

9/24/24 Tuesday

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SPD Wins State Election After Brandenburg Governor Distances Itself From Unpopular Scholz

Germany's SPD party experienced a shift in luck just three weeks after the country's right-wing party made strides in elections in eastern Germany. However, the AfD still came in a close second while the new leftist BSW party rode to third place.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD) succeeded in their goals to push back against the growing popularity of the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) during a state election in Brandenburg on Sunday. The party won by a slim margin even though it has governed the state since reunification in 1990.

The SPD won by 30.9% of the vote, while the AfD took home 29.2%, [Reuters](#) reported citing results by the State Electoral Commissioner. The SPD's success, however, was not credited to Scholz, but to the state governor, Dietmar Woidke, who is more popular than the chancellor amongst voters and who [distanced](#) himself from Scholz during the campaign.

George Szamuely, a senior research fellow at the Global Policy Institute, joined Sputnik's [The Backstory](#) on Monday to discuss the political changes which are underway in Germany.

"It was clear what was going on in Brandenburg. Basically, the establishment parties got together to ensure that the Alternative of Deutschland (AfD) was kept out of power. So, once they saw the writing on the wall and then they saw that the AfD was leading in the polls, then they had to decide, well, how do we stop it? And the best way to stop it was through the Social Democrats," Szamuely explained.

"So, essentially, what happened in Brandenburg is similar to what happened in the French election a couple of months ago. There was a lot of tactical voting. And so, the Christian Democrat prime minister of Saxony, he came to Brandenburg and he urged Christian Democrat voters to support the Social Democrats because the Social Democrats were the ones that were the most likely to beat the AfD in the polls," he added.

"And, that's what happened. It was a very close election, but they just got over the finish line," the analyst said. "So, again, as in France, this was a negative vote. This wasn't in any way a vote for any agenda, but it's a vote to keep out what they call the far-right."

Two-thirds of Germans do not support the reappointment of Chancellor Olaf Scholz as the SPD candidate for the next elections, Sputnik reported earlier this month, citing a YouGov survey for the German newspaper. An overwhelming 68% of respondents reportedly oppose Scholz's renomination as a candidate for chancellor, while 20% support the chancellor's candidacy. About 60% of those who voted for the SPD in 2021 also said they would no longer consider Scholz to be a suitable candidate. However, Scholz has confidently asserted that the three-party left-green coalition government would serve out its term and that he and the SPD will win in the 2025 elections.

"German politics has suddenly changed. It used to be this really very, very predictable setup," the analyst explained. "And then [the parties] would just simply play musical chairs every five, 10, 15 years. They would change, and then the Social Democrat, Free Democrat government,

or sometimes you'd have a Christian Democrat, free Democrat government. It was very, very stable, very, very boring, but that's not Germany any longer. That's gone."

"Because what happened in Brandenburg and happened, of course, in the other, in Saxony and Thuringia, is that you now have this, the AfD, and then, of course, you also have the Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht, that party, which is the sort of the kind of left-wing populist party," he said.

"...the establishment parties and the anti-establishment parties have the same number of seats now in this Brandenburg state parliament. So that's already a huge development. This is no longer, you know, your grandfather's Germany. This is a new Germany."

Sahra Wagenknecht started the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) in January, a left party that has grown in popularity after it came in third in three states in elections in early November, as Germany's more mainstream parties are losing support. The political newcomer has voiced her opinion about the Nord Stream pipeline and said that Germany knew about the attack in advance, Szamuely previously told [Sputnik](#). The AfD, as well as the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), have called for an end to the shipment of weapons to Kiev.

"...the German political establishment, which has been all gung-ho on behalf of Ukraine and some of these characters. And so, sometimes you get these somewhat exuberant Ukrainian who go on German television and say, 'oh, you know, Stepan Bandera, he was a great Ukrainian hero'. And now the Germans are listening to this and they think, 'whoa, whoa, whoa. I mean, Bandera, that's a Nazi collaborator,'" the analyst explained.

Germany's right-wing party, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) received an unprecedented number of votes earlier this month, pushing the party to second place behind the conservative Christian Democratic Union party (CDU) in Saxony with 30.6% of the vote.

The party's popularity is partly in thanks to the country's economic woes, as well as the country's ongoing migration crisis.

The AfD has suggested that increasing arms supplies and financial assistance to Kiev will not help end the conflict in Ukraine. Tino Chrupalla, the co-leader of the right-wing party, said in an interview on Saturday that there is "always readiness for negotiations", [Sputnik](#) reported citing a German newspaper.

"I mean, how long an apparently great nation, obviously, the biggest economic powerhouse of Europe, how long can this great nation endure this kind of humiliation? And then, how long can this great nation go on being pushed into a war that obviously the German people don't want?" Szamuely said.

"So, German taxpayers have to pay more and more. They pay for Ukraine. They're paying for all the migrants, and they're not really getting anything for it. They have to pay more and more for their energy supplies," the analyst explained. "So, you know, that's, you think, that's what the German political establishment needs to be addressing. Instead, they're just so obsessed about the AfD, which isn't in power and has never been in power. It's not the AfD that has brought Germany to this sorry situation."

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Biden's Big Bye-Bye

Biden attempted to express calm during his speech regarding foreign policy, despite the fact that the US has rapidly accelerated two wars overseas.

On [Tuesday](#), President Joe Biden delivered his final speech to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) as president. The president's remarks seemed to ignore the ongoing crises in Ukraine and the Middle East, as he said, "Even from the horrors of war, there's a way forward." And added, "Things can get better. We should never forget that."

Biden addressed leaders and representatives from 134 countries around the globe. During his speech, the US president said that when he was elected as a US senator in 1972 (over 50 years ago) that the world was at "an inflection point" and a "moment of tension and uncertainty." The irony of what is likely to be Biden's final political speech is marked by the fact that for years, the US has worked to support coups and subvert democracy in dozens of countries across the world. And under Biden's direction, the US has shown unrelenting support for Israel even while undermining the influence of the UN as well as the authority of international law, and recently dismissed a vote by the UN Security Council that called on the country to end its campaign in Gaza.

The US also led a group of Western countries in defunding the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which is a crucial source of aid for refugees facing humanitarian crises, Sputnik [reported](#).

During the 79th session of UNGA, Biden addressed many foreign policy topics including an attempt to get the globe to rally behind support for Ukraine. Biden also said that he believes a ceasefire and hostage negotiation agreement is still possible between Hamas and Israel, even as the ceasefire proposals have fallen through several times.

Biden himself said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu isn't doing enough to secure a ceasefire deal. And in fact, Israel has ratcheted up their violence in the Middle East and is reportedly conducting terrorist-like acts in their assault on [Lebanon](#).

On Monday, the IDF launched missiles into southern Lebanon killing nearly 500 people. This followed a suspicious string of attacks on Hezbollah members' communication devices which injured thousands and left dozens of people dead.

"Since Oct. 7, we've also been determined to prevent a wider war that engulfs the entire region," the president said. "Hezbollah, unprovoked, joined the Oct. 7 attack launching rockets into Israel. Almost a year later, too many on each side of the Israeli Lebanon border remain displaced. Full scale war is not in anyone's interest."

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Republicans Blame Democrats' Harsh Rhetoric for Assassination Attempt on Trump

The would-be assassin, Ryan Wesley Routh, camped outside the former president's golf course in West Palm Beach with food and a rifle for nearly 12 hours, according to reports. The 58-year-old has been officially charged with attempting to assassinate the former president and current candidate for the 2024 presidential election.

A campaign official for former President Donald Trump said that the first attempted assassination in Butler, Pennsylvania was “not a one-off” and that they are “literally trying to kill the guy”. Despite voicing their dismay and denouncing the violent attempts that were made on Trump’s life, the Republican National Committee has criticized the Democrats’ “dangerous rhetoric” which “inspired another attempt on President Trump’s life,” [Real Clear Politics](#) reported. “Their rhetoric is causing me to be shot at when I am the one who is going to save the country, and they are the ones that are destroying the country,” Trump told Fox News’ Brooke Singman on September 16.

“...the Donald Trump campaign, you know, I can’t really argue with them saying they’re trying to kill us because ‘they,’ being somebody, is more than one person out there trying to kill him,” said Jim Kavanagh, an independent journalist, who joined [Sputnik’s The Critical Hour](#) on Tuesday. “You know, the whole story is amazing. We’ve had two assassination attempts against a major presidential candidate, and it’s like, oh, a little bit on the news for a couple of days and then they just forget about it.”

“What happened to [Thomas Matthew] Crooks? He just disappeared. He’s a ghost of a person who’s been cremated, I guess. And, we heard anything about that, the first assassin? What’s the story of this guy? As you say, I mean, this is the dog that didn’t bark, we have these characters come on the scene and are prepared and actually, you know, one of them shot him,” he added. Federal prosecutors have officially charged Routh with attempting to assassinate Trump, [ABC News](#) reported. The charges include: “attempted assassination of a major presidential candidate, possessing a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence and assaulting a federal officer” as well as two federal firearms charges Routh was facing prior to the attempted attack. Investigators also said that they discovered “hundreds” of files with child pornography during a search of Routh’s son, Oran Routh’s residence in Guilford County, North Carolina. They discovered the illegal content during an “unrelated investigation” into Routh’s father who is in custody until a trial on [Monday](#). Prosecutors said they discovered “hundreds of child pornography files”.

