this year.

Boeing CFO Brian West acknowledged that a prolonged strike could jeopardize recovery, impact production and deliveries at the company. The company's goal of producing up to 38 aircraft per month by the end of the year might take longer, West said.

Boeing has orders for more than 5,500 airplanes but production is below expectation due to manufacturing issues and labor shortages. There are about 70 aircraft in the company's inventory now.

West said longer work disruption could end up "broadly impacting the industry."

Boeing is an important part of the US economy, employing almost 150,000 people and is also one of the country's largest exporters of passenger airplanes and military jets, but it also produces rockets and spacecraft.

Boeing workers at the company's plants in Seattle and Oregon have gathered since midnight after Thursday. Earlier, an overwhelming 95% of Boeing employees belonging to the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) union voted to strike and demand a 40% pay raise that has been resisted by management.

The Biden administration said it was trying to help the two sides reach an agreement.

"Administration officials are indeed in touch with Boeing and the machinists," White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said. "We encourage them to negotiate in good faith and work towards an agreement that gives employees benefits that they deserve."

Boeing had originally offered its machinists a wage increase of 25% over a four-year period that would have raised compensation by up to \$4,160 per worker, under the company's 401(k)

pension plan. The company had also agreed to cover more of their health care costs, provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave and make improvements to work-life balance, including reductions in mandatory overtime.

However, the company said it was now trying to up the offer.

"The message was clear that the tentative agreement we reached with IAM leadership was not acceptable to the members," the company said on its website. "We remain committed to resetting our relationship with our employees and the union and we are ready to get back to the table to reach a new agreement."

The last strike at Boeing in 2008 lasted more than 50 days and incurred the company an estimated loss of \$3 billion.

Jefferies aerospace analyst Sheila Kahyaoglu had previously estimated that a 30-day strike could be a \$1.5 billion hit for Boeing.

In 2019, two 737 MAX 8 crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia in October 2018 and March 2019 killed a combined 346 people, resulting in a temporary global grounding of the jets. Boeing announced then that it would compensate families and communities impacted by the fatal crashes by payouts totaling \$100 million.

The woes have continued this year after the door on one of its 737 MAX jets flown by Alaska Airlines blew out mid-flight on January 5. None of the people, including 171 passengers, were hurt and the plane made an emergency landing in Portland, in the US state of Oregon. Then, on August 28, a tire unexpectedly exploded on a Boeing 757 jet operated by Delta Air Lines at Atlanta's airport, killing two workers and seriously injuring a third.

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White House Says Biden Administration in Contact with Boeing, IAM

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) - The Biden Administration is in contact with Boeing and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) union, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said at a press briefing.

"Administration officials are indeed in touch with Boeing and the machinists," Jean-Pierre said on Friday.

Jean-Pierre added that the White House encourages all parties to negotiate in good faith and work towards an agreement that provides employees the benefits they deserve.

Earlier today, more than 30,000 Boeing employees have walked off its assembly lines in the first strike at the company in 16 years. They belong to the IAM union that is demanding a pay raise of 40%.

Boeing had offered an increase of 25% over a four-year period that would have raised compensation by up to \$4,160 per worker, under the company's 401(k) pension plan. It had also agreed to up health care coverage, provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave and make improvements to work-life balance, including reductions in mandatory overtime.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 14 (Sputnik) -

US SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIAN MEDIA

* The United States has imposed sanctions on the Russia's media group Rossiya Segodnya and its Director General Dmitry Kiselev for their roles in alleged covert influence operations, the US Treasury Department announced on Friday.

* A general license authorizing wind-down transactions with Russia's media groups Rossiya Segodnya and TV Novosti has been issued through November 13 following full blocking sanctions against the entities, the Treasury Department said.

* The United States will impose full blocking financial sanctions as part of its actions against the Russian media outlet RT, James Rubin, the director of the State Department's Global Engagement Center, said.

* The United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are launching a joint diplomatic campaign to push back against alleged Russian disinformation and covert influence, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

* Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told Sputnik that Blinken's actions should be treated as blockchain.

* The US State Department said that blocked Russian media outlets may continue to engage in journalism and media operations not prohibited by US sanctions.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Allowing Ukraine to utilize US technology to strike deep into Russia would not mean that the United States is entering directly into the Russia - Ukraine conflict, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Friday.

* The Defense Department has a \$5.9 billion remaining in the Ukraine Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA), with all but \$100 million set to expire by the end of the fiscal year on September 30, Pentagon spokesperson Patrick Ryder said.

* The escalating rhetoric indicates that the conflict in Ukraine is far from reaching its conclusion, the UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

* Canada fully supports Ukraine's ability to strike deep inside Russia with Western-supplied long-range weapons, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said,

* The US and UK talks on the possible strikes deep into Russia do not concern German weapons, as the decision not to deliver Taurus missiles to Kiev is unchanged, German Federal Government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said.

MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS

* Yemeni movement Ansar Allah, also known as the Houthis, has begun moving its paramilitary units into Syria to confront Israel, a source familiar with the matter told Sputnik on Friday.

* Participants in the meeting on Palestine in Madrid demanded the return of control of the

Rafah crossing to the Palestinian National Authority and the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip, including the Philadelphi Corridor, a joint statement said.

WESTERN POLICY ON DEEP STRIKES INSIDE RUSSIA

* The NATO countries will be in direct war with Russia if they lift the restrictions on the use of long-range weapons to strike deep inside Russia and Moscow will take "relevant decisions" in that case with all the consequences that would result for the aggressor nations, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

* The White House said that there will not be an imminent change to its policy restricting Ukraine from using long-range strike capabilities inside Russia.

* Kirby said on Friday that he would leave it to UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer to decide "what he wants to talk about" with respect to allowing Ukraine strike Russia with British long-range missiles.

US MILITARY SALES

* The US State Department approved a potential \$4.1 billion sale of aerial refueling aircraft to Japan, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Friday.

* The US State Department has approved a possible \$7.2 billion sale of F-35 fighter jets to Romania, the Defense Department said.

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Trump Pledges Large Deportations from Ohio, Plans to Return Migrants to Venezuela - Rally

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) — Former President Donald Trump pledged on Friday that there would be large deportations from Springfield, Ohio, with plans to send migrants back to Venezuela.

