

9/20/24 Friday

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Scratch a Liberal: European Elite Swings Right to Crush the Left

For years the neoliberal ruling class in Europe has warned about what they describe as the far-right parties in their countries. They cautioned that parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD), and the National Rally (RN) in France represent a dangerous and potentially violent swing toward fascism.

Despite years of hand-wringing about the populist right in Europe, the elite in many European nations have proven their preference for those groups over any momentum by leftists who will implement policies that will match the EU's liberal marketing materials.

The EU presents itself as a beacon of democracy, with free speech and a vehement commitment to human rights. But their actions have never matched that propaganda.

"What we're witnessing is the failure of the European dream, if you like. The idea of this community of nations, which at its heart was always a neoliberal financial cabal. And, it's failing. It's falling apart," explained Phil Kelly, a Belfast-based political commentator and socialist activist told Sputnik's Political Misfits. "It hasn't delivered in its kind of mythical promises. And the reality of what it's producing is increasingly stark economic failure and decline and declining living standards."

In France, President Emmanuel Macron appointed centrist-right Michel Barnier as prime minister. Barnier's party came in fifth during the national elections. The New Popular Front, the leftist party that came in first place, offered several prime minister candidates to Macron, but they were refused. While the French left have drawn up impeachment documents against Macron, the leader of the RN, Marine Le Pen, gave her tacit approval for the Barnier appointment. The sign is clear: Macron will negotiate with the RN, but not the left.

"This guy is an EU stooge, the blandest of the bland, you know, somebody that was probably spawned in a laboratory in Brussels, whose veins pump with blue EU blood. Not someone chosen by the people," Kelly said of Barnier.

"If France is going down a route with Macron...where he desperately clings to power, clings to preserve his own position for a little longer, the legacy of that is to sow a bitter harvest that one day he will have to deal with, and that is that you're making an enemy of the French people by denying democracy," Kelly concluded, dubbing Macron "Marie Macronette" as an "isolated political establishment with no connection to the people."

In Germany, after three people were fatally stabbed at a street festival by a Syrian man who said he was inspired by ISIS* German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's party all but adopted the AfD's immigration policy, closing its borders and ending, at least temporarily, the Schengen-Visiting Zone, which since 1985 has allowed visa-free travel between most EU countries.

"While the kind of conservative center parties and the liberal elites within Europe won't use the extreme rhetoric that you hear from the AfD or Le Pen and France or other far-right groups, their actions really demonstrate that they are the same," argued Kelly. "And any serious student of

history will tell you and understand fully that at times of crisis, liberals will always align with fascists, and that's exactly what we're seeing."

As the adage goes, scratch a liberal and a fascist bleeds.

Kelly pointed to the ruling parties in Europe allowing migrants to drown in the Mediterranean, supporting terrorist groups in Syria in an attempt to overthrow a sovereign state, supporting and arming neo-fascists in the Ukrainian military, and the support of genocide against the Palestinian people as evidence that the center-left and center-right parties are, at best, no better than the populist right that they say they fear. "Certainly, the blood soaking their hands is as thick and probably more splattered across their faces than anyone else," Kelly said.

"This political establishment are every bit as racist, every bit as despicable as the brown-shirted, goose-stepping thugs that they tell you to be scared of. They're one and the same, they rely on each other," he added.

As Europe was falling, Germany, previously the industrial heart of Europe, made no real protest when the Nord Stream pipeline was sabotaged. Many, including Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh, pointed their fingers at the United States. Yet Germany –like many EU nations– continues to function as an extension of the United States.

"At that moment, Germany really revealed itself to be a vassal state to the US," argued Kelly.

"You only have to think about the Nord Stream bombing, which devastated the German economy. And yet, the German government, as it pains, said it doesn't really want to know who is behind that."

Faced with a failing economy and ineffectual leaders, it is not uncommon for people to turn to populism. The question is what brand of populism they will gravitate towards, right-wing or leftist. Unfortunately, the right wing has gotten a head start in Europe.

"My worry here is that Germans who've seen their economy collapse, who've seen industrial giants like Volkswagen start to struggle, all as a result of the boomerang effect of sanctions and following blindly the US military and economic policy, that's creating the problem, but you have a narrative where migrants are the scapegoat in Germany," argued Kelly. "[Germany's] history proves it's a great fan of the scapegoat."

"The left [in Europe] must find itself in the dark," Kelly continued. "It needs to stop the circus because a left opposition to this wave of reaction is neither a rainbow postmodernist, clown twerking, to quote from Judith Butler, nor is it a kind of brown-shirted, goose-stepping clown juggling hammer and sickle, where you have a left that kind of masquerades itself as some kind of left-wing fascism."

Instead, the left needs to focus on economic issues if it wants to stand against the momentum of the right. "This is where we need class-based politics... to be connected to the people, but that connection is not strong enough in Germany. And I hope the [Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance, a new leftist party recently launched in Germany] gains ground. I hope it gains momentum because that's where hope would arise," concluded Kelly, noting earlier that he did not agree with their migration policies that somewhat mirror the AfD's.

"But at the moment, the clouds on the horizon are the AfD, and a political establishment who are opening the doors, as I said, and rolling out the red carpet for them to either march into power or have such an influence on the government that it's indistinguishable," Kelly warned.

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Israeli-Lebanon War to 'Alter the Entire Middle East' -Frm. State Dep. Analyst

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Israel exploded thousands of communication devices in Lebanon injuring thousands and killing dozens, including civilians. The Shia movement in Lebanon Hezbollah called the attack a violation of its sovereignty and an act of war. The region seems to be a hair's breadth away from full-scale war.

The Israeli war in Lebanon threatens to reshape the entire Middle East as Israel attacks more of its adversaries and attempts to goad the United States into joining its war, Michael Maloof a former security policy analyst for the Office of the Secretary of Defense [told Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) on Friday.

"[Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] will try to enlarge this whole thing and it's gonna be a mess for quite some time. It's gonna alter the entire Middle East's complexion," explained Maloof, adding that if Iran is attacked, it could bring in Russia and Turkiye, creating a world war with a front in Europe and the Middle East.

In March 2023, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich showcased a map during a speech of so-called "Greater Israel" which included not only the West Bank and Gaza as part of Israel, but parts of Jordan as well. The minister also said that the Palestinian people are an invention of the past 100 years. In September 2023, just two weeks before the October 7 attacks, Netanyahu showed a map labeled "The New Middle East" at the UN that did not draw borders for Gaza and the West Bank, subsuming them into Israel.

Greater Israel is a concept advocated by the right wing of Israeli politics that looks to expand Israel's borders throughout Palestine and in its most extreme versions, includes the whole of Jordan, most of Syria, most of Iraq, and parts of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye.

"I think because [Netanyahu] has become so fanatical listening to his rabid ministers of Smotrich and [National Security Adviser Itamar] Ben-Gvir he... doesn't have any choice but to remain, but to undertake that because if he just goes against them, he's out [of office] and subjects himself to exposure for legal action on corruption charges," explained Maloof. "But secondly, his attention has now turned more northward [away from Gaza and towards Lebanon] as he had promised and his ultimate goal is Iran. We can't forget that. He made that very clear when he outlined his war plan to Congress and Congress applauded."

In March, Netanyahu spoke to Congress alleging that Iran is a threat to the world. "Iran's regime is not merely a Jewish problem, any more than the Nazi regime was merely a Jewish problem. So, too, Iran's regime poses a grave threat, not only to Israel but also the peace of the entire world."

Netanyahu received 58 standing ovations from Congress during that speech. "That implied to him that he's got US support for whatever he does, wherever he goes, which will include Lebanon and ultimately Iran."

The US is seemingly helpless to prevent this inevitability because of the entrenched forces within and surrounding its government that have a vested interest in keeping the war going. "We have both Israeli lobbyists and defense contractor lobbyists who are gonna insist that we continue to support Israel."

While Hezbollah focused on military targets since both sides were forced to evacuate areas around their border, Maloof predicts that more Israeli civilians will be hit due to the Israeli pager attack. "Given how widespread the attacks were throughout Lebanon with the pagers, I think we could probably envision attacks increasingly on civilian targets as a consequence. And this is unfortunate, but this is all-out war and I think Netanyahu really brought it on himself."

Hezbollah has repeatedly said its attacks on Israel would stop once a ceasefire is achieved in Gaza. However, Netanyahu has pledged to return Israelis to the northern border by building a buffer zone to the Litani River in Lebanon. "But that's not going to be," explained Maloof.

"Hezbollah will not agree to that. And they're gonna make the north of Israel uninhabitable as a consequence."

"This thing will enlarge in a crescendo. You will have not only Hamas continuing on that front... Now you have the West Bank that's being fought [over]. There's going to be guerrilla warfare there. Then you have Syria and you have Iraq, which will also join in along with Lebanon and Yemen and ultimately Iran," predicted Maloof. "I see all of them beginning to do more coordinated attacks. Already, the Yemenis are using hypersonics. That's why that missile couldn't be intercepted."

America is unprepared, and likely could never become prepared for such a large war, despite its past and current steadfast support of Israel.

"I think like everything else, we'll probably ultimately abandon them, because we do that with any agreement. So, I suspect that in time, the American people will grow weary of this thing. I mean, how do you take on an entire region with a huge standoff and commitment?" asked Maloof. "We've got a war going on in Ukraine. Now we want to start another war with Taiwan. The neocons have just overextended the US capability. That's why you're seeing this reemergence now of a multipolar world order."

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Deadly landslides and floods devastate Ishikawa prefecture

At least one person has been left dead and several others are missing following landslides and floods in Japan's north-central region of Noto, located on the northern tip of Ishikawa prefecture, on Saturday. These disastrous events were triggered by heavy rains, leading the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) to issue its highest "life-threatening" alert for several cities across Ishikawa prefecture. "Heavy rain is hitting the region that had been badly damaged by the Noto earthquake, and I believe many people are feeling very uneasy," said Yoshimasa Hayashi, the chief cabinet secretary; who added that the government "puts people's lives first" and its priority is search and rescue operations. The severe flooding caused rivers to overflow, flooded homes and left many people in the region stranded. The rain is also forecasted to continue with up to 20cm (7.8in) to fall within the next 24 hours through midday on Sunday, due to the rain bands that caused torrential rain above the Hokuriku region, The Guardian reported citing JMA. Videos from social media

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US on Track to Top Last Year's Homeless Population Record

Cities that recorded an increase in homelessness include; Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, DC, Chicago and Miami.

The US is on track to hit another record high rate of homelessness this year, according to preliminary data collected and reviewed by [The Wall Street Journal](#). Housing costs and rent prices are soaring in the US, and as a result many Americans are left without roofs over their heads.

The Journal collected and reviewed data from more than 250 homeless-service organizations which assist cities, as well as metro and rural areas.

Thus far the news agency has counted about 550,000 homeless people on a single night earlier this year, which they say is up about 10% from what was reported last year. Taking that data into account, the report suggests the US is likely to top [its previous homelessness rate of 653,000 people in 2023](#) which is the highest rate ever recorded for the US since the government first began sharing data in 2007.

However the final numbers have not been collected from all reported areas, including New York City which recorded the highest rate of homelessness last year.

Texas' decision to bus migrants to cities such as Chicago and Denver may have contributed to the rising numbers, the report said. Large populations of migrants also arrived in New York from Texas, increasing the numbers there as well. Chicago recorded the highest increase of homelessness thus far, with more than seven of every 10 homeless people being recorded as a migrant in shelter, the report said citing city data.

The report also said that nearly half of the 7,250 families in Massachusetts' family shelters were migrants, and the state expected to spend more than \$1 billion on shelters this fiscal year, Home prices in the US have risen 2.4 times faster than inflation since the 1960s, according to a research report by [Clever](#) Real Estate, a real estate data company. If home prices in the US had increased at the same rate as inflation since 1963, then the average cost of a home in the US would be a little over \$177,000. However, the average house in the US costs over \$430,000.

The COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to the US housing crisis as people decided to move based on new, pandemic-based lifestyles. And the end to aid during that time has exacerbated the issue. Mental health crises and drug use, such as the use of fentanyl, have also contributed to the number of those struggling to find housing.

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'Sponge Cities' Could Help Prevent Flooding, Infrastructure Damage

In 2023, approximately 32 million people across the globe were impacted by flooding, including being injured or losing their homes, Statista noted. However, that pales in comparison to the

year of 1998 when China suffered their worst floods in over 44 years, and the US experienced the October 1998 Texas Flooding.

Yasmeen Lari, Pakistan's first female architect, is looking at new ways to prevent flooding in urban areas, [Financial Times](#) reported. Severe cases of flooding worldwide are expected to not only continue, but will worsen according to experts who say climate change is driving high-intensity rainfall that is destroying and overwhelming infrastructure.

"Every country, every city is now facing more or less this kind of issue — whether it's New York or London or Karachi," says Lari, 83. "So we all need to prepare for it."

In an effort to address the damage and risk to life that flooding can cause, architects are now suggesting they make their cities and homes more sponge-like. As a pilot project, Lari installed terracotta pavements as opposed to concrete pavements at Denso Hall Rahguzar that are made to absorb water to reduce the risk of flooding.

"Everybody has got to stop using concrete," Lari said. "That is the worst material. It actually causes more flooding. If you look at urban flooding, the reason why it's becoming worse is because we've got concrete paving everywhere. Water is not able to seep into the soil."

However, Lari alone cannot take credit for the concept of a "sponge city", which was first popularized by the Chinese landscape architect Kongjian Yu. It falls into the categories of; green infrastructure, low-impact development, or sensitive urban design. The intention is to design a city that is able to redirect rainfall back into the earth instead of through man-made pipes, channels or streets, [NPR](#) reported.

China has been spearheading this kind of infrastructure thanks to economic reforms in the late 1970s that have driven urban populations from 20% to around 65%. China first adopted Yu's concept in 2013 and tested it in a pilot program across 30 cities.

In Sanya, Yu and his team tested their theory by creating a park with; sponge-like wetlands, terraced embankments, ponds, rice paddies and greenways that can accommodate 830,000 cubic meters of stormwater, the Financial Times report detailed.

"The sponge city concept adapts these ancient principles into urban planning," says Yu. "By incorporating permeable surfaces, green spaces, and constructed wetlands."

Lari echoed the need for gardens and other vegetation, as plants play a vital role in helping absorb water, encourage permeability, improve air quality, reduce extreme heat and improve biodiversity.

"Right in the middle of streets, we should plant forests," says Lari.

The issues standing in the way of these sponge-city makeovers are both financial and practical.

"[It] requires changing existing regulations, building codes, and practices, which can face resistance from stakeholders accustomed to conventional methods," says Yu.

Therefore, it may be easier to integrate the green concept in new neighborhoods as opposed to overhauling some areas. However, Lari optimistically suggests that green urban planning can be done on a smaller, individual scale.

"No government will have enough money to be able to really take up the challenges that exist today because of climate change," she said. "But everything can be taken care of."

"I don't know what will happen in a few years time, because the intensity [of rainfall] keeps on increasing, but at least for the foreseeable future, we can prevent urban flooding," she added.

"This can be done locally. And it should be done."

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Deadly Landslides & Floods Devastate Ishikawa Prefecture

The flooding has hit the region at a harrowing time as communities are still working to rebuild their infrastructure following a disastrous earthquake which struck during the New Year. At least one person has been left dead and several others are missing following landslides and floods in Japan's north-central region of Noto on Saturday. These disastrous events were triggered by heavy rains, after which the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) issued its highest "life-threatening" alert level for heavy rain across several cities in the Ishikawa region. Sugimoto Satoshi, a JMA forecaster, said that the level of downpours recorded had "never been experienced in this region before", and added that the risk to residents' lives is "imminent". The severe flooding caused rivers to overflow, flooded homes and left many people in the region stranded. The rain is also forecasted to continue with up to 20cm (7.8in) to fall within the next 24 hours through midday on Sunday, due to the rain bands that caused torrential rain above the Hokuriku region, [The Guardian](#) reported citing JMA.

According to Hokuriku Electric Power Co, about 6,500 homes were left without power while some homes did not have water. In addition, traffic lights were no longer functioning as swaths of roads were blocked by muddy water.

"Heavy rain is hitting the region that had been badly damaged by the Noto earthquake, and I believe many people are feeling very uneasy," said Yoshimasa Hayashi, the chief cabinet secretary; who added that the government "puts people's lives first" and its priority is search and rescue operations.

The cities of Wajima and Suzu and the town of Noto directed about 44,000 residents to evacuate as well as another 16,000 in the Niigata and Yamagata prefectures north of Ishikawa. Two people who had gone missing during the downpour were carried away by river currents, [BBC](#) reported citing Japan's public service broadcaster NHK. Four workers who were repairing roads that were destroyed during a New Year's Day earthquake also went missing.

The flooded region is still recovering from an earthquake that occurred on January 1, during which a 7.5-magnitude earthquake killed over 235 people after it struck the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture. The earthquake caused buildings to collapse and triggered a terrible series of aftershocks. Wajima and Suzu were among those areas that were hit the hardest.

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Reports of Mass Physical, Sexual Abuse of Migrants Prompt Soul Searching in Europe

As the West continues to portray itself as the global defender of democracy and human rights, the evidence suggests its actual role in the world remains as destructive as ever.

Two years after EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell's comments describing the non-European world as a "jungle" provoked significant controversy, the EU is facing heightened [criticism](#) for its ruthless efforts to maintain fortress Europe.

The latest controversy stems from reports of mass human rights violations in Libya and Tunisia, which have been the recipients of millions of dollars from the European Union in exchange for guarantees to limit migration from North Africa. The region has been chronically destabilized by Western political interference, culminating in a NATO-backed regime change operation in Libya. More recently, Ukraine and US Gulf allies have come under scrutiny for their role in [arming and financing terrorist groups across the Sahel](#).

"How is that reduction achieved?" asked Refugees in Libya spokesman David Yambio, referring to EU efforts to stem migration that UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer has recently lauded.

"People are incarcerated, women are raped and children are dumped and left to die in the desert; this is happening on a daily basis."

"Each agreement made with the Tunisian and Libyan regime is a death sentence for migrants and refugees," Yambio claimed.

An explosive [report](#) in the British newspaper The Guardian this week detailed mass abuse of migrants by Libyan and Tunisian government officials colluding with human smugglers. Hundreds of cases of beatings, torture and rape have been documented by watchdog organizations.

Women are routinely robbed, sexually assaulted, and left for dead in the desert, the media revealed.

The report represents the most significant evidence yet of the dire conditions faced by migrants in North Africa as reports of mass human rights violations have circulated over the past several years. But European politicians have nonetheless been compelled to continue anti-migration efforts as immigration emerges as a significant issue across the continent.

Recently the controversial right-wing Alternative für Deutschland party [enjoyed its best performance yet in regional elections](#) in eastern Germany, riding to prominence over concerns over immigration policy and Europe's ongoing support for the Ukraine proxy war.

Right-wing Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni took power in 2022 on similar concerns over mass migration. Meloni has since helped pioneer the EU's controversial immigration policies.

"The families of detained Tunisian opposition politicians, who are already funding a case against the Tunisian authorities, are making a new submission to the international criminal court (ICC) next week demanding it open an investigation into crimes against humanity against sub-Saharan migrants," reports The Guardian.

The international body is tasked with prosecuting crimes against humanity across the globe, but its power has been brought into question in recent months as Israel consistently rebuffs its attempts to investigate alleged genocide in the besieged Gaza strip. Germany, the United States, and other Western countries [have largely defended Israel](#) as the official death toll from its military operation in the Palestinian territory surpasses 41,000.

"These abuses are the horrifying yet entirely predictable violations that always result from these kinds of deals," said European Council on Refugees and Exiles director Catherine Woollard, blasting the EU's ongoing partnership with Libyan and Tunisian officials despite reports of abuses.

As the West continues to portray itself as the global defender of democracy and human rights, the evidence suggests its actual role in the world remains as destructive as ever.

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'Long Overdue': US Military Apologizes for Destruction of Native Alaskan Villages

Indigenous activists continue to press for reparations and other forms of material compensation to make amends for centuries of genocide and displacement.

The US military has undertaken the process of issuing formal [apologies](#) to a Native Alaskan tribe more than a century after its shelling of two villages led to mass deaths.

A representative from the US Navy expressed remorse for the burning of the settlement of Kake Saturday afternoon, while a separate apology is planned next month on the 142nd anniversary of the destruction of the village of Angoon.

"It's a long time coming," noted Joel Jackson, the president of the Organized Village of Kake.

"Hopefully, through this apology, we can start healing from the wrongs that were committed against us."

"This has been 155 years in the making," Jackson [said](#).

The "pain and suffering inflicted upon the Tlingit people warrants these long overdue apologies," said Navy spokeswoman Julianne Leinenveber, referring to the tribe also commonly known as the Lingít. Navy officials conceded the "wrongful" nature of the attacks that "inflicted multigenerational trauma" as the tribe's oral history has passed down the memory of the devastating events.

Relations between the US and Native Americans were frequently tumultuous after the United States' purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. A treaty between Russia and indigenous peoples signed in the early 19th century maintained [peace](#) across the territory, but the US military maintained a [policy](#) condoning the use of lethal force to maintain American dominance.

Misunderstandings owing to disparate languages, worldviews and legal systems often led the United States to respond through violent bombardments of native settlements.

In 1869, a US military sentry killed two unarmed Lingít men in a canoe. After American commanders refused to offer restitution for the act in line with native customs, the Lingít killed two fur traders in response.

"As long as the native tribes... do not feel the force of the government and are not punished for flagrant outrages, so much the more dangerous do they become," wrote Alaskan federal revenue collector William Morris, reflecting the hostile relations that prevailed at the time.

The United States sent the USS Saginaw to shell the native village of Kake. US troops descended upon the village and razed it to the ground, burning housing, canoes, and food stores the natives depended upon to survive the harsh winter months. Multiple people would die in the weeks ahead of exposure and starvation.

Years later, the native village of Angoon would face similar destruction after the US military refused to offer compensation for the death of a Lingít medicine man.

"They left us homeless on the beach," recalled a 13-year-old native boy who survived the US attack, later offering testimony to an anthropologist.

The attacks form part of a grisly history of Western treatment of indigenous Americans dating back centuries. Earlier this year, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops issued an [apology](#) for the church's role in establishing Indian boarding schools across the continent, which led to the

[deaths](#) of hundreds of native children. In February, an Alaska lawmaker apologized for comments that appeared to [downplay](#) the prevalence of sexual assault of Native Alaskans; indigenous people are still significantly more likely to be victims of rape and other violent crimes. “We weren’t at war with the US, they declared war on us,” said Jackson. “It was never anything other than the military coming and bombarding our village – there was no war. They need to make it right.”

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Musk Backs Down, Complies with Brazilian Judge’s Orders for X Platform – Report

Self-reported data from X, previously known as Twitter, reveals that Musk has complied with more court orders and government takedown requests than the website’s previous owners. Tech titan Elon Musk has reportedly complied with demands made by the Brazilian Supreme Court surrounding the operation of the X platform in the country in the culmination of a weeks-long row that has sparked debate over freedom of expression and the role of governments and large social media companies in moderating online discourse.

“Elon Musk has backed down and complied with a Brazilian judge’s orders that he appoint a legal representative for X,” [reported](#) the Financial Times Saturday, citing court documents examined by the media outlet. X has also reportedly [agreed](#) to suspend several accounts cited by the court for generating disinformation and extremist content, according to other media outlets.

The move comes after Musk repeatedly refused to remove the accounts late last month in a highly visible spat with Brazilian Supreme Court justice Alexandre de Moraes. Musk’s intransigence led to X being blocked in the Latin American country of 212 million.