“Yeah. Well, let’s see what happens to [Oran Routh], whether he’s disappeared into the system and can’t talk to anybody for the next two years because he’s under arrest. You know, child pornography is - again, I have no idea what this person is, what he’s like. That’s one of their favorite things to find on people’s computers, so they can bundle them away. So, again, it is crazy stuff, and yet there it is, you know? And the candidates themselves are crazy stuff,” Kavanagh explained.

“So, you have these clown characters running for president, and then you have these clown characters running around trying to shoot them. And, this is supposed to be the most powerful country in the world that’s on the edge of World War III in two different places, or three different places,” he added.

“You have the Israelis blowing up Lebanon right now, and the Biden administration, sending another 20,000, about 50,000 American troops that [Vice President Kamala Harris] said aren’t there, that are in the Middle East, and we’re about to get into a war with Lebanon and Iran, and nobody talks about that, because they all agree on it. So, I just don’t know what to say about this.”

During the presidential debate between Vice President Kamala Harris and Trump, the former president accused his opponent’s political party of harsh rhetoric which he says bears

responsibility for the attempts made on his life. "I probably took a bullet to the head because of the things that they say about me," Trump said during the debate.

During the same debate, Trump, 78, said that Haitian immigrants in Ohio are "eating people's pets", despite officials saying that there has been no evidence of such an act. As a result, bomb threats and other threats of violence were made to various buildings in [Springfield](#) following Trump's remarks during the debate.

"So, again, this is deranged, this is deranged rhetoric. The Democrats, for all of their talk about Trump being divisive, nobody's been more divisive over the past eight years of Donald Trump's presence on the political scene than the Democrats and they pumped him up as the devil incarnate and as Hitler, and, this authoritarian dictator we cannot allow him to become president," Kavanaugh suggested.

"So, but this is American politics right now. It's characterizing people and as, characterizing your political opponents as existential enemies who are communists or dictators or both. And what are you gonna do about that? So there's gonna be a whole bunch of people out there," the analyst added.

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Biden's 'Performative' Lecture on Democracy at UN Belies True US Role in World

Biden has made his claimed struggle for democracy a primary argument for the Democratic Party's campaign against former President Donald Trump, but a closer look reveals the malign role of the United States in preserving countries' sovereignty and self-rule.

US President Joe Biden spoke before the United Nations General Assembly Tuesday, taking the opportunity to deliver what is likely one of the final major speeches of his political career.

The yearly gathering of world leaders and diplomats, which takes place each September in New York City, has served as the backdrop for several significant moments throughout its almost 80-year history. Cuban revolutionary Ché Guevara [addressed](#) the assembly in 1964, touting Havana's literacy campaign and assailing US intervention in Latin America. Former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi delivered a highly memorable [speech](#) in 2009, as did ex-Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, who blasted George Bush, neoliberalism, and the US War on Terror in a 2006 [broadside](#).

The week-long event provides an important forum for developing nations, who are briefly granted equal footing with great world powers. But the General Assembly is often criticized as a "talk shop" by those who claim the recognition granted to countries is more symbolic than tangible. Author and analyst Caleb Maupin joined [Sputnik's The Final Countdown program Tuesday](#) to discuss the 78th session of the annual event and break down Biden's address before the international audience.

"He talked about democracy and how he's committed to democracy," said Maupin, noting that Biden touched on themes he has frequently spoken about during the 2024 presidential election season. "He talked against Russia. He talked against Venezuela. He talked against the Palestinians. He talked up support for Israel. Joe Biden made a series of remarks going over standard US foreign policy."

“Joe Biden really likes to do these kinds of performative, ideological shows, and that's what his summit for democracy that he bragged about in his UN speech was,” the analyst claimed. “He loves to do these little performances where he talks about how he's sticking up for democracy and democratic ideals.”

Biden has made his claimed struggle for democracy a primary argument for the Democratic Party's campaign against former President Donald Trump, but a closer look reveals the malign role of the United States in preserving countries' sovereignty and self-rule. A 2015 [study](#) found the US provides military support to 73% of nations labeled “dictatorships,” with Saudi Arabia and Juan Orlando Hernández's oppressive former regime in Honduras providing perhaps the most prominent examples.

Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, still lauded as one of America's most admired and consequential statesmen, made his contempt for democracy clear in 1970 when he [vowed](#) to intervene in Chile if the country elected an anti-imperialist leader. “I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people,” said the controversial figure, who spearheaded a campaign of social and economic subversion of the Latin American country after the election of Salvador Allende.

Three years later Chile's democratically-elected president would be removed in a bloody US-backed military putsch, ushering in almost two decades of dictatorship resulting in the death and torture of tens of thousands. The model was duplicated in Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina in a campaign of state terror and repression known as Plan Cóndor. The US has worked to support coups and subvert democracy in dozens of countries around the globe, but its role in Palestine has generated perhaps the most attention in recent years. The United States has frequently undermined the influence of the UN and the force of international law in the name of defending Israel from criticism, recently downplaying the importance of a vote by the UN Security Council that called on the country to end its campaign in Gaza. The US has also led a group of Western countries in defunding the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a crucial lifeline for refugees facing hunger and displacement that Israel has long viewed as an impediment.

“There is a lot of criticism that can be leveled at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency,” noted Maupin. “[With] Israel though, in particular, there is a political issue there, which is the UN frequently criticizes Israel and calls out Israel for its treatment of the Palestinians.”

“Israel considers any connection with the legitimate elected government of Gaza, which is Hamas... support for terrorism,” he continued. “If the UN set up a health care clinic and an elected official who's part of the government in Gaza – that would be a member of Hamas – showed up and got health care, that would be considered aid to terrorism.”

Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton revealed the country's actual views on democracy in leaked audio of [comments](#) from 2006, in which she demonstrated that the United States' support for democratic elections is highly contingent upon voters choosing candidates in line with views and policies supported by Washington.

“I do not think we should have pushed for an election in the Palestinian territories. I think that was a big mistake,” Clinton said of the ballot that brought Hamas's armed resistance movement to power in Gaza.

"If we were going to push for an election then we should have made sure that we did something to determine who was going to win," she claimed, appearing to suggest the United States should have intervened to rig the outcome.

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US War Profiteers Bring World to Brink of Armageddon – Analyst

The military-industrial complex now threatens not only public investment but human civilization itself, according to author and professor Dr. Ken Hammond.

"In the councils of government we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."

Such were the words of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a moderate Republican who previously served in the US Army as Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe during World War II. Like Major General Smedley Butler, who served in the armed forces one generation before him, Eisenhower saw the nexus of private profit and military might firsthand. His successive political experience led him to coin his now-famous term for the phenomenon, which in earlier drafts of his farewell address he called the military-industrial-Congressional complex.

The scourge of war profiteering was already well understood in Eisenhower's day, with journalists having castigated the merchants of death who armed all sides in World War I and the War of the Pacific, but economic developments since the 1940s have accelerated the trend with military contractors and private mercenaries siphoning off billions of dollars in taxpayer funds.

The military-industrial complex now threatens not only public investment but human civilization itself, according to author and professor Dr. Ken Hammond. The expert in East Asian and Global History joined [Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Tuesday](#) to discuss how the influence of weapons manufacturers has brought the world to the brink of war with Russia, China.

"It's a money laundering scheme in a number of ways," said Hammond, responding to news that the Biden administration is preparing to ship \$567 million in lethal aid to authorities in Taiwan.

"Stuff that's laying around in military warehouses – obsolete equipment – they're going to ship that off to Taiwan as part of the ongoing efforts to poke China in the eye, provoke situations there, create a lot of public consciousness of tension and conflict and fear about the situation between the United States and China."

"They're basically giving away these weapons to Taiwan, and then they're going to turn around and buy new ones to replace those," he explained. "So that, too, is a giveaway to the defense industry, the so-called defense industry – the war industry, really. It's part of an ongoing relationship between the military-industrial complex and their control of the American government. So there's really no surprise here."

The United States has committed to recognizing the territory of Taiwan as part of the People's Republic of China [in at least three formal declarations](#), including the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué negotiated under former President Richard Nixon and two subsequent agreements in 1979 and 1982. The issue represented an important part of the diplomatic efforts necessary to normalize relations with Beijing, opening the country up to global capital and

manufacturing. But the US has increasingly sought to provoke China on the sensitive issue in recent years, shipping arms to Taiwanese authorities and dispatching ships to the Taiwan Strait. Beijing has [called for the United States to respect Chinese sovereignty](#) and refrain from interfering in the internal matter. China considers Taiwan an unalienable part of its sovereign territory and opposes any official contacts between the island and sovereign countries. Beijing has repeatedly said that the One China principle is a political foundation of China-US relations and that [violations by Washington of its own obligations](#) have been jeopardizing cooperation between the two countries, threatening peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

[Moscow has backed China on the issue](#), reaffirming its commitment to the One-China principle and recognizing Taiwan as an inalienable part of China in a number of official statements.