"We will do large deportations from Springfield, Ohio, large deportations. We're going to get these people out. We're bringing them back to Venezuela," Trump said during a press conference in California.

Trump added that there would be plans for the largest deportation in US history, starting with areas like Springfield and Aurora.

Earlier this week, Trump said during the debate with US Vice President Kamala Harris Immigrants are violently taking over towns and buildings in the United States.

Furthermore, the immigrants were brought into the US by the Biden-Harris administration. Trump's comment comes following disputed reports about Haitian migrants in Springfield killing and eating pets. Trump's comment also references the purported takeover of an apartment building by Venezuelan gang members in Aurora.

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US Imposes Sanctions Against Rossiya Segodnya, Director General Dmitry Kiselev - Treasury

(Updates with more details in paras 3-13)

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on the Russian media group Rossiya Segodnya and its Director General Dmitry Kiselev for their roles in alleged covert influence operations, the US Treasury Department announced on Friday.

Earlier in the day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the United States imposed new sanctions against three entities and two individuals for their alleged disinformation campaign on Russia's behalf.

The Treasury Department issued a general license authorizing wind-down transactions with Russia's Rossiya Segodnya and TV Novosti through November 13 after it imposed full blocking sanctions against the two entities.

"Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this general license, all transactions prohibited by Executive Order (E.O.) 14024 that are ordinarily incident and necessary to the wind down of any transaction involving one or more of the following blocked entities are authorized through 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time, November 13, 2024," the license said.

However, the US State Department said that the blocked Russian media outlets may continue to engage in journalism and media operations not prohibited by US sanctions.

"Consistent with General License 25F, these targets may continue to engage in journalism and media operations not prohibited by US sanctions," the State Department said in a press release.

The US, UK and Canadian governments have teamed up to expose Russia's alleged efforts to engage in subversive activities and electoral interference targeting Moldova, the release said.

The Russian broadcaster RT and its employees have "directly coordinated" with the Russian authorities to support Russian government efforts to influence the October 2024 Moldovan election, the release said.

The US government is also claiming that RT has participated in a "large online crowdfunding platform" providing material support and weaponry to Russia's military units in Ukraine.

The State Department said that RT used "proxy outlets that purport to be independent" to spread information about Ukraine, as well as maintain activities related to other countries, including Argentina.

The action follows a series of US sanctions, indictments and other measures against Russian media last week, amid allegations of efforts to interfere in US politics and elections.

In response to the previous actions, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that the measures were undertaken by US security services to "sterilize" the national and global information space from any form of dissent and Russia will respond to them.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the measures "nonsense" and likewise said that the US government is attempting to suppress the work of journalists to hide unpleasant truths.

Allegations of Russian interference in US elections are baseless, Peskov added.

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Trudeau Statement on Use of Long-Range Weapons Against Russia 'Unsurprising' - Stepanov

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The statement made by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that Canada supports Ukraine's ability to strike deep inside Russia with western-supplied long-range weapons "comes as no surprise," Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik on Friday.

Earlier in the day, Trudeau told reporters Canada was unequivocal that Ukraine must defeat Russia on the battlefield and that it fully supports Ukraine using long-range weapons to prevent and interdict Russia's ability to degrade Ukrainian infrastructure.

"The statement made by the head of the Canadian cabinet comes as no surprise. We have seen it all before. From the very beginning Prime Minister Trudeau and his ministers took the most aggressive stance towards Russia in the context of the Special Military Operation, while recklessly providing support to the Kiev regime," Stepanov said.

The Russian ambassador said that Canada is continuing on this path, which is an emblematic feature of the country's foreign policy to anticipate the intentions of its "mentors" - the United States and the United Kingdom.

"Its sole purpose is to fancy themselves by taking the anticipation lead in the race and running ahead the US-UK locomotive," Stepanov said.

The ambassador pointed out that the Canadian government falls short to have in practical and diplomatic terms any sort of impact on the outcome of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

Ottawa can only repeatedly display flashy Russophobic rhetoric as a means to offset its political impotence, Stepanov said.

Trudeau's remarks are highly unlikely to be worth of Moscow's attention, he added.

Stepanov said Moscow will consider the wording of Trudeau's statement in the context of current and future Russia-Canada bilateral ties development.

On Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the NATO member states are not just discussing the possible use of Western long-range weapons by Kiev deep inside Russia but are also deciding whether to get directly involved in the Ukrainian conflict. Such direct involvement by the West changes the nature of the Ukrainian conflict and Russia will be forced to make decisions based on the threats created for it, Putin added.

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UPDATE - Gold Prices Extend Record-High Streak, Notching Weekly Gain After 2-Week Loss

(Updates prices in paras 2-3, modifies headline)

NEW YORK, September 13 (Sputnik) - Gold prices extended their record-making streak on Friday, hitting an all-time high above \$2,600 an ounce that overwrote the previous day's peak, handing the precious metal a weekly gain after two straight weeks of losses.

US gold futures for December delivery were last at \$2,610.40 per ounce on the Comex division of the New York Mercantile Exchange, after peaking at \$2,641.40. That put December gold up 1.2% on the day. For the week, it gained 3.4% versus the accumulated 1% loss over two prior weeks.

Spot gold, which tracks real-time trades in gold bullion, was last at \$2,582.44 after an all-time high of \$2,586.10. For the session, spot gold rose 0.8% while for the week, it gained 2.6%.

Gold's run-up this week came amid heightened expectations that the first US interest rate cut in more than four years will happen by Wednesday, and more reductions will follow. The Federal Reserve will decide on September 18 on whether to opt for a 25-basis point or 50-basis point cut.

The last time the Fed cut rates was in March 2020 was when it dropped 100 basis right after the coronavirus outbreak. The central bank added 525 basis points after that, leaving the door open for a long and extended easing when conditions warrant.

Analysts say the Fed's hand is forced now by easing inflation, which has seen the growth in US consumer prices falling to 2.5% per annum in August from a four-decade high of 9.1% in June 2022. But some point to still-elevated costs for things such as shelter, airfares, auto insurance, education and apparel.