The CEO has also faced fines for his failure to comply with the order and the freezing of bank accounts for X and Musk’s satellite internet company Starlink. Musk [argued the measure was illegal under Brazilian law](#), but Moraes claimed X and Starlink’s parent company SpaceX were part of the same “economic unit,” with Musk enjoying 79% of SpaceX voting rights and 40% of the company’s stock.

The controversy led Musk to publicly trade barbs with the Brazilian Supreme Court Justice, who has sought to tamp down on far-right content and disinformation relating to Brazil’s 2022 presidential election.

“We will begin publishing the long list of [Moraes’] crimes, along with the specific Brazilian laws that he broke tomorrow,” [Musk wrote](#) on X. “We will begin publishing the long list of [Moraes’] crimes, along with the specific Brazilian laws that he broke tomorrow.”

“One day this picture of you in prison will be real. Mark my words,” Musk [wrote](#) to the Brazilian justice in a separate post, attaching a photoshopped image of Moraes in jail before replying with an image of toilet paper bearing the judge’s name.

X finally announced the company would appoint an official legal representative for the company Saturday, a requirement of doing business under Brazilian law.

Moraes's order led to public debate over the proper role of governments in regulating social media, with Musk repeatedly referring to Brazil's requests as tantamount to "censorship." Musk has fashioned himself as a free speech champion amid Western governments' increasing concern over online disinformation, which recently culminated in legislation set to effectively ban the platform TikTok in the United States.

But self-reported data from X, previously known as Twitter, [reveals](#) that Musk has actually complied with more court orders and government takedown requests than the website's previous owners.

"Twitter has fully [complied](#) with more than 80% of government and courts' requests to remove or alter content since Elon Musk bought the company, up from around 50% before he took over," [reported](#) Forbes, "reflecting a discordance with the billionaire's promises to limit political censorship."

"The Brazilian justice system may have given an important signal that the world is not obliged to put up with Musk's far-right anything-goes attitude just because he is rich," said Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva last month after the website was banned in the country.

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Two years after EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell's comments describing the non-European world as a "jungle" provoked controversy, the EU is facing heightened criticism for its ruthless efforts to maintain fortress Europe. The latest controversy stems from reports of mass human rights violations in Libya and Tunisia, which have been the recipients of millions of dollars from the European Union in exchange for guarantees to limit migration from North Africa.

"How is that reduction achieved?" asked Refugees in Libya spokesman David Yambio. "People are incarcerated, women are raped and children are dumped and left to die in the desert; this is happening on a daily basis."

"Each agreement made with the Tunisian and Libyan regime is a death sentence for migrants and refugees," Yambio claimed.

A report in The Guardian this week detailed mass abuse of migrants by Libyan and Tunisian government officials colluding with human smugglers. Hundreds of cases of beatings, torture and rape have been documented by watchdog organizations.

Women are routinely robbed, sexually assaulted, and left for dead in the desert, the media revealed.

The report represents the most significant evidence yet of the dire conditions faced by migrants in North Africa as reports of human rights violations have circulated in recent years. European politicians have nonetheless been compelled to continue anti-migration efforts as immigration emerges as a significant issue across the continent.

Northern Africa has been chronically destabilized by Western political interference, culminating in a NATO-backed regime change operation in Libya. More recently, Ukraine and US Gulf allies have come under scrutiny for their role in arming and financing terrorist groups across the Sahel.

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A representative from the US Navy expressed remorse for the burning of the settlement of Kake while a separate apology is planned next month on the 142nd anniversary of the destruction of the village of Angoon.

Relations between the US and Native Americans were frequently tumultuous after the United States' purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. A treaty between Russia and indigenous peoples signed in the early 19th century maintained peace across the territory, but the US military maintained a policy of lethal force to maintain American dominance.

The US sent the USS Saginaw to shell the native village of Kake in 1869. US troops descended upon the village and razed it to the ground, burning housing, canoes, and food stores the natives depended upon to survive harsh winter months. Multiple people would die in the weeks ahead of exposure and starvation.

Years later, the native village of Angoon would face similar destruction after the US military refused to offer compensation for the death of a Lingít medicine man.

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Musk backs down, complies with Brazilian judge's orders for X platform – report

Tech titan Elon Musk has reportedly complied with demands made by the Brazilian Supreme Court surrounding the operation of the X platform in the country in the culmination of a weeks-long row that has sparked debate over freedom of expression and the role of governments and large social media companies in moderating online discourse.

“Elon Musk has backed down and complied with a Brazilian judge’s orders that he appoint a legal representative for X,” reported the Financial Times, citing court documents examined by the media outlet. X has also reportedly agreed to suspend several accounts cited by the court for generating disinformation and extremist content.

The move comes after Musk repeatedly refused to remove the accounts late last month in a highly visible spat with Brazilian Supreme Court justice Alexandre de Moraes. Musk’s intransigence led to X being blocked in the Latin American country of 212 million.

“One day this picture of you in prison will be real. Mark my words,” Musk wrote to the Brazilian justice on X, attaching a photoshopped image of Moraes in jail before replying with an image of toilet paper bearing the judge’s name.

X finally announced the company would appoint an official legal representative for the company, a requirement of doing business under Brazilian law.

Musk has fashioned himself as a free speech champion amid Western governments’ increasing concern over online disinformation, which recently culminated in legislation set to effectively ban the platform TikTok in the United States. But self-reported data from X reveals Musk has actually complied with more court orders and government takedown requests than the website’s previous owners.

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Researchers Tap Into How One Shark is Able to Live for 400 Years

The shark is large, sluggish, and can be found in the deep waters of the North Atlantic. They don’t reach sexual maturity until they are 150 years old, therefore their population is believed to still be recovering from over-fishing prior to World War II.

The [Greenland shark](#) is an animal with the stunning ability to live for as long as 400 years. Now, an international group of scientists from Europe and the US are mapping the genome of the shark, which will help researchers better understand how the animal is able to live for so long, a report from the New York Times detailed.

According to the research, which was published as a preprint in [bioRxiv](#), the sharks possess exceptionally large genomes with about 6.5 billion DNA “base pairs”. That is twice as many as is found in humans, making it one of the largest non-tetrapod genomes sequenced so far.

“Any research into the mechanisms of how this animal is able to live for such a long time will at some point need the genome sequence,” said Steve Hoffmann, a computational biologist in Germany who led the research.

Beyond that, the scientists also discovered the genome to be composed of repeated genes which are known as “jumping genes”. These genes are able to self replicate after inserting themselves in others, like a “genomic parasite” Hoffmann explained. This can disrupt the normal functioning of genes and cause diseases or developmental issues in an organism, the report explained.

But the researchers have hypothesized that evolution has catered to the Greenland shark, allowing it to take control of these “genomic parasites” and use them in DNA repair.

João Pedro de Magalhães, a molecular biogerontologist who was not involved in the study, said research on the shark’s extraordinary genome may help scientists “develop cancer therapies or prevention measures, or a greater fundamental understanding of cancer that will lead to clinical benefits” for people.

A separate team of researchers were stunned in [2016](#) when they discovered that one female Greenland shark had likely been alive for 400 years, after they set out to determine the ages of 28 of these fascinating vertebrates. The sharks are large and can grow up to 5 meters (16.5 feet) in length and reach sexual maturity at age 150.

The determination of the shark’s age was not exact, but researchers guess she could have been between 272 and 512 years old, making her likely 400 years old - which means her date of birth would belong some time to the 17th century.

The discovery of the shark’s age made it the new record-holder for the world’s oldest vertebrate. However, the record for the oldest living invertebrate belongs to a 507-year-old clam named Ming, and the oldest living land animal was a Seychelles giant tortoise named [Jonathan](#) who was over 190 years old.

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US Shipping Industry Exhibits Harrowing Statistics Regarding Sexual Assault, Rape - Report

In the American shipping industry, about 95% of ship officers are male and the chain of order is strict. The system makes it that much more difficult for victims to bring their allegations to light. A recent report from the [Wall Street Journal](#) has highlighted the significant issue of rape and sexual assault at sea. Allegations of assault that occur in the shipping industry have put the industry under scrutiny which has not kept up with the gender equality-based changes that other industries have gone through in the #MeToo era.

The report detailed one harrowing case, during which a 19-year-old girl who was training to be an engineer was aboard a US-flagged car carrier vessel in the Red Sea in 2019. She said a group of senior officers coerced her to take repeated shots of liquor before one of them followed her back to her cabin and raped her. She then woke up to find blood on her sheets and bruises all over her body.

The US Coast Guard charged the senior engineer, a man named Edgar Sison, with sexual assault following the attack, however they dropped the charge after he voluntarily surrendered

his merchant mariner license last year. Sadly, Hicks isn't alone. Many cases such as these remain unprosecuted.

Overall, in the US less than 1% of rapes and attempted rapes end with a felony conviction for the perpetrator, [The Washington Post](#) reported in 2018. Yet, nearly 90% of rape and sexual assault victims report "some level of distress including high rates of physical injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and substance abuse".

"There has been an increasing awareness of violence and harassment occurring on ships, including sexual harassment, which compound the already challenging working conditions," an International Maritime Organization spokeswoman said.

A [survey](#) from 2021 conducted by the International Transport Workers' Federation found that 60% of women seafarers reported experiencing sexual harassment on board. And a 2020 report by the Maritime Legal Aid & Advocacy (MLAA) revealed several accounts of sexual harassment and assault on commercial vessels, cruise ships and in maritime academies.

Officials from the US Justice Department said that the department prefers to have the Coast Guard address investigations into sexual harassment and abuse off shore because the cases are "complicated and difficult to prosecute", the report explained.

In 2022, Congress passed a law in an attempt to strengthen oversight and investigations of alleged sexual assault and harassment in the shipping industry, the Journal's report said. However, despite the new laws prosecution remains rare.

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UN Warns of 'Catastrophe' as Israel and Hezbollah Near Full-Scale War

Civilians in southern Lebanon said it was one of the "heaviest bombardments" the region has experienced since the conflict first began, the report said.

Israel and Hezbollah have now entered a stage in their nearly year-long conflict that reports say is verging on a full-out war. Citing Israel's military, [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported on Sunday that "dozens of warplanes" struck southern Lebanon on Saturday night into Sunday morning. The IDF excused their attack as "pre-emptive".

In response to the mysterious string of attacks on Hezbollah members' communication devices - that left more than 30 people dead, including civilians - the militant group targeted Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems which is one of the developers of its Iron Dome air-defense system. Hezbollah also said that they targeted Israel's Ramat David Airbase near Haifa. According to the report, the IDF did not confirm the target of the militant group's strikes, but said they had "struck deeper than usual into Israeli territory".

The IDF said that about 150 rockets, missiles and other projectiles were fired onto its territory overnight on Saturday and early Sunday, [BBC](#) reported. The report added that thousands of Israelis took cover in bomb shelters as a result, which resulted in damaging homes near Haifa. On Sunday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would deal a "series of blows on Hezbollah that it could have never imagined". Meanwhile, Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem said: "Threats will not stop us... We are ready to face all military possibilities."

"We have entered a new phase, namely an open reckoning [with Israel]", Qassem said while at the funeral of Ibrahim Aqil, a high-ranking Hezbollah commander who was killed in an IDF strike in Beirut on Friday amongst a total of at least 45 people, including children.

International officials expressed their concern regarding the latest exchange of violence in Lebanon. For example, UN chief Antonio Guterres told CNN he feared "the possibility of transforming Lebanon [into] another Gaza". Meanwhile, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert wrote on that the Middle East is on the brink of "imminent catastrophe" and said there is "no military solution that will make either side safer".

The US embassy in Beirut also urged citizens in Lebanon to evacuate while commercial options are still available.

Tensions between Israel and Lebanon escalated following Israel's retaliatory attacks in the Gaza Strip in October of last year. Since then, the IDF and Hezbollah have been exchanging cross-border fire almost daily.

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Austin, Gallant Discuss Israel-Hezbollah Escalation – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin talked by phone with his Israeli counterpart to discuss the current escalation of tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Monday.