"Between these different [arms] shipments... this adds up to about a billion dollars," said Hammond of recent US guarantees to Taiwanese authorities. "What could they be doing with that billion dollars to house people who are living in tents and cardboard boxes on the streets of our cities? What could they do with that billion dollars to improve health care in this country? What could they do with a billion dollars to help out kids in our schools so they get a better education?"

"This is just pouring good money after bad down the drain of warfare and warmongering that doesn't serve the interests of the American people and ultimately doesn't even serve the interests of the people of Taiwan," he said, claiming the Democratic and Republican parties are in a competition to see "who's going to be the most warlike in our relationship with China."

"[Taiwanese people] don't want a war... but that's what the United States is trying to provoke," noted Hammond.

The Donbass conflict has provided another major opportunity for arms manufacturers to rake in record profits, transforming Ukraine into a de-facto member of NATO by pumping the country full of Western armaments. Critics claim the US-led bloc has sought to expand for the sake of weapons manufacturers, with each new member state required to upgrade its military equipment to ensure interoperability with its neighbors.

NATO has grown dramatically since the end of the Cold War, adding 16 more member states from 1999 through 2024. Many new members are former Eastern Bloc countries, threatening both Moscow's trade relationships and its security as the hostile bloc expands towards Russia's border. US officials have [recognized](#) the destabilizing [potential](#) of NATO expansion, but private profit has continued to provide a powerful incentive for the bloc to march eastward.

"They just blindly charge ahead with this stuff that's clearly in violation of our own stated policy," noted Hammond. "They don't care. They're just doing that. So they can say one thing, but what matters is that they do another. And the thing that they do is directly opposite to this rhetoric."

"It's the same with Gaza. Oh, we wring our hands about the situation in Gaza. They could stop the war tomorrow by cutting off all assistance to Israel, but they will never do that... until a change is made in the way that our country works."

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Divide and Conquer: Ruling Class Pits Americans Against One Another – Analyst

As America's two major parties grow increasingly polarized, independents have emerged as the largest group in US politics.

America's media class and ruling elites pit people against each other to prevent them from unifying in opposition to endless war, according to online commentator Craig Jardula. The cohost of The Convo Couch and AM Wake Up podcasts joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Tuesday to expound on his claim, decrying the rise of censorship and demonetization of online content.

"This has been a tactic by both parties," said the analyst, noting that his program The Convo Couch has been [denied](#) streaming profits on YouTube for over five years. "They want people to play into the cancel culture mentality. I don't think it's gonna be any different. I don't think things will change."

"Until we change that culture amongst ourselves, it won't change up above in our media," he claimed. "The military industrial complex... how powerful are they? Well, they only have power if they can control the media. And that's what they're doing. They have us pitted against each other as citizens."

As America's two major parties grow increasingly polarized, independents have emerged as the largest group in US politics. Recent polling [shows](#) half of voters identify as independent, a number that has steadily grown in recent years.

"Every election since 2004 – except 2012 – has seen the White House, Senate or House flip control," noted the website Axios, an indication of voters' increasing dissatisfaction with both Republicans and Democrats. Jardula claimed the trend suggested deep anti-war sentiment among the electorate, who oppose militarist factions that make up the majority in both major parties.

"They're determined to stifle the truth because they want to constantly bring us to war," claimed the analyst. "There's this funded mechanism of opposition to make sure that we're divided [against] each other, to make sure that cancel culture exists because if the cancel culture exists, then we as people are at war with each other instead of the ruling class."

"We're dealing with real fascism, where only the state can have their narrative," Jardula continued. "The way they succeed is to constantly have us pitted against each other so we're fighting each other and then they're constantly silencing all of us."

"I think the thing we have to understand most is that if they keep us in the two party duopoly, they succeed," he concluded.

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Evacuation Order Remains in Place Amid Chemical Leak Near Cincinnati - Officials

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - A half-mile evacuation order remains in place and roads are closed in the western suburbs of Cincinnati, Ohio, following a toxic chemical leak out of a rail car, according to local officials.

"As it relates to the public safety concerns, we are still maintaining a half-mile evacuation zone.

Additionally, the roads that are closed will remain closed for an undetermined amount of time," Little Miami Fire and Rescue Chief Mike Siefke said during a press conference on Wednesday.

On Tuesday night, a freight train parked in the town of Cleves near Cincinnati experienced a styrene leak in one of the cars, causing toxic gas to be released through a high-pressure pump, according to media reports.

Following the incident, Siefke told reporters that there was "potential for an explosion" at the site of the leak.

Central Railroad of Indiana officials John Keefer and Tom Chuba told reporters at the press conference that air and water quality in the area are still being monitored to ensure safety.

According to local authorities, the leak has not resulted from a train derailment, but from a problem with a car valve.

The White House said in a press release on Wednesday that President Joe Biden has been briefed on the styrene leak and has directed his team to provide any resources that may be needed.

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US House Republicans Demand Biden Administration Release Unclassified Ukraine Strategy

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - US House Republicans on Wednesday issued a joint statement urging the Biden administration to immediately release an unclassified version of its strategy to end the conflict in Ukraine.

"The Biden-Harris administration must immediately release an unclassified version of its strategy for how US and allied assistance will hasten a Ukrainian victory in Russia's war of aggression," the joint statement said. "After submitting the strategy months after the congressionally-mandated deadline, the decision to fully classify it is unacceptable and defies critical provisions that House Republicans fought to enact as part of the National Security Supplemental and the FY24 spending bills."

Republican Congressmen Tom Cole, Ken Calvert, Mario Diaz-Balart, Mike Rogers, Michael McCaul and Mike Turner were included in the joint statement.

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Indonesia Wants to See Peaceful Solution to Ukraine Conflict - Official

UNITED NATIONS, September (Sputnik) - Indonesia wants to see a peaceful solution to the Ukraine conflict, Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs of Indonesia Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan told Sputnik amid Volodymyr Zelenskyy's calls to "force Russia to peace"

"I think for Indonesia, based on our constitution, we'd like to see the peaceful solution, whatever it is," the coordinating minister said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"So we don't know yet the status of this situation [Zelenskyy's 'victory plan'], but many, many times our president has said he loves very much to see this peaceful solution over there."

Zelenskyy's stance on "forcing Russia to peace" is a fatal mistake, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday, adding that this will inevitably have consequences for Kiev.

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

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Two Canadian Citizens Killed in Lebanon Amid Conflict Escalation - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has confirmed the death of two Canadian citizens in Lebanon amid the ongoing fighting between Israel and the Lebanese movement Hezbollah, Global News reported on Wednesday.

Canada is aware that two Canadian citizens have died in Lebanon as a result of the ongoing escalation, the report said, citing Global Affairs Canada.

The ministry did not provide further details over privacy concerns but it noted that it had received several requests for consular assistance related to injuries sustained during recent attacks by Israel.

Canadian officials are ready to provide consular assistance to nationals in need, Global Affairs Canada added.

On Friday, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said that close to 45,000 Canadians are in Lebanon and called on all Canadian citizens to leave the country as soon as possible given the increasingly volatile and unpredictable situation and the potential challenges in providing consular service in the event of a full war.

Israel has carried out massive strikes in southern and eastern Lebanon in the past several days. Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said the death toll from the strikes has reached 558. Hezbollah has responded by firing dozens of rockets toward northern Israel.

This escalation was preceded by series of explosions of pagers and other electronic devices in Lebanon from September 17-18, which killed more than 40 people and injured nearly 3,500 others. Hezbollah and the Lebanese authorities blame Israel for the blasts while Israeli President Isaac Herzog denied the country's involvement in the incidents.

The situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border worsened after the start of Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip in October 2023. The Israel Defense Forces and Hezbollah fighters exchange fire almost daily in areas along the border.

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Indonesia's President-Elect Prabowo Mulls Attending BRICS Summit in Kazan - Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo Subianto is considering attending the upcoming BRICS Summit in Kazan, Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs of Indonesia Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan told Sputnik.

The minister confirmed that the country has received an invitation.

"Indonesia will join and I think the president-elect Prabowo [considering] this and we'll see what happens," the minister said.

There is no certain decision yet on the level of participation as the new administration in Indonesia will take office after October 20, the official explained.

He stressed that BRICS is good for developing countries especially.

"This is also can be part of South-South collaboration," the minister added.

Russia will host a top-level BRICS summit in Kazan from October 22-24.