"There is an equally split chance of a 25-bp or 50-bp cut next week," said Fawad Razaqzada, analyst at Stone X in London. "As a result, we have seen [the] dollar weaken across the board, and gold has hit a new all-time high."

Gold, typically, trades in the opposite direction to the dollar. The Dollar Index, which pits the US currency against six major rivals, has lost 4% since the end of June.

Gold's run-up has made it one of the best-performing commodities of 2024, with US futures of the precious metal up 25%. In comparison, oil, represented by benchmark Brent crude, is down more than 6% on the year.

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UPDATE - Oil Prices Notch Weekly Gain After Hurricane Hit on US Production

(Updates with market settlement in paras 2-4, modifies headline)

NEW YORK, September 13 (Sputnik) - Crude prices notched a weekly gain, ending two weeks of losses, on the back of worries that US oil output might be lower in the near-term after a hurricane strike on the US Gulf Coast of Mexico where dozens of energy-producing platforms were located.

The US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) and UK North Sea Brent crude benchmarks fell at Friday's settlement in New York but rose on the week.

WTI finished the day's trade down 32 cents, or 0.5%, at \$68.65 per barrel, after tumbling to a near three year-low of \$65.27 on Tuesday. For the week though, the US crude benchmark rose 1.4% after an accumulated 12.4%-loss over four prior weeks.

Brent, meanwhile, settled down 36 cents, or 0.5%, at \$71.61. It fell to \$68.68 on Tuesday — its lowest since December 2021. For the week, the global crude benchmark gained 0.7%, ending a near 11%-loss over three prior weeks.

WTI and Brent rebounded after Hurricane Francine barreled into the US Gulf Coast of Mexico this week, shuttering more than 40% of the region's oil output.

Investment bank UBS estimated that crude production in the US Gulf Coast of Mexico could fall by 50,000 barrels per day from a month ago due to Francine-related shutdowns. Other

estimates have called for a likely deficit of between 60,000 and 1.69 million barrels daily.

Despite the hit to US oil production, analysts had mixed opinions on where crude prices would be by next week. Friday's volatility, where the market rose 2% at one point before turning negative, was a reminder of how unpredictable things had become.

"My take is that ... the [oil] markets [are] extremely overdone to the downside," Phil Flynn, energy analyst at the Price Futures Group in Chicago, said, forecasting a continued rally that would take WTI and Brent into higher \$70 territory.

But Scott Shelton, who trades crude and writes opinion pieces for the Durham, North Carolina-based ICAP, said he was not so sure.

"This market appears unwilling to let anyone with more than 1-day time horizon make money," Shelton wrote. "They blew longs out last week and sapped their convictions that strong physical and low general stocks were meaningful and are now generating pain for the shorts from the longer-term macro side."

If scrutiny over Francine-related impact proves less damaging than thought, crude prices may go the other way, said Yeap Jun Rong, energy market strategist at IG.

"If production delays were to prove to be short-lived and damages to oil platforms were to be minimal, those gains may be unwound, as the broader demand outlook continues to serve as a key headwind to limit any sustained recovery," Yeap said in an email.

Since the end of June, crude prices haven't produced one full month of gains amid concerns of higher output than demand in two of the world's high-profile growth centers — the United States and China. In July, WTI lost 4.5% and in August, it fell 5.6%. This month so far, it's down almost 7%, resulting in a year-to-date loss of almost 4%.

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US Approves Possible \$4.1Bln Sale of 9 KC-46A Refueling Aircraft to Japan - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The US State Department approved a potential \$4.1 billion sale of aerial refueling aircraft to Japan, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Friday.

Japan requested to buy up to nine KC-46A aircraft and related aircraft equipment, as well as engineering, technical and logistics support services from the US government and contractors, DSCA said in a statement.

The proposed sale supports US foreign policy and national security objectives by improving the security of a major ally, the statement said.

The proposed sale would not alter the basic military balance in the region, the statement added.

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Attacks on 9/11 Left Legacy of Failed Wars, Impunity - Experts

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States opened the door for launching wars with impunity across the globe, which failed to achieve any objectives aside from enriching the defense industry, experts told Sputnik.

The September 11 attacks on the United States by al-Qaeda terrorists (banned in Russia) 23 years ago left nearly 3,000 dead and led to the US invasions and occupations of Afghanistan (2001-2021) and Iraq (2003-2011).

"The legacy of the 9/11 attacks is a combination of absolute failure and criminal impunity," Irish political commentator Finian Cunningham told Sputnik. "The 9/11 deaths of some 3,000 American citizens were callously exploited - and still are - by the US imperialist rulers to wage criminal wars for their madcap ambition of global dominance."

The 20-year occupation of Afghanistan achieved nothing, Cunningham said, but fuel more terrorism and leave the United States trillions of dollars in debt.

"The ultimate failure is perhaps best seen with regard to Afghanistan, the first war that the US rulers used 9/11 as a pretext. Twenty years of war and destruction under US and NATO occupation of that country achieved nothing positive in terms of the original alleged purpose," Cunningham said.

That sense of impunity, Cunningham added, breeds more wars, as can be seen in Ukraine, which is threatening to spiral into an all-out nuclear catastrophe. Failure and impunity leads to more failure, yet US leaders have learned nothing, Cunningham said.

"They will keep on failing and dragging the US into disasters. We should be alarmed that such impunity is threatening the entire world," Cunningham said.

Australian global peace activist Helen Caldicott, founder and then-head of Nobel Peace Prize-winning Physicians for Social Responsibility, said the attacks paved the way for increased Pentagon spending for activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and elsewhere. Caldicott said a Brown University study found the post-9/11 wars cost \$8 trillion and left 900,000 dead.

"In essence 9/11 was an outstanding gift to the military industrial complex," Caldicott said.

US historian Anton Chaitkin said the 9/11 attacks were exploited, starting with Bush administration leadership, to allow the US to launch wars and other illegal activities.

"Vice President Dick Cheney went into secretive locations, evidently to map out the transformation of America into a dictatorship making permanent war, doing torture, and gleefully shoveling dirt on the American Revolution and Constitution," Chaitkin said.