Earlier in the day, 182 people were killed and over 700 injured in Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon, the Emergency Situations Center of the Lebanese Ministry of Health said.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III spoke with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant yesterday evening to receive updates on the exchange of fires between Israel and Iranian-backed Lebanese Hizballah," Ryder said in a statement.

Austin expressed his support for Israel's "right to defend itself," and stressed the importance of finding a path to a diplomatic solution that will allow residents on both sides of the border to return to their homes. The Pentagon chief also pointed out the need to reach a ceasefire deal in Gaza that will bring all the hostages home, according to the statement.

"The Secretary made clear that the United States remains postured to protect U.S. forces and personnel and determined to deter any regional actors from exploiting the situation or expanding the conflict," Ryder said.

Gallant said earlier in the day that he discussed with Austin the situation in the Middle East and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) actions against Lebanese movement Hezbollah.

From September 17-18, pagers and walkie-talkies exploded in various parts of Lebanon, killing over 40 people and injuring nearly 3,500 others. It is still unknown what caused thousands of devices to explode simultaneously. Hezbollah and the Lebanese authorities blame Israel for the incident. Israeli President Isaac Herzog denied the country's involvement in the incident.

Last week, Gallant also announced a new phase of the Israeli war effort in the region, with the focus shifting to the northern front.

On Friday, Israel carried out an airstrike on a southern suburb of Beirut, killing 45 people, according to the latest data from the Lebanese Health Ministry. The IDF later said that the strike

killed top Hezbollah commander Ibrahim Aqil, as well as 15 other Hezbollah members.

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Biden Admin. to Ban Sale or Import of Connected Vehicles From China, Russia – White House

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) – The Biden administration proposed a rule to ban the sale or import of connected vehicles and related components from China and Russia over alleged national security risks, the White House said in a press release on Monday.

"The Department of Commerce is issuing a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) that would, if finalized as proposed, prohibit the sale or import of connected vehicles that incorporate certain technology and the import of particular components themselves from countries of concern, specifically the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia," the release said.

The restrictions on software from China and Russia would take effect in 2027 and the prohibitions on hardware are scheduled to take effect in 2030, according to the release.

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biden administration proposes rule to prohibit sale or import of connected vehicles that incorporate technology from China and Russia - white house

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West Wants Ukraine to Dominate UN Agenda Despite Middle East Crises – Russian Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Despite the crises in the Middle East and Gaza, Western countries want to put the Ukrainian crisis at the forefront of every UN discussion, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik in an interview.

"It was already announced by Western countries that they will organize a meeting on Ukraine to honor President Zelenskyy, who is coming here. So they obviously want to put Ukraine on top of every issue that the United Nations is discussing. This is very strange, because there are a lot of crises happening, including very acute crisis in the Middle East and in Gaza," Polyanskiy said, commenting on the upcoming general debate as part of the high week.

This decision of the West causes a lot of questions, but the Western countries will push this agenda anyway, the diplomat added.

The 79th session of the UN General Assembly opened in New York on September 10. The key event of the General Assembly sessions is traditionally the high-level week – an event where heads of state and ministers gather annually and speak out on pressing issues. The annual debates will take place from September 24 to 28, as well as on September 30. The Russian delegation will be led by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who is expected to speak on

September 28.

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РФ по итогам ГА оценит, услышал ли Запад предостережения по дальнобойным ракетам Киеву

ООН, 23 сен – РИА Новости. Первый зампостпреда России при ООН Дмитрий Полянский в интервью РИА Новости призвал подождать до конца недели высокого уровня в Нью-Йорке, прежде чем делать выводы о том, услышали ли на Западе предостережения РФ по возможному разрешению Киеву бить вглубь РФ: "подождем, как это будет оформлено в ходе дискуссий".

Ранее издание Politico сообщало, что США и Великобритания во время недели высокого уровня Генеральной ассамблеи ООН, которая будет проходить в Нью-Йорке с 24 по 30 сентября, могут заявить о предоставлении Киеву разрешения на использование западного оружия для нанесения ударов вглубь территории РФ.

"Трудно оценить это прямо сейчас. Давайте подождем до конца недели высокого уровня, потому что будет много встреч, много спекуляций, много разговоров. Так что давайте подождем, как это будет оформлено в ходе дискуссий", – сказал Полянский в ответ на соответствующий вопрос.

Президент РФ Владимир Путин ранее заявил, что страны НАТО сейчас дискутируют не просто насчет возможного использования Киевом западных дальнобойных вооружений, по сути они принимают решение, вовлекаться ли напрямую в украинский конфликт. Прямое участие стран Запада в украинском конфликте изменит его суть, Россия будет вынуждена принимать решения, исходя из создаваемых таким образом угроз для нее, добавил он.

Постпред РФ при ООН Василий Небензя отмечал, что страны НАТО начнут прямую войну с Россией, если дадут Киеву добро на применение дальнобойного оружия.

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Лавров на ГА ООН проведет множество двусторонних и многосторонних встреч - постпредство РФ

ООН, 23 сен - РИА Новости. Министр иностранных дел РФ Сергей Лавров на высокой неделе ГА ООН в Нью-Йорке проведет множество двусторонних и многосторонних встреч, сообщил в интервью РИА Новости первый зампостпреда России при Всемирной Организации Дмитрий Полянский.

"Много двусторонних встреч, много многосторонних, в которых примет участие господин Лавров", - сказал Полянский.

Российская делегация на высокой неделе будет продвигать вопросы многосторонности и международного права, добавил он.

Десятого сентября в Нью-Йорке стартовала 79-сессия Генеральной Ассамблеи ООН. Ключевым событием сессий Генассамблеи по традиции является неделя высокого уровня – событие, на которое ежегодно съезжаются главы государств и министры и высказываются по насущным темам. Ежегодные дебаты пройдут с 24 по 28 сентября, а также 30 сентября. Российскую делегацию возглавит глава МИД Сергей Лавров, его выступление ожидается 28 сентября.

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Lavrov to Hold Many Bilateral, Multilateral Meetings at UNGA - Russian Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will hold many bilateral and multilateral meetings at the United Nations General Assembly High Week in New York, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik in an interview.

"A lot of bilateral meetings, of course, a lot of multilateral meetings that Mr. Lavrov will participate," Polyanskiy said.

The Russian delegation will promote issues of multilateralism and international law at the High Week, he added.

The 79th session of the UN General Assembly opened in New York on September 10. The key event of the General Assembly sessions is traditionally the high-level week – an event where heads of state and ministers gather annually and speak out on pressing issues. The annual debates will take place from September 24 to 28, as well as on September 30. The Russian delegation will be led by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who is expected to speak on September 28.

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Постпредство РФ в ООН: Киев показал свое "стремление к миру" атакой на Курскую область

ООН, 23 сен - РИА Новости. Владимир Зеленский выбрал путь эскалации после нападения украинских боевиков на Курскую область, это "лучший ответ" всем, кто надеялся, что в Киеве стремятся к миру, сообщил в интервью РИА Новости первый замполпреда РФ в ООН Дмитрий Полянский.

"Мы судим о том, что делают другие, по их поступкам, а не по их словам. Поэтому он (Зеленский - ред.) четко выбрал путь эскалации, когда вторгся в Курскую область Российской Федерации. Я думаю, это был лучший ответ всем, кто надеялся, что украинское руководство стремится к миру", - сказал Полянский.

Подразделения ВСУ в 5.30 6 августа перешли в наступление с целью захвата территории в Курской области, их продвижение было остановлено, заявил начальник Генштаба ВС РФ Валерий Герасимов. Он подчеркнул, что операция в Курской области будет завершена

разгромом противника и выходом на госграницу. Как сообщило 22 сентября Минобороны РФ, за время боевых действий на курском направлении противник потерял более 16 тысяч военных, 126 танков.

Президент России Владимир Путин заявлял, что киевский режим предпринял провокацию, ведет неизбирательную стрельбу, в том числе по гражданским целям. Путин заявил, что противник получит достойный ответ, все цели, стоящие перед Россией, будут достигнуты.

В Курской, а также Белгородской и Брянской областях для обеспечения безопасности граждан действует режим КТО.

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Уточняется лид.

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Kiev's Attack on Kursk Region Shows Its 'Desire for Peace' - Russian Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Volodymyr Zelenskyy chose the path of escalation after the attack by Ukrainian militants on Russia's Kursk region, this is the "best answer" to everyone who hoped that Kiev was striving for peace, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik in an interview.

"Judge what others do by their acts and not by their words. So his clear choice of escalation was when he invaded the Kursk Region of the Russian Federation. I think it was the best reply to everybody who was having hopes that the Ukrainian leadership has peace on his mind. And let's not forget that his decree prohibiting to enter in any negotiations with Russian officials is still in force," Polyanskiy said.

At 5:30 on August 6, Ukrainian Armed Forces units launched an offensive to seize territory in the Kursk region, their advance was stopped, the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov said. He emphasized that the operation in the Kursk region would be completed by defeating the enemy and reaching the state border. As the Russian Defense Ministry reported on September 22, during the fighting in the Kursk direction, the enemy lost more than 16,000 soldiers and 126 tanks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Kiev had carried out a provocation, was conducting indiscriminate shooting, including at civilian targets. Putin said that the enemy would receive a worthy response, all goals facing Russia would be achieved.

In the Kursk, as well as the Belgorod and Bryansk regions, a counter-terrorism operation regime is in effect to ensure the safety of citizens.

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Russia Has Not Seen Zelenskyy's 'Peace Plan' - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Russia is not familiar with the "peace plan" of Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the Ukrainian crisis and was not invited to discuss it, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik in an interview.

Zelenskyy previously said that the "victory plan" for Ukraine had already been fully prepared. In August, Zelenskyy stated that this plan also contained a powerful package of coercion for Russia to end the war through diplomatic means. Commenting on Zelenskyy's words, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov noted that Moscow was aware of the essence of the Kiev regime, continued the special military operation and would achieve all its goals.

"No," Polyanskiy said, answering whether Russia had seen the corresponding plan and whether it had been invited to discuss it.

"It's hard for us to understand what's on madman's mind. So we don't know what what Zelenskyy plans here, and there is a lot of smoke around his stay here about what he's going to propose or not going to propose," the diplomat said.

"The West will have to support this PR campaign of the Ukrainian president, whose term has already expired, and to keep the Ukrainian issue in the focus of attention of international community. It's not very easy right now, so it's a hard task for them," he added.

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РФ не видела "мирный план" Зеленского – первый зампостпреда России в ООН

ООН, 23 сен – РИА Новости. Россия не знакома с "мирным планом" Владимира Зеленского по украинскому кризису, не была приглашена на его обсуждение, сообщил в интервью РИА Новости первый зампостпреда РФ при ООН Дмитрий Полянский.

Зеленский ранее заявил в своём Telegram-канале, что уже полностью подготовлен "план победы" Украины. В августе Зеленский заявлял, что этот план содержит и "мощный пакет принуждения России к окончанию войны дипломатическим путем". Пресс-секретарь президента РФ Дмитрий Песков, комментируя слова Зеленского, отметил, что Москва отдает себе отчет в сущности киевского режима, продолжает СВО и достигнет всех поставленных целей.

Полянский, отвечая на вопросы корреспондента агентства о том, видела ли РФ соответствующий план и была ли приглашена на его обсуждение, сказал "нет".

"Нам трудно понять, что на уме у безумца. Мы не знаем, что планирует Зеленский, и вокруг его пребывания здесь много шума относительно того, что он собирается предлагать или не собирается", – добавил он.

При этом Полянский отметил, что Западу придется поддержать эту "PR-кампанию украинского президента, срок полномочий которого уже истек, и держать украинский вопрос в центре внимания международного сообщества".

"Это не очень-то просто сейчас, так что это для них сложная задача", – подытожил зампостпреда.

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Западники хотят поставить Украину на первое место во всех дискуссиях ООН – постпредство РФ

ООН, 23 сен – РИА Новости. Страны Запада, несмотря на кризисы на Ближнем Востоке и в Газе, хотят поставить украинский кризис во главу угла всего, что обсуждает ООН, сообщил в интервью РИА Новости первый зампостпреда России при Всемирной Организации Дмитрий Полянский.