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US Lawmaker on Zelenskyy Visit to Pennsylvania: Kamala Harris Not Even Trying to Hide Foreign Interference in Our Elections

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House GOP Chairmen Demand Biden-Harris Admin Release Unclassified Ukraine Strategy

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Canada to Host Ministerial on Human Dimensions of Ukraine's 'Peace Formula' – Ministry

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – The Canadian Government will host on October 30-31 a ministerial conference on the human dimensions of Ukraine's so-called "peace formula," Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Wednesday.

"The Honourable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada, together with co-organizers Norway and Ukraine, will host the Ministerial Conference on the Human Dimension of Ukraine's 10-Point Peace Formula on October 30-31, 2024," GAC said in a statement.

The ministerial will seek to bring together foreign ministers to advance the common vision underpinned by the Joint Communiqué on a Peace Framework developed at the conference on Ukraine held in Switzerland earlier this year, the statement added.

Envoys attending the ministerial will exchange views aimed at developing a concrete plan, guided by the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, for the return of prisoners of war as well as deported civilians and children back to Ukraine, the statement said.

Switzerland hosted a high-level conference on Ukraine at the Buergerstock resort outside of Lucerne from June 15-16. Russia did not receive an invitation, but even if it had, it would not have attended the conference, the Foreign Ministry said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in June that Russia would cease fire and start talks with Ukraine as soon as Kiev withdrew troops from Russia-controlled regions and abandoned plans to join NATO. Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy rejected the proposal, calling it an ultimatum.

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Chinese Embassy in Washington Says US Bill to Sanction CCP Members 'Extremely Harmful'

(Updates with more details in paras 5-7; modifies headline)

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Legislation under consideration in the US House of Representatives to sanction members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) engaged in certain activities is extremely harmful to the US-China relationship, the Chinese Embassy in the United States told Sputnik on Wednesday.

House lawmakers are set to vote on the legislation, dubbed the Sanctioning Tyrannical and Oppressive People within the Chinese Communist Party (STOP CCP Act), later on Wednesday. "China strongly deplores and opposes the so-called 'STOP CCP Act' and has made serious demarche to the US side," Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu said in a statement. "The bill is extremely harmful. If it moves forward or gets passed into law, it will cause irreparable damage to China-US relations."

The bill requires the US president to impose sanctions on CCP members if they violate the autonomy of Hong Kong, harass or intimidate Taiwan, or contribute to political oppression or human rights violations against Uyghurs or other societal groups in China. The White House Office of Management and Budget said that the Biden administration opposes the bill.

China urges US politicians to reverse course, return to rationality, stop manipulating China-related issues and cease the "political farce" against China, the statement said.

The legislation is an attack and slander against China based on political motives, rumors and lies. The bill infringes on China's sovereignty and internal affairs, the statement also said.

Sanctioning CCP leaders would be a serious political provocation against China and a deep offense to the Chinese people, the statement added.

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Congressman Waltz Says 'About 20' Shipyards Left in US, Down From 300 in Early 1980s

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Michael Waltz said on Wednesday that only about 20 shipyards remain in the United States compared to nearly 1000 at the end of World War II and more than 300 in the early 80s.

"In the early [19]80s, we had over 300 shipyards. That was actually a decrease from the end of World War Two when we had nearly 1000, but still, by the early 80s, we had over 300. In just the last three few years, we're down to about 20 [shipyards]," Waltz said during a virtual conversation hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

According to Waltz, in 2023 alone, China placed more than 1500 new orders for new ships, while the United States received only five.

Senator Mark Kelly, who also participated in the discussion, added that only 80 commercial ships today operate under the US flag, down from 10,000 merchant vessels flying the US flag at the end of World War II.

In May, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro said that the United States lacks shipyards to build carriers capable of transporting liquefied natural gas.

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Kyrgyzstan, Russia Strategic Partners at High Level - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Kyrgyzstan and Russia have a relationship of strategic partnership at a high level, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Jeenbek Kulubayev told Sputnik.

"High-level strategic partnership," Kulubayev said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, when asked to assess Kyrgyzstan-Russia relationship.

Kulubayev also said he will meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the UN General Assembly on Thursday.

"We will have a multilateral meeting," he added.

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china considers us 'stop ccp act' extremely harmful, bill will cause irreparable damage to us-china relations if passed - Chinese embassy to sputnik

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Pentagon Says China Gave US Early Notice of ICBM Test, Positive Step to Reduce Risks

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - China notified the United States ahead of time of its plan to test launch an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in the Pacific Ocean, a US Defense Department spokesperson told Sputnik on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the Chinese Defense Ministry said that their rocket force launched an intercontinental ballistic missile carrying a dummy warhead to the high seas in the Pacific Ocean as a part of annual exercises.

"We monitored the PRC [People's Republic of China] ICBM test launch that occurred earlier today," the spokesperson said. "The PRC did give some advance notification of the ICBM test. This is a step in the right direction to reducing the risks of misperception and miscalculation."

The United States will continue to press China for substantive bilateral engagement on issues related to its nuclear weapons expansion, the spokesperson said.

Also, the United States will continue to advocate for a more regularized bilateral notification arrangement with China for ballistic missile and space launches, which can serve as a confidence-building measure, the spokesperson added.

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US to Invest \$685Mln to Advance Goals of Los Angeles Declaration on Migration – Blinken

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) – The United States is investing an additional \$685 million to advance objectives under the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday.

"We're working together to address the root causes of regular migration, including the lack of economic opportunity," Blinken said during a ministerial meeting at the United Nations. "I can announce today that the United States will additionally invest more than \$685 million across Latin America and the Caribbean."

The latest support in advancing the declarations' objectives brings Washington's total financial contribution for the 2024 fiscal year to over \$1.2 billion, Blinken added.

The funds will include close to \$369 million to assist refugees, vulnerable migrant populations and host countries. In addition, \$228 million will be assigned to provide emergency food assistance for Venezuelan migrants and displaced individuals in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, Blinken said.

Another \$10 million will be allocated to the World Bank's global concessional finance facilities work in Latin America and the Caribbean, a program that promote economic development tailored to respond to refugees and communities' needs, the secretary said.

The support will also help to institutionalize the partnership by setting up and maintaining a technical Secretariat, Blinken said. This will be done with assistance of the Pan American Development Foundation and the Organization of American States, Blinken said.

Launched in June 2022 and counting 22 signatory states, the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection seeks work on four pillars being to promote stabilization in communities of destination, origin, transit, and return; regular pathways for migration and international protection; humane migration management; and a coordinated emergency response.

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us continues to press for substantive bilateral engagement on issues related to china's nuclear weapons expansion - pentagon to sputnik

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us sees china's notification of icbm test launch plans as 'step in right direction to reducing risks' of miscalculation - pentagon to sputnik

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China Gave US Advanced Notice of ICBM Test - Pentagon to Sputnik

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Lavrov Has 'Very Busy Schedule' at UNGA, Many Seek Meeting - Vershinin

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has a "very busy schedule" during the high-level week at the UN General Assembly, with many officials seeking a meeting with him, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin told Sputnik.

"Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, who heads the Russian delegation, has a very busy schedule. He has many multilateral events and bilateral meetings on the schedule," Vershinin said.

Many officials are seeking an opportunity to communicate with Lavrov on the UNGA sidelines in New York, Vershinin added.

Such meetings enable Russia to promote "true multilateralism" based on international law and the UN Charter "in their entirety and interrelation," Vershinin said.

"This is our principled approach and we will adhere to it," the deputy foreign minister said.

The High-Level Week of the 79th UN General Assembly began in New York on Tuesday with

the participation of several hundred heads of state and foreign ministers.

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Trump, Zelenskyy Tensions Rise During US Trip - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – Tensions have risen between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump this week, Punchbowl News reported on Wednesday.

Over the weekend, Zelenskyy visited a munitions factory in Scranton with Pennsylvania's Democratic Governor Josh Shapiro and Democratic Senator Bob Casey, leading Trump's allies to accuse him of election interference.

In an interview with The New Yorker, Zelenskyy also criticized Trump's running mate J.D. Vance as "too radical" and Trump himself as unable to stop the war in Ukraine despite his claims to do so if elected president.

Trump slammed Zelenskyy on Monday and Tuesday as wanting Democrats to win "so badly."

It is unclear how many lawmakers will attend a scheduled meeting with the Ukrainian president at the Capitol on Thursday.

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New US Senate Report Reveals 'Key Failures' During Trump Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – A US Senate investigation has revealed "key failures" in the US Secret Service's (USSS) activities before the assassination attempt of former President Donald Trump in July, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs said in a new report on Wednesday.

On July 13, 20-year-old gunman Thomas Crooks attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in the city of Butler in Pennsylvania, shooting the former president in the ear, killing one audience member and wounding two others.

"The United States Secret Service's (USSS ') planning, communications, intelligence sharing, and related security failures in advance of and during July 13 directly contributed to Crooks' ability to carry out the assassination attempt and kill and injure people in Butler, PA that day," the report said.