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US State Dept. Approves Potential \$7.2Bln Sale of F-35 Aircraft to Romania - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The US State Department has approved a possible \$7.2 billion sale of F-35 fighter jets to Romania, the Defense Department said on Friday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Romania of F-35 Aircraft and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$7.2 billion," the Defense Department said in a press release.

The Romanian government had requested to buy 32 F-35A Lightning II fighter jets, the release added.

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us state department approves possible \$4.1 billion sale of KC-46A Aerial Refueling Aircraft, related equipment to japan - pentagon

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us state department approves potential \$7.2 billion sale of f-35 aircraft to romania - pentagon

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US State Dept. Says Blocked Russian Media May Continue to Engage in Journalism

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The US State Department said on Friday that blocked Russian media outlets may continue to engage in journalism and media operations not prohibited by US sanctions.

"Consistent with General License 25F, these targets may continue to engage in journalism and media operations not prohibited by US sanctions," the US State Department said in a press release.

Earlier on Friday, the United States imposed full blocking sanctions against Russia's media groups Rossiya Segodnya and TV Novosti for their alleged disinformation campaigns on behalf of Moscow.

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us state department says sanctioned russia media may continue to engage in journalism and media operations not prohibited by us sanctions

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US Authorizes Wind Down Transactions With Rossiya Segodnya Through Nov 13 – Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – The United States has issued a general license authorizing wind-down transactions with Russia's media groups Rossiya Segodnya and TV Novosti through November 13 following full blocking sanctions against the entities, the US

Department of the Treasury said on Friday.

"Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this general license, all transactions prohibited by Executive Order (E.O.) 14024 that are ordinarily incident and necessary to the wind down of any transaction involving one or more of the following blocked entities are authorized through 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time, November 13, 2024," the license reads.

Earlier in the day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the United States imposed new sanctions against three entities and two individuals for their alleged disinformation campaign on Russia's behalf.

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US Imposes Sanctions Against Rossiya Segodnya, Director General Dmitry Kiselev - Treasury

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on the Russia's media group Rossiya Segodnya and its Director General Dmitry Kiselev for their roles in alleged covert influence operations, the US Treasury Department announced on Friday.

Earlier in the day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the United States imposed new sanctions against three entities and two individuals for their alleged disinformation campaign on Russia's behalf.

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State Department Says Ukraine Using US Tech to Strike Russia Isn't Direct US Involvement

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Allowing Ukraine to utilize US technology to strike deep into Russia would not mean that the United States is entering directly into the Russia - Ukraine conflict, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Friday.

"Of course, it would not be an entering of the United States [into the Russia-Ukraine conflict]. We have been very clear that the United States is not going to be a part of this war... We're not going to put boots on the ground," said Miller during a press briefing.

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us sanctions ROSSIYA SEGODNYA, dmitry kiselev - treasury department

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Boeing's Stock Near 2-Year Low as Fitch Warns of Likely Downgrade After Strike at Company

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Boeing shares hit a near two-year low on Friday as Fitch Ratings warned of a possible downgrade of the company's credit status in the event of an extended workers' strike as it already reels from incurred debt in the amount of \$60 billion.

"The Boeing Company's investment-grade credit rating has limited headroom for a strike," Fitch said in a statement. "If the current strike lasts a week or two, it is unlikely to pressure the rating. However, an extended strike could have a meaningful operational and financial impact, increasing the risk of a downgrade."

Boeing's stock, a proxy of its credit standing, hit a two-year low on the Fitch caution. With less than three hours to Friday's close, the stock was down 4% on the day and 40% on the year, trading slightly above \$156. Earlier on Friday, it fell to \$155.60. That was the lowest since the November 2022 bottom of \$141.54.

Fitch cautioned that in a scenario where the strike dragged on without an immediate conclusion in sight, Boeing would likely have to access new liquidity sources to adhere to its cash targets. That could only bring more strain on a company that has already lost \$8 billion this year.

Boeing has said a prolonged strike could jeopardize recovery, impact production and deliveries at the company. It said its goal of producing up to 38 aircraft per month by the end of year might take longer. There were currently 70 aircraft in its inventory, Boeing said.

Specifically, deliveries of the 787 jet were below five per month due to seat shortages while the 777 deliveries were impacted by engine supply issues, Boeing said.

The company said it could see the strike "broadly impacting the industry" and "affecting deliveries."

More than 30,000 Boeing employees have walked off its assembly lines in the first strike at the company in 16 years. They belong to the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) union that is demanding a pay raise of 40%.

Boeing had offered an increase of 25% over a four-year period that would have raised compensation by up to \$4,160 per worker, under the company's 401(k) pension plan. It had also agreed to up health care coverage, provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave and make improvements to work-life balance, including reductions in mandatory overtime.

The emphasized that it was trying to come up with a better deal that would be acceptable to its workers.

"The message was clear that the tentative agreement we reached with IAM leadership was not acceptable to the members," Boeing said on its website. "We remain committed to resetting our relationship with our employees and the union and we are ready to get back to the table to reach a new agreement."

The last strike at Boeing in 2008 lasted 58 days and incurred the company an estimated loss of \$3 billion.

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US Imposing Full Blocking Financial Sanctions as Part of Actions Against RT - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United States will impose full blocking financial sanctions as part of its actions against the Russian media outlet RT, James Rubin, the director

of the State Department's Global Engagement Center, said on Friday.

"The sanctions that we're imposing, that you'll see in the fact sheet, are the strongest possible sanctions this government puts on. They're full blocking financial sanctions," Rubin said.

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US, Canada, UK Launch Joint Campaign to Address Russian 'Disinformation' - Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are launching a joint diplomatic campaign to push back against alleged Russian disinformation and covert influence, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday.

"Today, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada are launching a joint diplomatic campaign to rally allies and partners around the world to join us in addressing the threat posed by RT and other machinery of Russian disinformation and covert influence," Blinken told reporters.

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US Imposes Sanctions on 3 Entities, 2 Persons Related to RT 'Covert' Operations - Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United States is imposing sanctions on three entities and two individuals over Russia's alleged covert influence operations in the media domain, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday.