"Они, очевидно, хотят поставить Украину во главу угла каждого вопроса, который обсуждает ООН. Это очень странно, потому что происходит много кризисов, включая очень острый кризис на Ближнем Востоке и в секторе Газа", – сказал Полянский, комментируя предстоящие общие прения в рамках высокой недели.

Десятого сентября в Нью-Йорке стартовала 79-сессия Генеральной Ассамблеи ООН. Ключевым событием сессий Генассамблеи по традиции является неделя высокого уровня – событие, на которое ежегодно съезжаются главы государств и министры и высказываются по насущным темам. Ежегодные дебаты пройдут с 24 по 28 сентября, а также 30 сентября. Российскую делегацию возглавит глава МИД Сергей Лавров, его выступление ожидается 28 сентября.

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West Wants Ukraine to Dominate UN Agenda Despite Middle East Crises – Russian Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Despite the crises in the Middle East and Gaza, Western countries want to put the Ukrainian crisis at the forefront of every UN discussion, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik in an interview.

"It was already announced by Western countries that they will organize a meeting on Ukraine to honor President Zelenskyy, who is coming here. So they obviously want to put Ukraine on top of every issue that the United Nations is discussing. This is very strange, because there are a lot of crises happening, including very acute crisis in the Middle East and in Gaza," Polyanskiy said, commenting on the upcoming general debate as part of the high week.

This decision of the West causes a lot of questions, but the Western countries will push this agenda anyway, the diplomat added.

The 79th session of the UN General Assembly opened in New York on September 10. The key event of the General Assembly sessions is traditionally the high-level week – an event where heads of state and ministers gather annually and speak out on pressing issues. The annual debates will take place from September 24 to 28, as well as on September 30. The Russian delegation will be led by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who is expected to speak on September 28.

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Quad Leaders to Provide Indo-Pacific Region with New Open-RAN Pilot Programs - US Official

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The Quad leaders during their fourth in-person gathering will announce new open Radio Access Network (RAN) pilot programs in the Indo-Pacific region as part of a larger technology reform initiative, a senior Biden administration official said.

"You'll ... see us redevelop our work to provide the region with the critical and secure technologies, including new open RAN pilots in the Pacific Islands and in Southeast Asia," the official said.

The Open RAN pilot project, which aims to diversify the region's telecom networks, is part of the Quad's larger plan to secure supply chains for essential technologies, such as semiconductors and telecommunications infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region.

US President Joe Biden will host the fourth in-person Quad Leaders Summit today in Wilmington, Delaware, where he will welcome the leaders of Australia, India and Japan.

The Quad is an intergovernmental security forum for strategic dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the United States, founded in 2007 and reestablished in 2017 after a nine-year pause.

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US to Welcome Japan, India Leaders Aboard USCG Ship for 1st-Time in Indo-Pacific -Official

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States will welcome leaders from Japan, India and Australia aboard a US Coast Guard vessel for the first time in the Indo-Pacific, a senior Biden administration official said on Saturday.

"I think what you can expect to see [in terms of] Coast Guard cooperation coming out of the leaders summit tomorrow is an announcement that for the first time, a US Coast Guard vessel will welcome Japanese, Australian and Indian counterparts on board that vessel for a period of time in the Indo-Pacific," the official said.

US President Joe Biden will host the fourth Quadrilateral Leaders Summit in Delaware on September 21. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan will attend the summit.

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us coast guard vessel to welcome Japanese, Australian, Indian counterparts on board for first time in indo-pacific - senior administration official

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PREVIEW - Quad Leaders to Expand Cooperation in Several Areas During Weekend Summit at Biden's House

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will host the leaders of the Quad alliance this weekend at his house in Delaware for a closed-door summit that promises to take cooperation among the partners to a new level with continued particular focus on the Indo-Pacific region.

In a surprise move, Biden decided to host his fourth in-person summit with the leaders of Australia, India, and Japan at his residence in Wilmington and not at the White House, with the press banned from covering bilateral meetings and the summit from the scene.

In addition to the four-way leaders' meeting at 4:00 p.m. EST (20:00 GMT) on Saturday, Biden will also hold bilateral meetings with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in the morning and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi early in the afternoon, according to White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby. Biden's first bilateral meeting was with the Australian Prime Minister on Friday evening.

Later in the day, the leaders will take part in a Cancer Moonshot event to mobilize efforts to end the disease, followed by a dinner at Archmere Academy, Biden's high school, Kirby said.

During the summit, the Quad leaders are expected to launch a range of joint projects leveraging collective resources to build on the commitment to deliver public goods to the region, according to a senior US administration official.

In the maritime space, the leaders will expand the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness by improving monitoring of the waters using better technologies and training in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, as well as by adding the Indian Ocean region to the coverage, the official said.

The leaders will discuss China's role and actions in the Indo-Pacific region, including on the economic front, and North Korea, the official noted.

Additionally, the four leaders are expected to launch the first-ever Quad Coast Guard exercise and a joint logistics network that will allow allied militaries to share cargo space on aircraft and vessels for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions, the official added.

Moreover, the leaders will also announce that for the first time, a US Coast Guard vessel will welcome Japanese, Australian, and Indian counterparts on board for some time in the Indo-Pacific, the official also said.

During a White House briefing on Thursday, members of the press did not hide their surprise that they would not be allowed into Biden's home to cover his meetings, but would only be allowed to film the leaders' arrival.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre responded to the criticism that it is not "unusual" for the press to stay behind the fence as Biden meets with foreign leaders and said that there would be other opportunities for them.

Meanwhile, the White House Correspondents' Association has already called the lack of press access to the summit "unacceptable."

The Quad is an intergovernmental security forum for strategic dialogue between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, founded in 2007 and reestablished in 2017 after a nine-year pause.

In July, the Chinese Foreign Ministry criticized the Quad foreign ministers' statement and accused the alliance of stoking tensions in the region, inciting antagonism and confrontation, and seeking to curb the development of other countries.

In June, Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed a strategic partnership treaty in Pyongyang. Kim said the pact provided for the development of economic, political, and military cooperation, while Putin did not rule out closer military cooperation with Pyongyang.

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Trump's Ex-Lawyer Says President Biden Did Not Interfere in Hunter's Criminal Cases

NEW YORK, September 21 (Sputnik), Lenka White - US President Joe Biden did not influence the Justice Department in how the agency handled his son's criminal cases, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's former lawyer, Joe Tacopina, told Sputnik.

In June, Hunter Biden was convicted of three firearms-related felonies, and pleaded guilty to federal tax charges earlier this month. Hunter faces a total of 42 years in prison, with sentencing hearings scheduled in December in both cases.

"For those people who say he [President Biden] controls the Justice Department, I think this situation with his son really puts that argument to bed. And what I mean by that is, if he were controlling his Justice Department, the FBI, the US Attorney's Office, as the president, would he, in any way, shape or form, let his own son get prosecuted?"

Tacopina said, in fact, US authorities "vigorously" prosecuted Hunter Biden.

"There were no favors done, and that's the president's Justice Department prosecuting his own son," Tacopina said, adding that he thought the process was "pure."

President Biden has repeatedly ruled out the possibility of pardoning his son.

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Harris Prosecutor Experience Helped 'Catch' Trump in Televised Debate - Ex-Lawyer

NEW YORK, September 21 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris used her experience as a prosecutor to trip up former US President Donald Trump during their first and possibly only national debate, the Republican presidential candidate's former lawyer, Joe Tacopina, told Sputnik.

Harris and Trump sparred in a nationally televised debate on September 10 in Philadelphia. At least four major polls found the former California Attorney General outperformed Trump, although the latter claimed victory, complained the moderators were against him, and refused to engage in a rematch.

"You saw an experienced trial lawyer up there doing trial lawyer things... she [Harris] was impressive and she was prepared," Tacopina said when asked about the candidates' performance in the debate. "She threw the bait and he took it. He went off topic and focused on how great his rallies are and... things that really didn't matter."

Harris employed typical trial lawyer courtroom tactics to "catch" Trump and push him into making mistakes.

"I've tried 150 jury trials - I could debate against anybody very comfortably. Just give me a few hours to get comfortable with the subjects. I'll go. I think you saw that," Tacopina said.

Harris had an edge even though more of her legal experience was as an administrator and not as a trial lawyer engaged in courtroom battles every day, Tacopina said.

"If you have some trial experience, that's enough to give you the ability to be comfortable in a debate setting," the lawyer said. "Any trial lawyer debating against any non-trial lawyer has an upper hand."

Trump was in a much better position in the first national debate considering his opponent, President Joe Biden "couldn't put a sentence together," Tacopina said.

According to poll aggregator Real Clear Politics, as of September 10, Harris has a 1.9% edge over Trump nationally as the November 5 election nears. The two candidates are in a dead heat in every so-called battleground state.

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Trump's Former Lawyer Says Stormy Daniels Case Won't Lead to Prison Term

NEW YORK, September 21 (Sputnik), Lenka White - The Trump Organization's case involving the forgery of financial documents related to hush payments to former porn actress Stormy Daniels is unlikely to lead to a prison sentence, former attorney for the Republican presidential candidate Joe Tacopina told Sputnik.

In May, a jury found Trump guilty of falsifying records to cover up an alleged affair with adult film actress Stormy Daniels. New York Supreme Court Judge Juan Merchan delayed a sentencing hearing until November 26 so as not to interfere with the 2024 US presidential race.

"I don't think it is the strongest case, the hush money case, in the sense that there's already been a conviction, but I don't think that's the case that has the most dire consequences. I don't see him going to jail in that case," Tacopina said.

According to the lawyer, the most serious case against the former president is the one related to the storming of the Capitol on January 6, 2020, by Trump supporters.

"The strongest case is probably the January 6 case in federal court in Washington, DC, with a judge who I don't think is a terrific fan of President Trump," Tacopina said. "That's going to be a tougher case once the dust settles, once we know what the case is, because there's still some pending issues."

Trump's federal election interference case has been complicated by the Supreme Court ruling president's have immunity with respect to official acts made while in office. Trump also faces charges of illegally trying to overturn the vote count in Georgia.

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US Must Develop Hypersonic Technologies Neglected During War on Terror - Congressman

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The US must develop hypersonic technologies immediately after losing focus during the war on global terrorism, Congressman Doug Lamborn, chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, told a conference at the Hudson Institute.

"We were needing to focus on counterterrorism operations and these divided our attention," Lamborn said on Friday. "As a result, technologies such as scramjet engines or thermal protection engines that we could have developed have yet to come to fruition. So we must correct this trajectory now."

Right now, Lamborn added, the US only has slow cruise missiles with limited range and ballistic missiles with predictable trajectories.

These will not get the job done, Lamborn said, when the enemy has a full magazine of defense interceptors. The US needs something that will go far, fast and evade defenses, he added.

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China, Russia 'Way Ahead' of US in Hypersonic Capability - Congressman

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - China and Russia are way ahead of the United States in the development and deployment of hypersonic weapons, US Congressman Doug Lamborn said at the Hudson Institute think tank.

"China is fielding massive amounts of hypersonics, they want to have multitudes of these by the end of the decade," Lamborn, chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, said on Friday. "Russia has some hypersonic capability... they're behind China, but they're still way ahead of us."

China was looking to be the dominant global power in deploying both nuclear capable and conventional warhead hypersonic strike weapons, Lamborn said.

The Chinese have already exhibited a high rate of flight testing in their hypersonic weapons resulting in the rapid development of their nuclear-armed hypersonic missile technology, Lamborn added.

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Ex-Trump Lawyer Says Legal Cases Unlikely to Affect US Election Outcome

NEW YORK, September 21 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Former US President Donald Trump's legal cases will probably not affect the outcome of the 2024 election, although the looming hush money sentencing could raise doubts among some voters, former Trump attorney Joe Tacopina told Sputnik.

A US judge postponed sentencing Trump over 34 counts in the New York hush-money case until after the election. The former president also faces charges in the Georgia election-meddling and federal election interference cases. A fourth legal case involving alleged mishandling of classified documents was dismissed.