The report found that the USSS personnel failed to define responsibilities for planning and security of the rally, did not effectively coordinate with state and local law enforcement, and failed to take action to ensure Trump's safety.

"USSS personnel were notified of a suspicious person with a rangefinder around the AGR building approximately 27 minutes before the shooting," the report said.

However, key USSS agents told the Committee they did not receive this information and therefore did not know local law enforcement had identified a suspicious person, it added.

The report also pointed out that the USSS was notified about a suspicious individual two

minutes before the shooting. "Three minutes before shots were fired, a local law enforcement officer sent out a radio alert that there was an individual on the AGR [building] roof. This information was passed to the USSS Security Room approximately two minutes before Crooks fired," it added.

Additionally, seconds before the shooting, a local officer sent out a radio alert that the individual was armed. However, that information was not relayed to key USSS personnel, according to the report.

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Trump, Zelenskyy Tensions Rise During US Trip - Reports

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It is unclear how many lawmakers will attend a scheduled meeting with the Ukrainian president at the Capitol on Thursday.

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US Navy Confirms Damage of Replenishment Ship in Mideast, Too Early to Determine Cause

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The US Navy is assessing the damage of one of its replenishment oiler ships operating in the Middle East but it is too early to speculate what caused the incident, a Navy official told Sputnik on Wednesday.

"USNS Big Horn, a replenishment oiler, sustained damage while operating at sea in the US 5th Fleet area of operations, Sept. 23," the official said. "All crew members are currently safe and US 5th Fleet is assessing the situation, but it is too early to speculate on the specifics or cause of the damage."

The Big Horn was reportedly damaged in the Arabian Sea off the coast of Oman and will be moved to a nearby port using tugboats.

The Big Horn is assigned to the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group and is the only dedicated oiler ship working in the Middle East to supply fuel to the Lincoln's airwing and the escorts in the strike group, US media reported.

The Lincoln carrier strike group is currently in the Middle East serving as a deterrent to a

potential Iranian retaliatory attack against Israel. Iran vowed to retaliate against Israel over the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in late July.

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RPT - Pager Explosions in Lebanon Require Analysis, Recommendations - Russian Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Moscow believes that pager detonations in Lebanon still need to be analyzed as the world's conflicts entered a new stage given this unprecedented attack, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik in an interview.

"It already has some [implications on the current conflict in the Middle East] and you know that Israel has started its military operation in the south of Lebanon, if we judge from the latest news reports. But it opens a lot of questions which are still need to be analyzed, not only in the context of Middle East settlement, but also in the context of information security. So we are in a new world after this kind of attack, and I think that the consequences should be very carefully analyzed and some recommendations should be made," Polyanskiy said when asked what implications last week's pager detonations across Lebanon would have.

From September 17-18, pagers and walkie-talkies exploded in various parts of Lebanon, killing 45 people and injuring more than 3,000 others. Israeli authorities have neither confirmed nor denied their involvement in the attack.

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RPT - Middle East, Gaza to Stay at Core of UNGA General Debate - Russian Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White - The situation in Gaza will remain as the main topic of the UN General Assembly Week despite many attempts by certain countries to put Ukraine in the forefront, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik in an interview.

"I'm absolutely sure that, of course, the questions of the Middle East and Gaza will be at the core of most statements during the general debate, no matter how the others would try to shift the focus on Ukraine and maybe some other issues," Polyanskiy said when asked whether there might be a lot of action in the UN week on Gaza.

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 is led by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who is expected to speak on September 28.

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RPT - Russian Deputy Ambassador to UN Polyanskiy Calls UK 'Main Opponent of Peace' in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White - London is the biggest advocate against any peace efforts between Moscow and Kiev, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik in an interview.

"Of course, the UK's role there is very prominent. It's now the main opponent of peace," Polyanskiy said, adding that London is behind most of the actions undermining all peace efforts. The ambassador also recalled the last peace efforts in Istanbul which were undermined by former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

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RPT - Grossi Says IAEA Engages in Ongoing Dialogue With Russia on ZNPP, Kursk Nuclear Plant

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi told Sputnik that the agency has a very important process of constant dialogue and data exchange with Russia regarding the situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant (ZNPP), as well as the one in Kursk.

"Of course, in terms of the conflict there [Ukraine] we have a very, I would say, important process of constant dialogue, exchange of information as to the situation in Zaporizhzhia, of course, and also in Kursk lately, where you remember the events last August," Grossi said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

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RPT - IAEA Chief Says Working on Visit to Iran Within Next Month

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi told Sputnik that the agency was working on a visit to Iran within the next month.

"We are working on a visit to Tehran within the next month or so," Grossi said on the sidelines

of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Grossi shared that today he was going to see Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Asked about the program in Iran, Grossi said, "I don't know, we have to work on that."

In 2015, Tehran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear program, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, with China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with the participation of the European Union. Under the deal, Iran agreed to scale back its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. The United States withdrew from the deal in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump, leading to the collapse of the deal. In 2021, Tehran voluntarily allowed the IAEA to replace cameras at the nuclear facility in the Iranian city of Karaj, but said it would not provide data from the cameras' footage until the US lifted its sanctions.

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RPT - IAEA Chief Says Expects Another Round of Visits to Russia, Ukraine in Next Weeks, Months

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi told Sputnik that he expects to undertake another round of trips to Russia and Ukraine in the upcoming weeks and months.

When asked whether he has any plans to visit Russia and Ukraine, Grossi said, "Yes, all the time." Grossi also said he had just returned from his visit to Kiev and Kaliningrad.

"So I suppose that in the next few weeks and months I will be having another round," Grossi added.

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RPT - IAEA Not Planning at Present to Have Permanent Presence at Kursk Nuclear Plant - Grossi

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi told Sputnik that the agency does not see that need at present to have a permanent presence at the Kursk nuclear power plant (NPP).

"The situation is completely different in the sense that here we are dealing with a plant in Russia, belonging to Russia, normally operated," Grossi said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York when asked whether there was a need for a permanent agency presence in Kursk, similar to the situation in Zaporizhzhia.

Grossi said it is important not to forget that the plant is operating, producing energy, which is a completely different situation from the plant in Zaporizhzhia.

"So for the moment, we are not planning to have a permanent presence or something like that. We don't see a need to do that. We hope that there will not be any new event that would require

the IAEA to assess the situation. If that is the case, well, I will let you know," Grossi said.

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RPT - Grossi Says IAEA's Agenda Includes Nuclear Cooperation With Russia Beyond Ukraine Conflict

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi told Sputnik that the agency's current work with Russia concerns not only the Ukraine conflict given that Russia is a big player in the nuclear field.

When asked about potential discussions with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, Grossi indicated that there were several topics to address, not all of which were related to the conflict in Ukraine.

"As you know, Russia is a big actor in the nuclear field so we have a number of things that we are dealing with them," he stated. "But of course, in terms of the conflict there, we have a very, I would say, important process of constant dialogue, exchange of information as to the situation in Zaporizhzhia, of course, and also in Kursk lately, where you remember the events last August."

"So the dialogue for me with the Russian Federation is indispensable and it will continue," Grossi added.

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Szijarto Says Brussels Trying to Tell European Diplomats Who They Should Meet at UNGA

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) – EU officials are trying to tell European foreign ministers who they should and should not meet during the high-level week at the UN General Assembly and what position to take on certain issues, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto told RIA Novosti.

"We usually start the [UNGA] week with the meeting of the foreign ministers of the European Union. Now Brussels, or the people from Brussels, would like to give us a line to take. They would like to tell us with whom we should meet and with whom not, and what kind of positions we should represent," Szijarto said in an interview on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly.

The Hungarian foreign minister noted that he does not consider the United Nations a group of like-minded countries, adding that it was established to bring together those nations that do not like or even hate each other.

"My expectation before the General Assembly is that, finally, those who have not been talking to each other for a long time will now have the chance to do so. But I always get disappointed," Szijarto said.

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Szijjarto Says He Will Meet With Counterparts From China, Belarus During UNGA

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) – Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti that he plans to meet his counterparts from China and Belarus during the UN General Assembly high-level week.

"I'm going to meet the Foreign Minister of Belarus. I'm also going to meet the Foreign Minister of China, as well as 27 other foreign ministers," Szijjarto said.

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Szijjarto Says Will Meet With Ukraine's New Foreign Minister on Monday in Budapest

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) – Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti that he plans to meet with his new Ukrainian counterpart, Andrii Sybiha, on Monday in Budapest.

"We're supposed to meet next Monday in Budapest," Szijjarto said.

He pointed out that the rights of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine have been seriously violated in the last nine years.

Hungary wants to have good relations with all its neighbors, including Ukraine, the minister added.