"As a result of these findings today, we're imposing sanctions on three entities and two individuals for Russia's covert global influence operations, including interference in Moldova's democracy, and its upcoming elections," Blinken told reporters.

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Blinken Claims RT Possesses Cyber Capabilities, Engaged in Covert Influence Operations

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday accused state media organization RT of possessing cyber capabilities and engaging in covert information, influence operations, and military procurement.

"Thanks to new information, much of which originates from RT employees, we know that RT possesses cyber capabilities and engaged in covert information and influence operations, and military procurement," Blinken told reporters.

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blinken says us, uk and canada launching joint diplomatic campaign to rally allies to join them in addressing alleged threat posed by rt

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blinken says us imposing sanctions on 3three entities, 2 individuals over russia's alleged covert influence operations

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blinken claim rt possesses cyber capabilities and engaged in covert information and influence operations, military procurement

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Pentagon Says Nearly All Ukraine Aid Funds to Expire by End of Fiscal Year

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The Defense Department has a \$5.9 billion remaining in the Ukraine Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA), with all but \$100 million set to expire by the end of the fiscal year on September 30, Pentagon spokesperson Patrick Ryder said on Friday.

"We have \$5.9 billion left in Ukraine Presidential Drawdown Authority; all but \$100 million of which will expire at the end of the fiscal year. The [Defense] Department will continue to provide drawdown packages in the near future and is working with Congress to seek an extension of PDA authorities beyond the end of the fiscal year," Ryder said in a statement.

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Ottawa, Quebec Loan Telesat \$1.9Bln for Its Lightspeed Satellite Project - Company

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The governments of Canada and the Province of Quebec have reached a C\$2.54 billion (US\$1.9 billion) funding agreement with Telesat to complete and operate the Lightspeed Satellite Constellation, the company said in a statement on Friday.

"Telesat ... one of the world's largest and most innovative satellite operators, today announced the completion of funding agreements with the government of Canada and the government of

Quebec for its highly advanced Telesat Lightspeed Low Earth Orbit (LEO) broadband satellite constellation," the statement said.

The deal includes a C\$2.14 billion (US\$1.6 billion) loan from the federal government and a C\$400 million (US\$294 million) loan from the province of Quebec. It will carry a floating interest rate 4.75% above the Canadian Overnight Repo Rate Average with a 15-year maturity, the statement said.

The Office of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a separate statement that Telesat Lightspeed will expand Internet and 5G networks in communities across Canada with affordable, high-speed broadband connectivity.

"As a low-Earth-orbit (LEO) satellite network, it will take less time to send and receive information, leading to better and faster Internet service, even in rural, remote, and Northern communities," the statement said.

Telesat Lightspeed will become Canada's largest ever space program, the statement also said.

The company is set to invest over C\$4.4 billion (US\$3.2 billion) in the Canadian economy over the next 15 years, create 200 post-secondary co-op jobs, and provide C\$1.6 million (US\$1.2 million) in scholarships to students with focus science, technology, engineering, and math programs, the statement added.

The Lightspeed Network will further help Ottawa bolster its satellite communications technology and support NATO and North American Aerospace Defense Command modernization efforts, according to the statement.

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Biden Says Hostility Toward Haitian Immigrants in US Must Stop

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Friday called for an end to hostility against immigrants from Haiti amid unsubstantiated claims that Haitians have been eating pets and geese in the town of Springfield, Ohio.

"A proud Haitian American community that's under attack in our country right now, it's simply wrong. There's no place in America for it, this has to stop," Biden said during remarks at the White House.

The United States would not exist without the contributions of black Americans, Biden added.

Springfield city officials told Sputnik earlier this week that they have not found any record of Haitian migrants eating pets in the community.

The Clark County Sheriff's Office shared audio of a call it received on August 26 from a resident in Springfield alleging that Haitians were harvesting geese, but noted that this is the only record authorities have on these claims.

A Springfield city official also said they are not aware of any credible reports proving these "rumors."

On Tuesday, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby accused Republicans of spreading racially charged conspiracy theories about the situation in Springfield.

According to Springfield City Manager Bryan Heck, the city of Springfield is facing a housing crisis after more than 15,000 Haitian migrants moved into the area over the last four years. Prior

to this uptick in the city's population, the town had some 60,000 residents, Heck said.

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Biden admin has \$5.9Bln left in ukraine presidential drawdown authority, all but \$100mln of which will expire at end of fiscal year - pentagon

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UN Says Escalating Rhetoric Shows Ukraine Conflict Far from Over, Situation Remains Tense

UNITED NATIONS, September 13 (Sputnik) - The escalating rhetoric indicates that the conflict in Ukraine is far from reaching its conclusion, the UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

“I think the rhetoric that we are hearing, what we are seeing on the ground, is yet another indication that we are not moving towards the end of this conflict in a way that we would like to see it, within the framework of international law and the UN Charter,” Dujarric told a briefing.

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UPDATE – US Will Release Allegations of Russian Intelligence Activities at RT - Reports

(Update: adds RT response in paras 6-7)

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is set to release allegations of Russian government intelligence activities at state media organization RT, CNN reported on Friday.

The US State Department will unveil US intelligence findings alleging that RT is connected to intelligence and influence operations by the Russian government, the report said, citing three sources familiar with the matter.

The action follows a series of US sanctions, indictments and other measures against Russian media last week, amid allegations of efforts to interfere in US politics and elections.

In response to the previous actions, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Russia will respond to the measures. Zakharova also said that the measures were undertaken by US security services to “sterilize” the national and global information space from any form of dissent.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the measures “nonsense” and likewise said that the US government is attempting to suppress the work of journalists to hide unpleasant truths. Allegations of Russian interference in US elections are baseless, Peskov added.

RT responded to the report on Friday by jokingly claiming that they have been broadcasting “straight out” of Russian intelligence headquarters.

RT said that they have been “running out of popcorn” to watch what the US government will

come up with about them next.

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Gold Prices Extend Record-Making Streak as Weekly Gain in Sight After 2-Week Loss

NEW YORK, September 13 (Sputnik) - Gold prices extended their record-making streak on Friday, hitting an all-time high above \$2,600 an ounce that overwrote the previous day's peak, setting the precious metal up for a weekly gain after two back-to-back weeks of losses.