"I don't think it's going to have that much impact on the election," Tacopina said about how Trump's legal cases might affect the vote. "Maybe some people will have trouble voting for a candidate that has a felony conviction and pending indictments, but it seems like that has taken a backseat to a lot of the important issues."

Tacopina, however, said the postponement of the hush money case sentencing until after the election could be a good or bad thing for Trump.

"If he was going to be sentenced to no jail time, which I believe he will be, that really is the end of the case. Now the sentence is sort of looming over him, and it leaves voters with something to question as to whether their candidate of choice might wind up getting sentenced to jail," Tacopina said.

The other cases against his former client will not be resolved before the election and some are literally "falling apart," Tacopina said. The January 6 case, Tacopina noted, will be affected by the Supreme Court ruling that Trump can claim immunity from prosecution for official acts as president.

According to the lawyer, the issue of legal prosecution of Trump is currently "secondary" and will not change the opinions of his supporters and opponents.

The decisive factor that will determine the victory of one or another candidate will be how convincingly each of them will show themselves during the public television debates.

Trump and Democratic rival, Vice President Kamala Harris, sparred in their first - and likely only - presidential debate on September 10 in Philadelphia. Trump has ruled out a rematch after claiming victory in the debate, and saying it was stacked against him by pro-Harris moderators. Post-debate polling of viewers indicated that Harris outperformed Trump.

"I think that debate was much more important than any of these pending cases," Tacopina said.

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South Carolina Executes First Inmate in Over 13 Years - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - South Carolina inmate Freddie Owens was put to death by lethal injection in what was the state's first execution in over 13 years, local CBS news reported.

Owens, 46, was pronounced dead at 6:55 p.m EST, the report said.

Owens was convicted of killing a convenience store clerk during a robbery in 1997. Prosecutors at the trial said Owens shot the clerk, whose name was Irene Graves, in the head for opening a safe too slowly.

During his murder trial Owens confessed to brutally killing Christopher Lee, an inmate at a local county jail. According to the report, Owens said in a written statement that he killed Lee because he was "wrongly convicted of murder."

Attorneys alleged that Owens, who was 19 at the time of the killing, suffered from brain damage as a result of abuse that occurred while Owens was at a juvenile correction facility, the report added.

All last-minute appeals by Owens' attorneys, including one that traveled as far as the Supreme Court of the United States, were denied, according to the report.

South Carolina's governor, Henry McMaster, filed a response to the stay of execution request, urging SCOTUS to reject the petition and alleging that nothing about Owen's case was exceptional.

The report added that Owens' death may be the first of several inmates to die in the state's death chamber, as five other inmates are out of appeals and the South Carolina Supreme Court has said it would allow an execution every 5 weeks.

South Carolina hadn't performed an execution since 2011, when the state's supply of lethal injection drugs expired and pharmacies refused to furnish more out of fear of being identified by the public. However, a law passed last year allowing the state to keep secret its lethal cocktail and the drug's suppliers.

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US Army Extends BAE Systems Contract to Build More Armored Vehicles - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - BAE Systems Land and Armaments was awarded a \$184,351,382 US Army modification contract to continue producing Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicles, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"BAE Systems Land and Armaments [of] York, Pennsylvania was awarded a \$184,351,382 modification ... contract for Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicles," the release stated on Friday.

Work on the extended contract will be performed in York, Pennsylvania over the next two and three-quarter years with an estimated completion date of May 31, 2027, the Defense Department said.

The Army Contracting Command located at Detroit Arsenal in the US state of Michigan will continue to oversee the work as its contracting activity, the Defense Department said.

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Trump Says Will 'Save Vaping' in US if Elected President in 2024

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - Former US President and 2024 Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said that he will protect the vaping industry if he is reelected in November.

"I saved flavored vaping in 2019, and it greatly helped people get off smoking," Trump said on Friday via Truth Social. "I'll save vaping again!"

Trump also highlighted his work to raise the federal smoking age to 21.

In contrast, US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris want "everything banned," Trump said.

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US Navy Extends Austral Deal to Expand America's Submarine Industrial Base - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has given Austal USA an almost \$152 million contract extension to continue the expansion of the national Submarine Industrial Base, the Defense Department announced.

"Austal USA [of] Mobile, Alabama is awarded a \$151,999,986 contract to support continued expansion of Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) capability and capacity," the Defense Department said in a press release on Friday.

Work on the contract will be performed in Mobile, Alabama over the next two years and is expected to be completed by September 2026, the release said.

The Naval Sea Systems Command in Washington will oversee work on the project as its contracting activity, the release added.

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Pentagon Pushing for Funds to Upgrade Satellite Control Network - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - US military brass are urgently seeking funding to upgrade the antiquated US satellite control network (SCN), media reported.

The US Satellite Communications Augmentation Resource (SCAR) program is seen as critical to US military commanders amid concerns over great power conflict with China and/or Russia, Breaking Defense reported on Friday.

"SCN does not have the capacity to be able to see to the necessary assets to fight the fight when things go from a peacetime footing to a dynamic space operations environment," Space Rapid Capabilities Office's (RCO) Director Kelly Hammett was quoted as saying in the report.

The push for more funding is currently underway in discussions with members of Congress and the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), the report added.

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US, Iraq to Finalize Talks on Military Coalition Future Next Week - Pentagon Official

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States and Iraq intend to finalize their discussions on the evolution of the military coalition in the Middle Eastern country next week, a senior US defense official said during a press briefing.

"We haven't reached any final conclusions. I think this will kind of unfold over the course of next week," the Pentagon quoted the official as saying on Friday.

The official explained that the United States and Iraq are discussing an evolution of the coalition mission to defeat ISIS (banned in Russia) which ultimately would involve ending the mission in Iraq.

Western media reported in early September that the United States and Iraq agreed on the gradual withdrawal of US-led coalition troops from the country, with initial plans of hundreds of military personnel leaving by September 2025.

At the same time, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said in August that Washington never discussed with Baghdad the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq as part of bilateral talks on the future of the US-Iraqi military partnership.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) -

MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS

- * The leadership of the Lebanese movement Hezbollah's Radwan forces, approximately 20 key figures, were killed in an Israeli strike on the Lebanese capital Beirut, US media reported on Friday.

- * The death toll in the Israeli strike increased to twelve, with 66 others injured, the Lebanese Health Ministry said.

- * Israel has moved to a new level of confrontation with Hezbollah in which there are no red lines, Dmitri Gendelman, adviser to the Prime Minister, said.

- * US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and expressed concern about the escalating tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, the Pentagon said in a statement.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

- * The United States is going to announce another major weapons aid package for Ukraine as soon as next week but might delay its delivery over inventory shortages, US media reported on Friday.

- * Energodar was repeatedly attacked by Ukrainian drones, which knocked out the transformer of the Zarya substation, posing a direct threat to the safety of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, the ZNPP said.

- * The European Commission expects that the G7 loan to Ukraine worth \$50 billion will be repaid for up to 40 years, according to the EU body's proposal.

US SECRET SERVICE

- * The US Secret Service will make organizational changes to increase its effectiveness, including by leveraging new technologies for the protection of high-profile individuals and officials, Acting Director Ronald Rowe said on Friday.

- * The US Secret Service suffered from communications problems and a lack of diligence during the attempted assassination of former US President Donald Trump at a July campaign rally in Pennsylvania, Rowe said.

RUSSIA-HUNGARY ENERGY COOPERATION

- * Hungary has already received 5.3 billion cubic meters of gas from Russia through the Turkish Stream in 2024, and the role of the pipeline in Hungarian energy supply will grow, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said on Friday.

- * Hungary received 3.7 million tonnes of oil from Russia via the Druzhba pipeline in 2024, oil supply secure despite actions of Ukraine and EU, Szijarto said.

BRICS

- * Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will attend the upcoming BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan, Palestinian Ambassador Abdel Hafiz Nofal told Sputnik on Friday.

- * Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik told Sputnik that he will visit the Russian city of Kazan to attend the BRICS summit.

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US SEC to Seek Sanctions Against Elon Musk in Twitter Probe - Court Document

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on Friday indicated in a court filing that it could seek to sanction billionaire Elon Musk for failing to testify in its probe of the Twitter social platform that he purchased and renamed X.

Citing multiple instances where Musk had failed to respond to opportunities to testify on the \$44 billion Twitter deal, the regulator implied in the court action that it was only exercising the notice given to his counsel "that among other things, we may seek sanctions against Mr Musk."

The SEC wants to query Musk to determine if he broke any federal securities laws when he bought Twitter in 2022 and rebranded it X.

Musk has accused the SEC of trying to "harass" him through unwarranted investigations.

His lawyers have also said sanctions action would be "drastic" and unnecessary against their client.

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China 'Shocked and Gravely Concerned' by Devices Attack in Lebanon – Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 20 (Sputnik) – China was "shocked and gravely concerned" over the attacks involving pagers and other electronic devices in Lebanon, Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Fu Cong said on Thursday.

"Thousands of communications devices in Lebanon including pagers and two-way radios were detonated remotely and simultaneously. The explosions caused thousands of civilian casualties. China hereby registers profound shock and great concern over this development," Fu told the UN Security Council.

The envoy said that the attacks undoubtedly amounted to a gross violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and security as well as constitute a blatant breach of international law and international humanitarian law.

"The attacks were so outrageously brutal and atrocious that they deserve nothing less than condemnation in the strongest terms," Fu continued.

On September 17 and 18, pagers and walkie-talkies exploded in various parts of Lebanon. According to the country's Health Ministry, 37 people were killed and more than 3,000 injured as a result of the blasts. The Hezbollah movement and the Lebanese authorities blamed Israel for the incidents. Israeli authorities have neither confirmed nor denied their involvement.

On Wednesday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that a new phase of the war had begun and that the center of focus of the military effort had shifted to the northern front.

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Reporting on Remote Manipulation of Devices 'Exceedingly Dangerous' Precedent – Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, September 20 (Sputnik) – Incoming reports indicate the remote manipulation of pagers and other electronic devices involved in the Lebanon attacks, which sets an “exceedingly dangerous” precedent, Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

“Given that, according to incoming reports, we are talking about remote manipulation of electronic devices, by the way, from a different jurisdiction, we view this as an exceedingly dangerous precedent,” Nebenzia told the UN Security Council.

On September 17 and 18, pagers and walkie-talkies exploded in various parts of Lebanon. According to the country's Health Ministry, 37 people were killed and more than 3,000 injured as a result of the blasts.

The Hezbollah movement and the Lebanese authorities have blamed Israel for the incidents. Israeli authorities have neither confirmed nor denied their involvement. On Wednesday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that a new phase of the war had begun and that the center of focus of the military effort had shifted to the northern front.

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US House Judiciary Panel Asks FBI for Info on Iran Hacking Trump Campaign - Letter

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - US House Judiciary Panel Chairman Jim Jordan sent a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray on Friday, requesting information about Iran's alleged hack of Trump campaign materials.

On Wednesday, the Biden administration accused Iran of attempting to interfere with the 2024 presidential election in the United States by sending unsolicited emails to people tied to the Biden-Harris campaign containing materials stolen from the Trump campaign.

“Iran's actions raise serious concerns about foreign election interference targeting President Trump's campaign to support President Biden's and Vice President Harris's campaigns. We write to request information about this serious matter,” the letter said.

Jordan requested an unclassified briefing to answer questions about the materials that were allegedly hacked, who received the materials, and the FBI's investigation into the matter.

The briefing should occur as soon as possible but no later than September 26, the letter said.

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US to Include Medium-Range Missiles for Ukraine's F-16s in \$375M In Aid Package – Reports

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) – The United States will likely include medium-range missiles for Ukraine's F-16s in a new package of military assistance worth \$375 million that is set to be announced on Monday, Politico reported on Friday, citing US officials.

The missiles will have a range of about 70 miles and will allow Ukrainian pilots to stay away from Russian air defenses, according to the report.

The new package is also expected to include artillery munitions, rockets, and air defense missiles, the report said.