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Szijjarto tells RIA Novosti he will meet with new Ukrainian foreign minister on Monday in Budapest

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EU Asks Foreign Ministers to Provide List of Bilateral Meetings at UNGA, Hungary Refuses

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The European Union has asked its member states' foreign ministers to provide a list of their bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the ongoing UN General Assembly in New York, but Hungary refused to do so, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"We usually start the week with a meeting of the foreign ministers of the European Union. Now Brussels, or the people from Brussels, would like to give us a line to take. They would like to tell us with whom we should meet and not meet, and what kind of positions we should represent. They have even asked for the list of bilateral meetings of ours which, of course, I have not

shared with them," Szijarto said.

The fact that the European Union is asking for such things is "too much," Szijarto added.

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Szijarto Says Brussels Trying to Tell European Diplomats Who They Should Meet at UNGA

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Summit on Ukraine Can Only Be Successful With Russia's Participation – Szijarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) – A conference on the Ukraine conflict can only bear fruit if Russia participates in it and if there is a compromise plan on the table to reach peace, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto told RIA Novosti.

"My position is that a peace conference can be effective or can make sense only if two preconditions are met. First, both parties of the war must be present at the table. Second, there must be a plan that can be discussed. As of now, I don't really see the appetite from those speaking about the peace conference to see both sides around the table," Szijarto said in an interview.

Szijarto pointed out that the conference on Ukraine as discussed by some politicians appears to be "more about propaganda than substance."

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summit on Ukraine could be success if both sides were present and compromise plan was discussed, but no appetite for that - Szijarto to RIA Novosti

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Hungary Will Continue to Make Peace Proposals on Ukraine – Szijarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) – Hungary will continue to look for solutions to the conflict in Ukraine and make peace proposals, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto told RIA Novosti.

"We have a very clear position on this war. It must come to an end immediately. A ceasefire must be established, and peace talks should be started. This is a very clear position of ours. So, therefore, we will continue to make peace initiatives," Szijarto said in an interview.

Hungary is pursuing this stance both at the United Nations and the European Union, the minister added.

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Hungary will continue to push for peace initiatives on Ukraine, including during unga high-level week - Szijarto to RIA Novosti

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Ex-CIA Analyst Says Pentagon Trying to Take Control of Ukraine Policy From Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The US military could be attempting to seize control of policy on Ukraine from Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other hawkish State Department officials including by blocking sending long range strike missiles to Kiev, former senior CIA analyst Ray McGovern told Sputnik.

Ukraine has been lobbying the Biden administration for permission to employ long-range US missiles to carry out strikes deep into Russian territory. On September 12, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that Russia would not tolerate any such action and would regard it as a last red line to be crossed.

"My interest had to do with indications that the military overruled Blinken and told.... [President Joe] Biden 'No!' about giving authorization to fire Storm Shadow missiles deeper into Russia," McGovern said.

McGovern said the Pentagon had about eight hours to digest Putin's warning on September 12 before the Defense Department confirmed there was still no change in the restrictions on weapons to Ukraine.

McGovern said this happened just a few hours before it fell to Biden to break the word to UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Expectations had been high that Biden and Starmer would

announce new rules on weapons use in the Ukraine conflict. However, no such announcement emanated after the talks at the White House.

The White House said Ukraine's request to use US-supplied long-range weapons deep in Russian territory will be discussed during Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's meeting with Biden later this week.

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Trump Briefed by US Intelligence Agency About Iranian Plots to Assassinate Him - Campaign

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump was briefed earlier by the US intelligence community about alleged threats from Iran to assassinate him, the Trump campaign said in a press release.

"President Trump was briefed earlier today by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence regarding real and specific threats from Iran to assassinate him in an effort to destabilize and sow chaos in the United States," the release said on Tuesday.

There have been two assassination attempts on Trump since July but there has been no evidence disclosed linking these attempts to Iran.

US intelligence officials notified Trump that these threats have heightened in the past few months, and US law enforcement officials across all agencies are working to ensure the former US president is protected, according to the Trump campaign.

The Trump team further said that Iran is "terrified" of Trump's strength and resolve, and wants Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris to win the election because of her "weakness."

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Trump Briefed by US Intelligence Agency About Iranian Plots to Assassinate Him - Campaign

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US State of Missouri Executes Marcellus Williams for 1998 Murder He Said He Did Not Commit

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Missouri death row inmate Marcellus Williams was executed by lethal injection for the murder of Lisha Gayle in 1998, the Missouri Department of Corrections said in a press release.

"The State of Missouri carried out Marcellus Williams's death sentence for the 1998 murder of Felicia Gayle on Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024, at Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Bonne Terre, Missouri. He was pronounced dead at 6:10 p.m.," the release said on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, the US Supreme Court rejected a last minute effort by Williams' attorney to block the execution.

Williams, 55, had long claimed innocence despite being convicted of Gayle's murder in 1998. Williams' execution was also reportedly opposed by both Gayle's family and the prosecutor's office that put Williams on death row.

Gayle, who was a social worker and former newspaper reporter, was stabbed 43 times with a kitchen knife on August 11, 1998. Her purse and her husband's laptop computer were stolen, but authorities later discovered they were in Williams' possession.

However, authorities had no evidence of Williams' DNA on the kitchen knife used to kill Gayle because it had been contaminated with the fingerprints of members of the prosecutor's office who handled the evidence without gloves.

Prosecutors claimed they had testimony from a former jail mate of Williams who claimed he had admitted he killed Gayle.

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Pro-Palestine Protest Marks End of First Day of UNGA in New York

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Hundreds of Palestinian activists are protesting in New York on the first day of the high-level week of the UN General Assembly, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

The protesters, accompanied by many police in heavy gear, move from street to street, chanting in support of Palestine.

A Sputnik correspondent observed the arrest of four people.

The demonstration is taking place relatively close to the UN headquarters, where the high-level week kicked off on Tuesday. The conflict in the Middle East is expected to be one of the key focus areas during meetings this week.

The activists had protested at the Grand Central Station, before moving down 42nd Street (the intersection with Third Avenue), where they continued to march through the city.

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Szijarto Says Hopeful to See Steps Taken at UNGA to Deescalate Conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) – Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto told RIA Novosti that he is hopeful that steps will be taken at the UN General Assembly to deescalate tensions with respect to the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

"I hope that some steps towards de-risking, lowering the risk of escalation of the two most severe armed conflicts in the world can be made. Steps towards de-risking or the de-escalation of the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza must be made," Szijarto said in an interview.

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Szijarto tells RIA Novosti he hopes UNGA will take steps toward de-escalation in Ukraine, Gaza

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Hungary Stands Against Allowing Kiev to Strike Deep Into Russian Territory - FM Szijarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Hungary remains opposed to the idea of allowing Kiev to strike deep inside Russian territory with Western weapons as it can further escalate the situation, Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto told RIA Novosti on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

"If any step increases the risk of escalation, we are against it. When it comes to the question of using Western weapons against territories in Russia... there's no way to answer this other than to say: yes, it does increase the risk of escalation. Therefore, we definitely cannot support it," Szijarto said on Tuesday.

White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Tuesday that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and US President Joe Biden are going to discuss Kiev's request to lift restrictions on the use of US-supplied long-range weapons deep inside Russian territory.

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US Navy Orders \$99Mln in New Research on Electromagnetic Power Systems - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Envisioneering has received a \$99 million US Navy contract for research and development for high-power electromagnetic systems, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Envisioneering [of] Alexandria, Virginia is awarded a \$99 million ...contract for research and development support for high power electromagnetic systems development, application, and testing," the release stated on Tuesday.

Work for the initial task order will be performed at the US Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in Washington, DC over the coming year and is expected to be completed by September 2025, the Defense Department said.

The Defense Department said the NRL will serve as the contracting activity to oversee work on the project.

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US Awards Huntington Ingalls Nearly \$9.5Bln for Amphibious Ship Construction - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Huntington Ingalls won two contracts totaling over \$9.47 billion to design and build three new amphibious transport dock ships and an amphibious

assault ship over the coming decade, the Defense Department said in a press release.

"Huntington Ingalls Inc., Pascagoula, Mississippi, is awarded a \$5,798,767,376... contract for detail, design, and construction (DD&C) of three amphibious transport dock ships (LPD) Flight II (LPD 33, LPD 34, and LPD 35)," the release stated on Tuesday.

Huntington Ingalls was also awarded another contract worth \$3,673,365,244 to design and build an amphibious assault ship, the release said.

Most of the work on all four ships will be performed in Pascagoula, Mississippi over the next eleven years and is expected to be completed by September 2035, the release added.

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Global Security Situation Worst Since End of Second World War - Hungarian Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The global security situation is the worst it has been since the end of the Second World War and steps need to be taken to avoid deterioration of conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto told RIA Novosti on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly.

"I have to tell you that there's no doubt that the global security situation is now the worst by far. I think this statement is also true if you compare the time which has passed since the conclusion of the Second World War," Szijarto said on Tuesday. "Steps towards de-risking or the de-escalation of the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza must be made."

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global security situation is now the worst since world war ii - szijarto to ria Novosti

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US Prosecutors Charge Ryan Routh With Attempting to Assassinate Trump - Filing

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - US prosecutors charged Ryan Routh with attempting to assassinate former US President and 2024 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, according to an updated indictment filed on Tuesday.