With two hours to the close, US gold futures for December delivery were at \$2,606.95 per ounce on the Comex division of the New York Mercantile Exchange after peaking at \$2,611.60. December gold was up 1% for the day. For the week, it showed a gain of more than 2% versus the accumulated 1% loss over two prior weeks.

Spot gold, which tracks real-time trades in gold bullion, was at \$2,578.85 after an all-time high of \$2,583.36. For the session, spot gold rose 0.8% while for the week, it gained 2.5%.

Gold's run-up came amid heightened expectations that the first US interest rate cut in more than four years will happen by Wednesday and that more reductions could follow. The Federal Reserve will decide on September 18 on whether to opt for a 25-basis point or 50-basis point cut.

The last time the Fed cut rates was in March was when it dropped 100 basis right after the coronavirus outbreak in 2020. The US central bank added 525 basis points after that, leaving the door open for a long and extended easing when conditions warrant.

Analysts say the Fed's hand is forced now by easing inflation, which has seen the growth in US consumer prices falling to 2.5% per year in August from a four-decade high of 9.1% in June 2022. But some point to still-elevated costs for things such as shelter, airfares, auto insurance, education and apparel.

"There is an equally split chance of a 25-bp or 50-bp cut next week," Fawad Razaqzada, analyst at Stone X in London, said. "As a result, we have seen [the] dollar weaken across the board, and gold has hit a new all-time high."

Gold, typically, trades in the opposite direction to the dollar. The Dollar Index, which pits the US currency against six major rivals, has lost 4% since the end of June.

Gold's run-up has made it one of the best-performing commodities of 2024, with US futures of the precious metal up 25%. In comparison, oil, represented by benchmark Brent crude, is down more than 6% on the year.

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Children in Beslan Showed True Christian Spirit in 2004 Terror Attack - ROCOR Metropolitan

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The children killed in the terrorist attack in the Russian city of Beslan two decades ago showed a truly Christian spirit before their tragic deaths, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) Synod of Bishops Vice

President and Metropolitan Mark (Arndt) told Sputnik.

On September 1, 2004, Islamic terrorists attacked Beslan, killing more than 330 people, including 186 children. The attack involved a three day siege of a school in which more than 1,100 people were taken hostage, including 777 children.

"Some children showed a truly Christian spirit in their suffering," Mark said.

The metropolitan explained that on the 20th anniversary of the massacre this year, he attended the memorial events held annually by the city of Beslan in order to show ROCOR's support for the people who lost their loved ones.

Mark said he also attended the events in show of support for the people that survived and for those that were born after the terrorist attack.

"I was also there [in Beslan] 20 years ago. Shortly after the tragic events, I saw what needed to be done to help. Two decades later, I feel that this is still a big task for all of us," Mark said.

ROCOR's German diocese then established a rehabilitation center in Beslan to help those in need of psychological and spiritual support, Mark said.

The church continues to work to help people and assist them to find a spiritual foundation for their lives, Mark added.

The hierarch pointed out that it was important to him personally to attend the commemorative events in Beslan this year despite the difficulties people encounter in traveling directly to Russia due to the massive restrictive measures imposed on the country by the collective West.

It is also important to note that although much time has passed since the tragic events of 2004, the wounds have not yet healed, Mark said.

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Canada Fully Supports Ukraine Using Long-Range Weapons to Strike Inside Russia - Trudeau

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – Canada fully supports Ukraine's ability to strike deep inside Russia with Western-supplied long-range weapons, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Friday.

"Canada and others are unequivocal that Ukraine must win this war against Russia ... and yes, Canada fully supports Ukraine using long-range weaponry to prevent and interdict Russia's continued ability to degrade Ukrainian civilian infrastructure and mostly to kill innocent civilians in their unjust war," Trudeau told reporters.

Earlier in the day, media reported that the United States and the United Kingdom may lift restrictions on Ukraine using long-range weapons supplied by the West to strike deep into Russia during the UN General Assembly.

On Thursday, Putin said that NATO countries are not just discussing the possible use of Western long-range weapons by Kiev but are also deciding whether to get directly involved in the Ukrainian conflict. The direct involvement of the West in the Ukrainian conflict changes its nature, and Russia will be forced to make decisions based on the threats thus created for it, Putin concluded.

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Kirby Says Leaves It to UK's Starmer to Talk About Ukraine's Long-Range Strikes of Russia

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Friday that he would leave it to UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer to decide "what he wants to talk about" with respect to allowing Ukraine strike Russia with British long-range missiles.

"I also leave it to the [British] Prime Minister to decide what he wants to talk about, but there's just no change to our policy right now, with respect to that capability," Kirby said when asked to provide more details about discussion between the United States and the United Kingdom regarding allowing long-range strikes into Russia.

Kirby also refused to say whether the United Kingdom and France can lift restrictions on the use of their long-range missiles to strike Russia on their own and without US permission.

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canada fully supports ukraine using long-range weaponry against russia - trudeau

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US takes Putin's statements about consequences of lifting restrictions on long-range strikes seriously - white house

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US Will Release Allegations of Russian Intelligence Activities at RT - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is set to release allegations of Russian government intelligence activities at the state media organization RT, CNN reported on Friday.

The State Department will unveil US intelligence findings alleging that RT is connected to intelligence and influence operations by the Russian government, the report said, citing three sources familiar with the matter.

The action follows a series of US sanctions, indictments and other measures against Russian media last week, amid allegations of efforts to interfere in US politics and elections.

In response to the previous actions, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Russia will respond to the measures.

Zakharova also said that the measures were undertaken by the US security services to

"sterilize" the national and global information space from any form of dissent.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the measures "nonsense" and likewise said that the US government is attempting to suppress the work of journalists to hide unpleasant truths. Allegations of Russian interference in US elections are baseless, Peskov added.

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Kirby Says Does Not Expect Imminent Change to US Policy on Strikes Deep Inside Russia

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – The White House said Friday that there will not be an imminent change to its policy restricting Ukraine from using long-range strike capabilities inside Russia.

"I wouldn't expect to see a change to that policy today," White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said at a press briefing, ahead of UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's meeting with US President Biden at the White House.