CNN reported earlier on Friday that the United States is going to announce another major weapons aid package for Ukraine as soon as next week but might delay its delivery over inventory shortages.

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Events in Lebanon, Syria Over Past Week Mark Very Dangerous Turn - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, September 20 (Sputnik) — Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday that recent developments in Lebanon and Syria have escalated tensions into a new dimension, marking a dangerous shift.

"What transpired in Lebanon and Syria over the past week brings the escalation in Lebanon in Syria into a new high technology dimension, and this is a very dangerous turn," Nebenzia said during a UN Security Council meeting.

Nebenzia added that it was evident the event was a coordinated, remotely guided operation, with no party taking responsibility.

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Harris Says She's Trying to Get Another Debate With Trump

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) — US Vice President Kamala Harris said on Friday that she is trying to schedule another debate with former President Donald Trump.

"I'm trying to get another debate," Harris said during a rally.

On September 10, Trump and Harris clashed in their first debate aired by ABC News. A CNN poll of debate watchers found that 63% believed Harris outperformed Trump.

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russia views remote manipulation of electronic devices from different jurisdiction as exceedingly dangerous precedent - nebenzia

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it is clear that attacks in lebanon and syria were coordinated, remotely-guided operation for which no one has claimed responsibility - nebenzia

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events in lebanon and syria over past week mark very dangerous turn - nebenzia

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US State Dept. Approves Possible \$114Mln Sale of Javelin Missiles to Bulgaria - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) – The US State Department has approved a potential \$114 million sale of 218 Javelin FGM-148F missiles and related equipment to the government of Bulgaria, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency said on Friday.

“The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Bulgaria of Javelin FGM-148F missiles and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$114 million,” the agency said in a press release.

Besides the javelin missiles, the Bulgarian government also request to purchase 107 Javelin Lightweight Command Launch Units (LWCLU), Javelin LWCLU Basic Skills Trainers (BST), Javelin Outdoor Trainers (JOT), Battery Coolant Units (BCUs), and other items, according to the release.

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Harris Says She's Trying to Get Another Debate With Trump

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) — US Vice President Kamala Harris said on Friday that she is trying to schedule another debate with former President Donald Trump.

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On September 10, Trump and Harris clashed in their first debate aired by ABC News. A CNN poll of debate watchers found that 63% believed Harris outperformed Trump.

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UN Rights Chief Says Lebanon Device Attacks Violated International Humanitarian Law

UNITED NATIONS, September 20 (Sputnik) – The attacks involving pagers and other electronic devices in Lebanon violated international humanitarian laws, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said on Friday.

“Simultaneous targeting of thousands of individuals, whether civilians or members of armed groups, without knowledge as to who was in possession of the targeted devices, their location and their surroundings at the time the attack violates international human rights law, and as applicable international humanitarian law,” Turk told the UN Security Council.

The High Commissioner further reminded that international humanitarian law prohibits the use of booby-trapped devices in the form of harmless portable objects specifically designed and assembled to contain explosive material.

"It is a war crime to commit violence intended to spread terror among the civilians," he added.

On September 17 and 18, pagers and walkie-talkies exploded in various parts of Lebanon. According to the country's Health Ministry, 37 people were killed and more than 3,000 injured as a result of the blasts. The Hezbollah movement and the Lebanese authorities blamed Israel for the incidents. Israeli authorities have neither confirmed nor denied their involvement.

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Israel Does Not Seek Escalation or War With Hezbollah - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 20 (Sputnik) - Israel does not want an escalation in the Middle East and does not intend to enter into war with the Lebanese movement Hezbollah, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon on Friday.

"We [Israel] don't want to see escalation in the region. We have no intention to enter a war with Hezbollah in Lebanon," Danon said.

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lebanon pagers attack violates humanitarian law - un high commissioner for human rights

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White House Correspondents' Association Criticizes Lack of Quad Access - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The White House should allow journalists greater access to cover the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) Leaders' Summit this week, White House Correspondents' Association President Eugene Daniels said in a statement.

US President Joe Biden will host the fourth in-person Quad Leaders' Summit in Wilmington, Delaware on September 21. Leaders from the United States, Australia, India and Japan will attend.

"My understanding is that the current posture of the administration is for the press to only see the leaders drive in with no eyes, or cameras on [Biden] in this historic moment," Daniels said on Thursday. "While we understand that there are security concerns, it's essential for the public to have direct and independent press accounts of the greetings at the very least."

Daniels said that he cannot remember a time where the press was blocked from covering a bilateral meeting with Biden on US soil.

Daniels urged the administration to "rethink its posture" and adhere to established standards of

press access at such events.

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Israel's UN Ambassador Refuses to Admit His Country Was Behind Lebanon Pager Bombings

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Lebanese National Pleads Guilty to Evading US Sanctions - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - A Lebanese national who had been designated as a global terrorist by the US government pleaded guilty to sanctions evasion, the US Justice Department said on Friday.

"Lebanese national Mohammad Ibrahim Bazzi, 60, pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to conduct and to cause US persons to conduct unlawful transactions with a Specially Designated Global Terrorist," the Justice Department said in a statement.

The US government had designated Bazzi a global terrorist for sponsoring and providing financial, material and technological support and financial services to Hezbollah, the statement said.

Bazzi is considered to be a key Hezbollah financier and accused of providing millions of dollars to this group over the years, the statement also said.

The US government said Bazzi and his associate Talal Chanine, who remains at large in Lebanon, proposed several options for transferring money as part of a fictitious franchising agreement as payment for the rights to operate a Lebanese-based restaurant chain throughout the United States.

The Romanian authorities arrested Bazzi in February 2023 and subsequently extradited him to the Eastern District of New York, the statement added.

Bazzi faces up to 20 years in prison, according to the statement.

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Austin Concerned Over Escalating Tensions Between Israel, Hezbollah - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) — US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin spoke with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and expressed concern about the escalating tensions between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah, the Pentagon said in a statement on Friday.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III spoke with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant today and reiterated his concern over the current escalation of exchanges between Israel and Lebanese Hizballah," the statement read.

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US Secret Service Says Will Need Tremendous Resources to Secure 2028 Olympic Games

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - US Secret Service Acting Director Ronald Rowe said on Friday that it will take significant resources to secure the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

"We have the 2028 summer Olympics ahead of us in Los Angeles. The Secret Service will be responsible for the security planning of that. That is going to require a tremendous amount of personnel, a tremendous amount of resources, and a tremendous amount of collaboration with state and local and other federal partners," Rowe said during a press conference.

In June, the US Department of Homeland Security designated the 2028 Olympics as a National Special Security Event. The designation allows for significant resources from the federal government, as well as state and local partners, to be utilized in a comprehensive security plan.

The Secret Service is currently operating in a heightened threat environment, as demonstrated by two apparent assassination attempts against former US President and 2024 Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, Rowe said.

The Secret Service will have hired more than 400 special agents by the end of the fiscal year, Rowe said. Applications to serve in the Secret Service are at an all-time high, Rowe added.

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US to Unveil Major Weapons Package for Ukraine as Soon as Next Week - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The United States is going to announce another major weapons aid package for Ukraine as soon as next week but might delay its delivery over inventory shortages, CNN reported on Friday.

The major security assistance comes from the remaining \$5.9 billion presidential drawdown authority for Ukraine which is set to expire at the end of the fiscal year, in two weeks, the report said citing two US officials.

The package could be comprised of artillery, air defenses and other ammunition critical to Ukraine's defense, the report said as it further noted the assistance is expected to be significantly larger than recent announcements valued at nearly \$200 million.

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US Secret Service Will Need Tremendous Resources to Secure 2028 Olympics - Acting Director

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

US Backs Venezuela-Led Discussions on Political Crisis' Peaceful Resolution - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to support Venezuela-led discussion for a peaceful resolution of the political crisis in the country, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Kevin Sullivan said in a congressional hearing on Friday. "We will continue to advocate for Venezuelan-led discussions that lead to a peaceful resolution of this crisis, a return to democratic norms, and an end to repression and violence," Sullivan told the US House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Sullivan accused Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his government of violating human rights and of exerting pressure on his opponents during the recent elections.

"Maduro and his allies have continued to refuse to recognize the will of the Venezuelan people, or to heed the repeated call of the international community to release detailed election results and have instead launched widespread repression in an attempt to cling to power," Sullivan added.

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Enrique Roig said during the hearing that the United States remains deeply committed to supporting the Venezuelan opposition and civil society.

"We are engaged in direct communication with opposition leaders, including Edmundo Gonzalez and Maria Corina Machado," Roig said.

"The operating environment in Venezuela remains dire as essential civil society activities are criminalized by law and international funding is restricted, making it challenging for organizations to challenge the government's narrative," Roig added.

USAID Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator Greg Howell highlighted the possibility of mass migration of opposition members from Venezuela.

"If Maduro continues to ignore the will of the Venezuelan people, there is a real concern that many more Venezuelans will begin to leave their country soon in addition to the nearly eight million who have already fled, with significant impacts to the region," Howell said.

In addition, Howell urged the United States and its partners to continue building international support for a democratic transition in Venezuela.

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There Will Be Organizational Changes Within US Secret Service – Acting Director

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) – The US Secret Service will make organizational changes to increase its effectiveness, including by leveraging new technologies for the protection of high-profile individuals and officials, Acting Director Ronald Rowe said on Friday.

"There will be organizational changes. For example, I've already directed the creation of an Applied Research and Development section to field new technologies leverage the research of other government agencies, and calibrate our technical security assets to stay ahead of threat protectors and technical collection impacting Secret Service equities," Rowe said during a press

conference.

According to Rowe, for the Secret Service to be more agile it needs additional personnel, technical assets, and equipment for the sustainment of immediate and future needs.

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US Secret Service Says Had Communication Issues, Poor Diligence During July Trump Shooting

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The US Secret Service suffered from communications problems and a lack of diligence during the attempted assassination of former US President Donald Trump at a July campaign rally in Pennsylvania, Secret Service Acting Director Ronald Rowe said on Friday.

"The Secret Service did not give clear guidance or direction to our local law enforcement partners. There were communication deficiencies between law enforcement personnel at the site," Rowe said during a press conference.

Although some members of the Secret Service's advanced team were very diligent, complacency by others led to a breach of security protocols, Rowe said. The Secret Service will hold its personnel accountable, Rowe said.

A second apparent assassination attempt against Trump on Sunday demonstrates a heightened threat environment for the Secret Service, Rowe said.

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Nebenzia Says Syria's Humanitarian Aid is Only 25% Funded Despite Donor Pledges

UNITED NATIONS, September 20 (Sputnik) -Moscow seeks clarification from the UN regarding the outcome of all donor pledges made to Syria, Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

"There's something else that's very important, that needs to be resolved: under-financing of humanitarian needs as donors are just not upholding their pledges. The humanitarian appeal is just financed to 25%," Nebenzia said the UN Security Council. "I'd like to ask the UN representatives who always go to the Brussels Donor Conference in Syria, as a kind of PR exercise - what actually happens to these pledges?"

In May this year, the donors said that they were prepared to contribute 5 billion in grants and 2.3 billion euros in the form of loans, so we would like to know what has been done with all these billions, he said.

"We're convinced that the UN Secretariat leadership needs to conduct additional work with donors in order to understand their plans because they've not been mobilized yet," Nebenzia concluded his argument.

Syria has been in a state of conflict since 2011 after the US-led collective West tried to topple the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad and supported opposition groups that include

various extremist and terrorist elements. Some of Syria's oil wells are controlled by US troops, which have been in the country illegally since 2016 under the pretext of fighting terrorists and their allied militants.

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US Continues Hunt for Potential Violators of Russian Oil Price Cap - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The US Treasury Department continues its hunt for potential violators of sanctions imposed on Russian oil and recently sent a request to a shipping insurer to inquire about 14 companies in a bid to limit the amount of fuel sold by Moscow, Bloomberg reported on Friday.

The American Club, one of the main shipping insurers, has confirmed that it received a request from the department and passed it on to its members, the report said.