Last week, the US Secret Service opened fire on what appeared to be a gunman near a golf course where Trump was playing at the time. Police arrested Routh in connection with the incident and initially charged him with two firearm-related offenses.

The updated indictment charges Routh with attempted assassination of a major presidential candidate, assaulting a federal officer, possessing a firearm in furtherance of a violent crime, felon in possession of a firearm and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number.

The attempted assassination charge carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, according to a penalty sheet filed with the indictment.

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Szijarto Says Worsening Relations With US Not Hungary's Fault

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The fact that US-Hungary relations have worsened during President Joe Biden's term is absolutely no mistake of Budapest, Foreign Minister of Hungary Peter Szijarto told journalists.

"The fact that our relationship, political relationship with the US has worsened a lot during this administration is absolutely not our fault," Szijarto said on the UN General Assembly sidelines in New York City on Tuesday.

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New York Schools Chancellor Banks Resigns Amid FBI Probe That Cost Police Chief His Job

NEW YORK, September 25 (Sputnik) - New York City Schools Chancellor David Banks has announced his resignation amid a FBI probe on high-ranking staff in Mayor Eric Adams' administration that had already caused the police chief his job.

"After nearly 40 years of dedicated service to New York City's public schools, I have made the decision to retire at the end of this year," Banks said in a statement on Tuesday. "I want to thank Mayor Adams for giving me the opportunity to serve as chancellor."

Banks did not refer to the probe against him by the FBI or the seizure of his phone by federal agents who had also targeted other close allies of Adams.

Banks also had his home, which he shares with his romantic partner, New York City's First Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright, raided.

In addition, Bank's brother Phil, who serves as the city's deputy mayor for public safety, had his phone seized and home raided as well.

News of Banks' resignation came nearly two weeks after New York City Police Department Commissioner stepped down, saying the FBI probe against him had created a distraction for the department.

The FBI has not said what it is investigating the high-ranking officials associated with Mayor Adams for but media reports have speculated that the agency was carrying out a probe related to corruption.

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NASA Delays Launch of Crew-9 Mission to ISS Until Saturday Due to Tropical Storm Helene

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - NASA is delaying the launch of the Crew-9 mission to the International Space Station (ISS) until Saturday due to Tropical Storm Helene, the US space

agency said in a press release.

NASA astronaut Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov will be aboard the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft for the Crew-9 mission. The Crew-9 team will return to Earth in five months with Boeing Starliner astronauts Barry Wilmore and Sunita Willaims, who have been stranded on the ISS since July after their spacecraft experienced issues with thrusters and was returned to Earth unmanned.

"NASA and SpaceX teams have adjusted the next launch opportunity for NASA's SpaceX Crew-9 mission to no earlier than 1:17 p.m. EDT, Saturday, Sept. 28, from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida due to expected tropical storm conditions in the area," NASA said on Tuesday.

Although Tropical Storm Helene is expected to mostly impact the Gulf of Mexico, the storm is large enough to create high winds and heavy rain in the Cape Canaveral and Merritt Island regions on Florida's east coast, according to NASA.

NASA will complete a launch rehearsal on Tuesday night with the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft and Falcon 9 rocket, and then the rocket will be moved back to a hangar ahead of any potential storm activity, the release said.

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Oil Prices Up Almost 2% As Middle East Tensions Escalate From Israel-Lebanon Fight

NEW YORK, September 25 (Sputnik) - Crude prices jumped almost 2% Tuesday from worsening tensions in the oil-rich Middle East as Israel's attacks against Lebanon added to its battle with Palestinians in Gaza.

UK North Sea Brent, the global benchmark for crude, finished the New York trading session up \$1.27, or 1.7%, at \$75.17 per barrel.

West Texas Intermediate, the benchmark for US crude, settled up \$1.19, or 1.7%, at \$71.56 per barrel.

At least 569 people, including 50 children, have been killed and 1,835 wounded in Israel's fierce bombardment of various parts of Lebanon, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

An Israeli airstrike on Beirut also killed a senior Hezbollah commander while Lebanon's Hezbollah fired a barrage of missiles at Israeli air bases and attacked a naval base with drones as cross-border rocket attacks by both sides increased fears of a full-fledged war in the region.

The strikes risk pulling Iran, a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, closer to a conflict with Israel. Iran supports the Lebanese militant group, even as it joined the United Nations in calling for a de-escalation.

"It's unlikely that Israel will grab that olive branch," Phil Flynn, energy analyst at the Price Futures Group brokerage in Chicago said, referring to the calls for a stand-down.

September has been a volatile month for crude, with prices rising after being in a downtrend since the end of June.

WTI is down almost 3% for this month, extending the 5.6% and 4.5% loss seen in August and July, respectively. Year-to-date, the US crude benchmark is almost flat, after rallying more than 20% earlier in the year.

Brent is off by almost 6% this month, extending the 2.5% and 6.5% slide seen in August and July, respectively. Year-to-date, the global crude benchmark is down more than 3%, after rallying more than 20% earlier in the year.

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US Senate Passes Bill to Bolster Security Service Protection for Major Candidates

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The US Senate passed legislation 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.

The Senate passed the bill on Tuesday by unanimous consent, sending the bill to US President Joe Biden's desk. The US House of Representatives passed the legislation last week.

The bill, dubbed the Enhanced Presidential Security Act, directs the 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.

In July, 20-year-old Thomas Crooks attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania. Last week, Secret Service agents opened fire on a gunman position near a golf course where Trump was playing at the time and arrested 58-year-old Ryan Routh in connection with the incident.

Nearly two-thirds of likely voters in the United States believe that another assassination attempt against Trump is likely before Election Day, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released Tuesday.

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Iran Does Not Want to Be Involved in War Between Lebanon, Israel - Lebanese FM

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Iran does not want to be involved in a war between Lebanon and Israel, Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said during a Carnegie Endowment for International Peace virtual discussion.

"I think they don't want the war. I don't think they want to be involved in a war," the minister said on Tuesday.

Axios reported on Tuesday that the Lebanese movement Hezbollah allegedly asked Iran to attack Israel as fighting in the region escalates. However, the report said that Iran has so far refrained from attacking Israel because Tehran believes now is not the time to do so given that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is participating in the UN General Assembly in New York this week.

From September 17-18, pagers and other electronic devices exploded in various parts of Lebanon, killing more than 40 people and injuring nearly 3,500 others. The Lebanese government and Hezbollah have accused Israel of being responsible for the blasts. However,

Israeli officials have denied that the country was involved in the incidents.

Israel has also launched hundreds of airstrikes in southern Lebanon in the past several days against what it claims are Hezbollah weapons systems.

Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said at least 558 people have been killed in the airstrikes and more than 1,800 others have been wounded.

On Tuesday, the Israel Defense Forces announced a new wave of attacks on alleged Hezbollah targets in Lebanon.

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Lebanese Foreign Minister Says Some 500k People Displaced Amid Escalation

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said about half a million people have been displaced in southern Lebanon as a result of the recent escalation between Israel and Hezbollah.

"We used to have 110 [thousand people displaced in Lebanon]. Now probably they're approaching half a million," the minister said during a Carnegie Endowment for International Peace virtual discussion on Tuesday.

Starting on September 17, 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 blasts. Israeli President Isaac Herzog denied the country's involvement in the incidents. In response, Hezbollah struck Rafael, an Israeli military-industrial complex company north of the city of Haifa on Sunday.

Earlier this week, Israel launched hundreds of airstrikes in southern Lebanon. The death toll from the bombardments has climbed to 558, Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said.

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Pezeshkian Says in UNGA Speech Dialogue With West Can Follow If JCPOA Revived

NEW YORK, September 25 (Sputnik) - Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said during a speech at the UN General Assembly that meaningful dialogue between the collective West and Iran can resume if the 2015 nuclear agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is revived.

"We are ready to engage with JCPOA participants if JCPOA commitments are implemented fully and in good faith," Pezeshkian said on Tuesday. "Dialogue on other issues can follow."

Pezeshkian added that Iran stands ready to foster meaningful economic, social, political and security partnerships with global powers and with its neighbors based on equal footing, but called for the removal of sanctions placed on Iran in order to unlock the country's potential.

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Nebenzia Says Ukrainian Army Today on Verge of 'Complete Collapse'

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said during the UN Security Council that the Ukrainian army is on the verge of collapse.

"The Ukrainian army today is at the verge of complete collapse," Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

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Honduran Top Diplomat Says No Meeting Scheduled Between Castro, Putin Yet

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Honduras Eduardo Enrique Reina told Sputnik that while there is not a meeting scheduled between Honduran President Xiomara Castro and Russian President Vladimir Putin, it is not ruled out. When asked if there is any meeting planned between the Honduran president and Putin, Reina said, "Not for the moment, I think. But we'll see."

Last year, Reina met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. The two ministers discussed regional and global issues, bilateral cooperation and coordination in international organizations, including in the UN.