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white house's kirby on uk decision to let ukraine strike russia: I'll leave it to prime minister to decide what he wants to talk about

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white house's kirby says no change to us policy on ukrainian long-range strike capabilities inside russia expected today

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Oil Prices In For Weekly Gain, Hurricane Hit On US Production Ends 4 Week-Loss

NEW YORK, September 13 (Sputnik) - Crude prices were on the cusp of a weekly gain, boosted by a three-day rally that came on the back of worries that oil output might be lower in the near term after a hurricane hit the US Gulf Coast of Mexico where dozens of energy-producing platforms were located.

The US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) and UK North Sea Brent crude benchmarks were up more than 1% each for Friday. With a prior two-day rally, gains for the week stood at between 2% and 3%.

With four hours to the close of trading, WTI was up \$1.12, or 1.6%, at \$70.09 per barrel, after tumbling to a near three-year-low of \$65.27 on Tuesday. The US crude benchmark was poised to finish the week up almost 3.5% after an accumulated 12.4%-loss over four prior weeks.

Brent, meanwhile, rose \$1.08, or 1.5%, to \$73.0, after falling to \$68.68 on Tuesday — its lowest since December 2021. For the week, the global crude benchmark was en route to a 2.7% gain, ending a near 11%-loss over three prior weeks.

WTI and Brent rebounded after Hurricane Francine barreled into the US Gulf Coast of Mexico this week, shuttering more than 40% of the region's oil output. Investment bank UBS estimated that crude production in the US Gulf Coast of Mexico could fall by 50,000 barrels per day from a month ago due to Francine-related shutdowns. Other estimates have called for a likely deficit of between 60,000 and 1.69 million barrels daily.

Despite the hit to US oil production, analysts had mixed opinions on where crude prices would be by next week.

“My take is that ... the [oil] markets [are] extremely overdone to the downside,” Phil Flynn, energy analyst at the Price Futures Group in Chicago, said, forecasting a continued rally that would take WTI and Brent into higher \$70 territory.

However, Scott Shelton, who trades crude and writes opinion pieces for the Durham, North Carolina-based ICAP, said he was not so sure.

If the scrutiny over Francine-related impact proves less damaging than thought, crude prices may go the other way, said Yeap Jun Rong, energy market strategist at IG.

Since the end of June, crude prices haven't produced one full month of gains amid concerns of higher output than demand in two of the world's high-profile growth centers — the United States and China. In July, WTI lost 4.5% and in August, it fell 5.6%. This month so far, it's down 4.9%, resulting in a year-to-date loss of 2.5%.

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Pentagon Watchdog Says 340 Pallets of Equipment Sustained Water Damage at Travis AFB

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The Department of Defense Office of Inspector General (OIG) said on Friday that the Pentagon had to spend about \$730,000 to cover costs after about 340 pallets with body armor destined for shipment to Taiwan were damaged by water at Travis Air Force base.

“The DoD OIG identified more than 340 pallets of equipment that sustained water damage while stored at Travis Air Force Base for three months, pending a flight to Taiwan. This resulted in the United States incurring at least \$730,000 in additional costs,” OIG said in a press release.

Some 340 out of 504 total pallets sustained water damage between November 2023 and March 2024 while they remained at the base because the latter was not equipped with sufficient storage capacity to fully mitigate the exposure of the cargo to bad weather conditions, the OIG said in a report published along the release.

Moreover, the equipment that was eventually delivered to Taiwan turned out to be not mission-ready and prevented the United States from meeting its security cooperation goals, according to the release.

In February, the Pentagon watchdog said in a letter to Congress that Some of the weapons the US had prepositioned in Europe to send to the Ukrainian armed forces (UAF) were non-functional due to poor maintenance and conditions.

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Moscow to Respond if West Lifts Restrictions on Deep Strikes Inside Russia - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, September 13 (Sputnik) - The NATO countries will be in direct war with Russia if they lift the restrictions on the use of long-range weapons to strike deep inside Russia and Moscow will take "relevant decisions" in that case with all the consequences that would result for the aggressor nations, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

"If the decision to lift the restrictions is really taken, that will mean that from that moment on NATO countries are conducting direct war with Russia. In this case, we will have to take, as you understand, relevant decisions with all the consequences for this that the Western aggressors would incur," Nebenzia said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The Russian ambassador also said that the United States is responsible for pinning all the blame elsewhere but it will not be able to succeed because "there is intelligence from US and EU satellites."

The UN Security Council meeting was requested by Russia and focuses on the issue of Western supplies of weapons to the Kiev regime.

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More Than Three-Quarters of US Voters Believe Harris Should Do Media Interviews - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - More than three-quarters of voters in the United States believe it is important for US Vice President Kamala Harris to give interviews in the buildup to the 2024 presidential election, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released Friday.

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of respondents believe it is important for Harris to grant interviews to the media and a majority, 54%, believe it is very important, the poll report said.

Less than one-fifth of respondents, 19%, do not believe it is important for Harris to give interviews, the poll report added.

Harris has delivered just one major media interview since becoming the Democratic Party's presidential nominee, according to the poll report.

The poll surveyed 881 likely US voters on September 5 and 8-10. The poll has a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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US Does Not Support Elections in Syria, Believes Conditions Not Met - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United States does not support elections in Syria at this time because it believes that the conditions of transparency and fairness have not been met, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Friday.

"The United States assesses that the necessary conditions for convening free, fair, transparent, and inclusive elections in Syria, including in the North and East, have not been met and therefore does not support the recent announcement by the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) calling on the High Elections Committee to begin preparations for municipal elections," Miller said in a statement.

The United States has consistently said that any elections in Syria should be free, fair, transparent and inclusive, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, the statement said.

Conditions for such elections are not currently met in Syria, the statement added.

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Canada to Donate Up to 200,000 Mpox Vaccine to Counter Africa Outbreak – Ministry

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – The Canadian Government will donate up to 200,000 doses of the Imvamune vaccine from its domestic supply to counter the ongoing mpox (also known as monkeypox) outbreak on the African continent, Canada's foreign ministry said on Friday.