The US government believes that some of the 14 companies may have violated the price cap imposed on Russian crude oil exports, according to the release.

On Thursday, US Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh said that the United States is getting closer to starting discussions about a much stricter regime concerning Russia's oil fleet and exports.

In December 2022, the Group of Seven (G7), the European Union and Australia introduced a price cap on Russian oil at \$60 per barrel. At the end of 2023, the G7 tightened control over compliance with the price ceiling and imposed a series of sanctions against companies and individual tankers transporting Russian oil allegedly in violation of the restrictions.

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probe finds complacency of some secret service members led to breach of security protocols, staff will be held accountable - usss

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internal probe of trump assassination attempt finds us secret service did not give clear guidance to local law enforcement partners - usss

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Biden Says 'Critical' for Congress to Pass Funding Bill to Avoid Gov't Shutdown in 10 Days

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Friday that it is “critical” for Congress to pass a continuing resolution that would fund the federal government to

avoid a shutdown in 10 days.

"Before I begin this cabinet meeting, I want to discuss very briefly the need for Congress to pass a continuing resolution. It's critical. We have ten days for Congress to pass a short-term funding bill...It's important we get this done," Biden said at the top of his cabinet meeting.

The US Congress must pass appropriations bills or a temporary government funding measure before the end of the month to avoid a shutdown. House Speaker Mike Johnson is pushing a six-month continuing resolution (CR) with the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act attached, which requires people to present proof of US citizenship to register to vote in federal elections.

On Wednesday, the US House of Representatives blocked a six-month continuing resolution to fund the government, to which an election integrity bill was attached.

Former US President Donald Trump urged Republicans to oppose a continuing resolution if Democrats do not provide assurances on election integrity.

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Russia Urges UN to Give Direct, Honest Assessment of Sanctions' Impact on Syria - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 20 (Sputnik) - Russia is calling on the United Nations to provide an honest assessment of the impact of the West's illegitimate sanctions on Syria, Russian Ambassador to the world body Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

"We would urge the UN to publicly give direct and honest assessments of the difficulties encountered by the Syrians because of the illegitimate sanctions and also humanitarian workers carrying out their noble mission, the difficulties they encounter," Nebenzia said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

Earlier in September, former Syrian Economy Minister Lamia Assi told Sputnik that the Western economic sanctions against Syria have resulted in many Syrian families being forced not to send their children to school amid the dramatic drop in living standards.

Syria has been in a state of conflict since 2011 after the US-led collective West tried to topple the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad and supported opposition groups that include various extremist and terrorist groups. Some of Syria's oil wells are controlled by US troops, which have been in the country illegally since 2016 under the pretext of fighting terrorists and their allied militants.

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US Air Force Says Conducted Simulated Test of Minuteman III Missile

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force conducted a simulated electronic launch minuteman (SELM) test at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, the Joint Global Strike Operations Center said in a statement.

"SELM tests are vital to the health of the ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile] fleet as it

ensures the system will do what it is commanded to do if needed and provides sustainment data to Air Force Global Strike Command and US Strategic Command,” the statement said on Thursday.

The Air Force conducts SELM tests twice a year to assess Minuteman III ICBMs in their deployed environments without actual launches, the statement said. The tests are scheduled years in advance, the statement added.

SELM tests provide a “great deal” of value to various organizations, although they are not as visible as an operational test launch, the statement said.

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US Stocks Poised For 2nd Straight Weekly Gain After Rate But Boost

NEW YORK, September 20 (Sputnik) - US stocks dipped Friday but were still headed for a second straight week of gains after rallying most of this week in anticipation of an interest rate cut delivered by the Federal Reserve.

The three main US stock indexes on Wall Street — the blue-chip-laden S&P 500, the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite, and the broad-based Dow Jones Industrial Average — were all between 0.2% and 1% in daily trading, after record highs on Thursday on the S&P and Nasdaq.

For the week, the three indexes were poised to finish up more than 1% each.

“Historically, stocks have performed well in periods when the Fed is cutting rates [and] while the US economy is still growing,” analysts at Swiss-owned Wall Street UBS said in a note. “Markets now appear to be expecting this outcome.”

The Fed cut 50-basis points from US rates on Wednesday for the first time in four years, bringing the peak rate paid by Americans on their borrowings to 5% per annum from a previous two-decade high of 5.5%. Money market traders are betting there would be two more cuts of 25 basis points before the year-end to bring the peak for rates down to 4.5%.

Rate cuts reduce business costs and indirectly boost demand, typically boosting the economy.

With three hours to Friday’s close of trading, the S&P, which tracks the stocks of 500 high-performing US companies, was down 0.6% for the day. For the week, it was up 1.3%, extending last week’s 4% gain.

The Nasdaq, which comprises pricey stocks such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google, slid almost 1% on the day while rising 1.3% on the week, adding to the prior week’s 6% rally.

The Dow, the broadest indicator for US equity markets and one that often reflects value, dipped 0.2% on the day and rose 1.4% on the week, adding to the previous week’s 2.6% climb.

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Simes Prosecution Raises Concerns Over US Methods to Silence Critical Voices - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The criminal prosecution of US political scientist and

Russian TV presenter Dimitri Simes raises questions about the Biden administration's true motives in targeting critical voices and about the overall legitimacy of such actions, the Washington Post wrote in an opinion-editorial (op-ed) text published on Friday.

In September, the United States charged Simes and his wife Anastasia Simes with alleged violations of US sanctions and with money laundering. Charges against Simes were part of a bigger government action against Russian media outlets, namely the Rossiya Segodnya media group and TV Novosti, for their alleged disinformation campaigns and election interference.

Simes, who has been known as a fierce critic of US foreign policy in recent years, became the first and, so far, only American citizen to be personally charged with violating sanctions for cooperating with a Russian media outlet, Channel One, according to the op-ed.

The Washington Post op-ed aptly notes that the Biden administration is essentially undermining its own objections to targeting media organizations that work for the US government.

In an interview for the newspaper, Simes reasonably argues that US prosecutors are singling him out and rejects the notion that he was engaged in money laundering, clarifying that he just tried to pay his taxes in the United States and sending them via an Armenian bank was the only option.

"I am not a propagandist. I am presenting my point of view. I absolutely enjoy doing it. And I reject the notion that I have taken any side," the article quoted Simes as saying. "I thought the First Amendment was designed exactly to protect unpopular views."

The case against Simes and Russian media outlets makes one think again about where the First Amendment ends and a criminal offense begins, and what consequences this might have for all the journalists who criticize the actions of certain foreign governments, including the one in Washington.

On Thursday, Freedom of the Press Foundation called on the US government to declassify documents related to the activities of Russia Today that prompted a new package of sanctions based on allegations that the outlet has been engaged in covert information and influence operations on behalf of the Kremlin.

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US House Passes Bill to Bolster Secret Service Protection for Major Candidates

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed legislation on Friday to bolster US Secret Service protection for major presidential and vice presidential candidates, following two apparent assassination attempts against former US President and 2024 Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump.

House lawmakers passed the bill, dubbed the Enhanced Presidential Security Act, in a vote of 405 in favor and zero opposed.

The legislation directs the US Secret Service to use the same standards to determine the number of agents in a protective detail for presidents, vice presidents, and major presidential and vice presidential candidates.

"It's unacceptable that now we're at two assassination attempts on President Trump. The Secret Service has to provide the same level of protection for presidential candidates as for

presidents so that something like this doesn't happen a third time. The future of our country is at stake," House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a statement on the bill.

On Sunday, US Secret Service agents opened fire on a gunman positioned near a golf course where Trump was playing at the time. Police arrested 58-year-old Ryan Routh in connection with the incident.

In July, 20-year-old Thomas Crooks attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, shooting him in the ear, killing one audience member and wounding two others.

Trump said that his team requested more US Secret Service protection in the wake of the incidents. US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said that they are open to getting more funding for the Secret Service if needed.

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US, Chinese Officials Hold 'Productive' Talks at EWG in Beijing - Treasury

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The US Department of the Treasury said in a statement on Friday that it has engaged with the Chinese Ministry of Finance in productive discussions on various issues at the Economic Working Group (EWG) in Beijing.

"Senior officials from the US Department of the Treasury and China's Ministry of Finance convened for a set of productive discussions and were joined by participants from other agencies," the statement said.

The discussions began with an exchange of views on domestic and global economic growth, concerns about "overcapacity" in Chinese sectors, non-market policies and China's support for Russia, the statement said.

The meeting concluded with talks on economic cooperation and debt challenges in emerging economies, the statement added.

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US House Passes Bill Banning Federal Funds to Aid Immigrants in Sanctuary Cities

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed legislation on Friday to ban federal funds from aiding immigrants in so-called sanctuary cities, where officials do not cooperate with federal authorities to enforce immigration laws.

House lawmakers passed the bill, dubbed the No Bailout for Sanctuary Cities Act, in a vote of 219 in favor and 186 opposed.

"American taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for costly policies put in place by liberal bureaucrats because those bureaucrats are now facing the consequences of their own actions. They could repeal their sanctuary policies at any time – they choose not to. It's time for these sanctuary cities, counties, and states to be held accountable for their disastrous policies, instead of

hardworking American taxpayers," House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a statement on the bill.

Sanctuary policies exacerbate the United States' immigration crisis by encouraging people to cross illegally with the promise that they will not face consequences in a sanctuary jurisdiction, Scalise said.

However, state and local officials continue to ask the federal government for financial assistance to help handle the influx of immigrants, despite not enforcing federal immigration law, Scalise added.

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Kirby Says Video of Israeli Soldiers Pushing Palestinians Off Roof 'Deeply Disturbing'

WASHINGTON, September 20 (Sputnik) – The White House said Friday that a video of Israeli soldiers pushing and kicking several Palestinians off a rooftop in the town of Qabatiya in the occupied West Bank was “deeply disturbing” and “clearly would depict abhorrent and egregious behavior” if “proven to be authentic.”

“Yes, we've seen that video, and we found it deeply disturbing. If it's proven to be authentic, it clearly would depict abhorrent and egregious behavior by professional soldiers,” White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said at a press briefing.

Kirby added that White House “reached out immediately” to Israel, which said there would be an investigation.

On Thursday, Israeli forces storming Qabatiya killed at least seven Palestinians, with footage emerging of soldiers pushing several people off the rooftop of a multi-storey building they had surrounded. It was unclear whether the people were alive or dead. One soldier also repeatedly kicked an apparently lifeless body until it fell over the edge of the roof.

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Oil Markets Dip After US Interest Rate Cut-Boosted Rally, Weekly Gain in Sight

NEW YORK, September 20 (Sputnik) - Oil markets were poised for weekly gains despite crude prices dipping on Friday after rallying the day before on the news of the US interest rate cut.

The US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) and UK North Sea Brent crude benchmarks were headed for weekly gains of 4% or more, extending the previous week's run-up of about 1%.

With four hours to Friday's settlement in New York trading, WTI was at \$70.64 per barrel, down 0.7% on the day but up 4.4% on the week. Brent was at \$74.25 per barrel, down 0.8% for the session and up 3.8% for the week.

Crude prices dipped in some profit-taking to the week's heady run, even as the strength above \$70 per barrel could continue, analysts said.

"Today's price action is generally weaker though only marginally," Scott Shelton, crude futures

broker at ICAP in North Carolina, said.

Thursday's rally in oil was a belated reaction to the 50-basis point cut in US interest rates on Wednesday by the Federal Reserve. It was the first rate cut in four years by the Fed and brought the peak paid by Americans on borrowings to 5% from a prior four-decade high of 5.5%.

Money market traders are betting there would be two more cuts of 25 basis points before the year-end to bring the peak for rates down to 4.5%. Rate cuts reduce business costs and indirectly boost demand, typically helping spur consumption of oil and other energy products that are vital to running businesses.

This week's run-up in crude oil was also helped by tensions in the oil-rich Middle East after Lebanon blamed the widespread detonations of explosives planted in communication devices on Israel. The Lebanese movement Hezbollah, whose members were targeted by the explosions, has vowed it would retaliate.