In mid-August, Canada announced that it would provide an additional C\$1 million (\$733,000) in funding assistance to support the World Health Organization (WTO) response to the mpox outbreak in Africa. Ottawa has pledged a total of C\$3 million for the organization's epidemic response.

"The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of International Development, and the Honourable Mark Holland, Minister of Health, today announced that Canada will make available up to 200,000 doses of the Imvamune vaccine from Canada's existing supply to support the global response to the mpox outbreak," Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said in a statement.

On August 13, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) declared a public health emergency over the outbreak of mpox on the continent and called on the international community to help collect about 2 million doses of the vaccine. Shortly after, the WTO declared the mpox outbreak in Africa a public health emergency of international concern.

Mpox is a rare infectious disease that is also transmitted between people. It is usually a mild disease that most people recover from within a few weeks, but some may have complications. The initial symptoms of mpox include fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, enlarged lymph nodes, chills and exhaustion. A rash may develop, often starting on the face and then spreading to other parts of the body.

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Boeing's 30,000 Manufacturing Workers Go on Strike, Landing Planemaker in Deeper Crisis

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - More than 30,000 manufacturing employees of Boeing laid down tools on Friday in the first strike at the company in 16 years, landing into a deeper crisis a planemaker already wallowing in \$60 billion debt and multiple safety issues.

Television news networks showed workers at Boeing plants in Seattle and Oregon, both northwest of the United States, holding signs that read: "On Strike Against Boeing" in an action that began at midnight. Earlier, an overwhelming 95% of Boeing employees belonging to the union called the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) voted to strike in demand of a 40% pay hike resisted by management.

Boeing had instead offered an increase of 25% over a four-year period that would have raised compensation by up to \$4,160 per worker, under the company's 401(k) pension plan. It had also agreed to cover more of their health care costs, provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave and make improvements to work-life balance, including reductions in mandatory overtime.

Boeing said it was trying to come up with a better offer, after acknowledging its shortcomings at the wage negotiations.

"The message was clear that the tentative agreement we reached with IAM leadership was not acceptable to the members," the company said on its website. "We remain committed to resetting our relationship with our employees and the union and we are ready to get back to the table to reach a new agreement."

Those familiar with the situation said all eyes were on new Chief Executive Kelly Ortberg, who took office on August 8, to see how he responds to the situation.

The last strike at Boeing in 2008 lasted more than 50 days and incurred the company an estimated loss of \$3 billion. Prior to Friday's action, Boeing had already lost around \$8 billion this year, bringing its debt to around \$60 billion.

Beyond the losses, the ramifications for both the company and the US economy might be bigger.

Boeing has orders for more than 5,000 planes but production at its facilities are below expectation due to manufacturing issues and labor shortages. The company is also an integral part of the US economy, employing a total of almost 150,000 people — nearly half of them in Washington State — and is one of the country's largest exporters. From passenger planes to military jets, rockets, spacecraft and even the Air Force One that carries the US president, Boeing is a symbol and pride of America's manufacturing strength.

The strike "could throw a major wrench in the fragile supply chain" of the aviation industry, Fox News said, adding: "Boeing is trying to increase production. It has 5,500 planes on order. But if there's a strike they can't make them. Three quarters of those planes are the most popular."

Boeing has been in the news in recent years for all the wrong reasons.

Prior to this year, two 737 MAX 8 crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia in October 2018 and March 2019 killed a combined 346 people, resulting in a temporary global grounding of the jets. Boeing

announced in 2019 that it would compensate families and communities impacted by the fatal crashes by payouts totaling \$100 million.

The woes have continued this year after the door on one of its MAX 9 jets flown by Alaska Airlines blew out mid-flight on January 5. None of the people, including 171 passengers, were hurt and the plane made an emergency landing in Portland, in the US state of Oregon. Then, on August 28, a tire unexpectedly exploded on a Boeing 757 jet operated by Delta Air Lines at Atlanta's airport, killing two workers and seriously injuring a third.

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CENTCOM Says Killed ISIS Operative Preparing for Attack in Eastern Syria

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – The US Central Command said on Friday that earlier this week its forces killed an Islamic State (IS or ISIS, a terrorist organization banned in Russia) operative in Eastern Syria who was preparing for an attack.

“On Wednesday, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Forces killed an ISIS attack cell member in a strike in Eastern Syria. The individual was in the midst of planting an IED [improvised explosive device] for a planned attack against Coalition and Partner Forces,” the command said in an X post.

In late August, CENTCOM said that it eliminated 15 Islamic State militants in western Iraq in a joint operation with Iraqi security forces.

Syria has been torn by conflict since 2011. The United States and allied militants control parts of its hydrocarbon-rich east. After 13 years of instability, more than half of the country's population requires food assistance, with millions displaced, according to UN figures.

The United States refused to leave the country after it invaded it in 2016 amid the Syrian Civil War on a pretext to fight terrorists. The government of Syria has repeatedly stated that it deems the presence of the US and Turkish troops on its territory an act of military aggression and demanded that they immediately withdraw from the country.

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

(Updates with details and context in paras 3-8, background in paras 9-10)

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 natural graphite and certain critical minerals in 2024.

Tariffs on facemasks, medical gloves will increase to 25%, while duties on syringes and needles will be hiked to 50% in 2024, the notice said.

Many of the tariffs including those on EVs, solar cells, steel aluminum, EV batteries and critical minerals will go into effect on September 27, it said.

The new tariffs were deliberated under the so-called Section 301 investigation of China's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Technology Transfer, Intellectual Property, and Innovation.

Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 had proposed tariffs on \$18 billion of imports to the United States from China.

The Biden administration said in May that the duties would be imposed in response to China's alleged unfair trade practices and to counteract the resulting harms to US workers and businesses.

China's Foreign Ministry has said that US discriminatory practices against Chinese electric vehicles and other items violate World Trade Organization rules, undermine the stability of global production and supply chains, and will ultimately harm the interests of the United States itself, as China will take action to protect its legitimate rights and interests.

The International Monetary Fund said in a report on Thursday that imposing tariffs and using non-tariff barriers in international trade creates risks of retaliation and undermines the multilateral trade system.

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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.