In April of last year, Putin said that Honduras was Russia's most important partner in Central America and that Moscow was ready to develop a political dialogue and expand trade relations with the country.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) -

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday that the speed and scale of killing and destruction in the Gaza Strip are unlike anything he has seen in his years.

* Guterres said Lebanon is "at the brink" amid an escalation of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah and warned against the country becoming "another Gaza."

* Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for considering the possibility of applying coercive measures on Israel for its failure to comply with UN Security Council resolution 2735 on a ceasefire in Gaza.

* US President Joe Biden said in his address to the UN General Assembly that a diplomatic solution in the Middle East remains a possibility.

* The United States will strengthen its network of alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, Biden said.

* The United States will not let up on supporting Ukraine amid the ongoing conflict with Russia, Biden said.

MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

* Israel has struck more than 1,500 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon over the past day, using about 2,000 rounds of ammunition, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said.

* Israel said on Tuesday that it had eliminated Ibrahim Muhammad Qubaisi, the commander of Hezbollah's rocket and missile division in a targeted strike on Beirut.

* Hezbollah fighters attacked the Samson base of the Israeli military with Fadi-3 missiles, the movement's press service said.

* UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said two agency employees were killed in Lebanon as a result of the Israeli strikes.

* Russia condemns the large-scale military attack by Israel against Lebanon, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* If Kiev is allowed to strike deep into Russian territory with long-range weapons, it would pose an extraordinary threat to global security and Ukraine's neighbors, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said on Tuesday.

* Russia's army group South has eliminated up to 810 Ukrainian soldiers over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said that the Western supporters of Kiev regime organized a UN Security Council meeting with the sole objective to provide Volodymyr Zelenskyy with yet another "concert stage" at the United Nations.

SITUATION IN RUSSIA'S BORDER REGIONS

* The Russian armed forces have eliminated more than 16,700 Ukrainian soldiers and 127 tanks during military operations in the border areas of the Kursk Region, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Tuesday.

* The Ukrainian armed forces have lost control more than 12 previously seized settlements in Russia's Kursk region and suffered heavy losses, Akhmat special forces commander Apti Alaudinov said.

* The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has visited prisoners of war captured in Russia's Kursk region, without specifying from which side, and passed on messages to their families, ICRC representative Claire Kaplun told Sputnik.

OPEC REPORT ON GLOBAL ENERGY

* OPEC expects OPEC+ production of liquids to increase by 25% to 62.9 million barrels per day by 2050 from 2023 levels and its share of the global market to rise to 52% from 49%, the organization said in its annual World Oil Outlook report on Tuesday.

* OPEC expects global oil demand to grow by 17.5% from 2023 levels to 120.1 million barrels

per day by 2050, and its share in the energy mix to fall from 31% to 29%, the organization said.

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Honduras Believes Parties to Ukraine Conflict Should Establish Dialogue - Top Diplomat

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Honduras believes that the parties to the conflict in Ukraine should establish dialogue in order to bring it to an end, Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Reina made the comment in response to a question about his view on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's new "peace plan."

"What we have said about the situation is that the best thing is for the parties to establish dialogue, all the parties in the conflict," Reina said. "So, the best thing is that both of them are talking."

Zelenskyy said previously that his "victory plan" had already been fully prepared. In August, Zelenskyy pointed out that the plan contained a powerful package of coercion and diplomacy to end the war.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov commented then that Russia was fully aware of the essence of the Kiev regime and would continue its special military operation as well as achieve all set objectives.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in June that Russia would cease fire and start talks with Ukraine as soon as Kiev withdrew troops from the territory of Russia's new regions and abandoned plans to join NATO.

However, Putin said in August that Russia cannot negotiate with those who indiscriminately target civilians and civilian infrastructure amid the Ukrainian invasion of Russia's Kursk region.

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Lebanese Foreign Minister Says Latest Escalation in Country 'Really Depressing'

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said on Tuesday that the latest escalation in the country following a series of device explosions is really depressing as many civilians were hurt as a result of the attack.

"There is a lot of depression, especially the latest escalation is really depressing," the minister said during a virtual talk hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "While, it was an attack, mostly on Hezbollah, a lot of civilians got hurt in the process."

Starting on September 17, 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 blasts. Israeli President Isaac Herzog denied the country's involvement in the incidents. In response, Hezbollah struck Rafael, an Israeli military-industrial complex company north of the city of Haifa on Sunday.

Earlier this week, Israel launched hundreds of airstrikes in southern Lebanon. The death toll from the bombardments has climbed to 558, Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said.

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Haitian Group Says Seeking Criminal Charges Against Trump, Vance for Springfield Comments

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The Haitian Bridge Alliance (HBA) said on Tuesday that it is filing criminal charges against former US President Donald Trump and his 2024 running mate JD Vance for their comments related to Haitian immigration to Springfield, Ohio.

"As HBA alleged to the court, over the last few weeks, both Trump and Vance led an effort to vilify and threaten the Haitian community in Springfield. Together, they spread and amplified the debunked claim that Haitian immigrants in Springfield are eating pets including cats, dogs, and wildlife," HBA said in a statement.

The criminal charges ask the court to affirm probable cause that Trump and Vance committed multiple crimes and issue arrest warrants against them, the statement said.

Hospitals, schools, and government offices in Springfield have experienced multiple bomb threats in recent weeks, following national discourse about the impact of Haitian immigration on the city. Trump and Vance's amplification of rumors that Haitian immigrants were eating pets and local wildlife harmed the Springfield community and violated criminal law, the statement said.

HBA is represented by Ohio-based civil rights attorney Subodh Chandra, the statement said. Chandra has previously hosted US Vice President Kamala Harris for Democratic fundraisers at his home and office.

The group accuses Trump and Vance of disrupting public service, making false alarms, telecommunications harassment, aggravated menacing, and violating the prohibition against complicity, the Chandra Law Firm said on Tuesday in a statement on the case.

"Trump and Vance must be held accountable to the rule of law. Anyone else who wreaked havoc the way they did would have been arrested by now," Chandra said in the statement.

Trump and Vance's comments are not protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution, the statement said. Trump and Vance are not "above the law," the statement added.

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Honduras Opposes Any Unilateral Sanctions - Top Diplomat

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Honduras opposes any unilateral sanctions, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Honduras Eduardo Enrique Reina told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

When asked whether western sanctions impact Honduras' cooperation with Russia, Reina said, "in general, we are against any unilateral measures that any country takes, independent of where it's taken."

"But we'll see how far it goes," he added.

High-level week at the UN General Assembly kicked off on Tuesday in New York City, where top officials from around the world are expected to engage on a number of critical issues including the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.

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US House Panel Advances Report Finding Secretary of State Blinken in Contempt of Congress

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The US House Foreign Affairs Committee advanced a report on Tuesday to recommend finding Secretary of State Antony Blinken in contempt of Congress for refusing to comply with a subpoena.

The panel advanced the report favorably to the House of Representatives in a vote of 26 in favor and 25 opposed.

"On September 24, 2024, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken failed to comply with a duly served subpoena issued by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on September 18 for his testimony before the Committee pertaining to the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs' investigation into the 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent noncombatant evacuation operation," the contempt report said.

Blinken's testimony is a vital component of the panel's investigation into the 2021 Afghanistan withdrawal, the report said. Blinken's refusal to comply with the subpoena - despite months of notice and offers of accommodations - warrants contempt, the report added.

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Honduras Relations With Russia Very Good, Including in Healthcare, Culture - Top Diplomat

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Honduras has very good relations with Russia, including in the areas of culture, healthcare and education, Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"We have a very good diplomatic relations. We have some issues of cooperation related to culture, to technical affairs, to health, education," Reina said on Tuesday. "So, I think we have a very good level of relations with Russia."

Last year, Reina met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. The two ministers discussed regional and global issues, bilateral cooperation and coordination in international organizations, including in the United Nations.

In April of last year, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Honduras was Russia's most important partner in Central America and pointed out that Moscow was ready to develop a

political dialogue and expand trade relations.

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iran's president at unga says dialogue on other issues can follow if jcpoa revived

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UNSC to Hold Meeting on Situation in Lebanon on Wednesday - President

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) — The UN Security Council will hold a meeting on the situation in Lebanon on Wednesday, the Slovenian Council President said on Tuesday in a statement.

"The Presidency intends to schedule the briefing on the situation in Lebanon for tomorrow, Wednesday 25 September at 6.00 pm with the Secretary General briefing the Council," the statement read.

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Honduras Wants to Deepen Trade Relations With Russia - Top Diplomat

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Honduras would like to boost trade relations with Russia, Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York on Tuesday.

When asked in which areas Honduras would you like to see expanded ties with Russia, Reina said, "I think to increase issues like trade."

"I think it might be important how our Honduran products can go to Russia. We have good export products of very high level, like coffee or sea products. So maybe trade would be an interesting [area] to deepen the relations," Reina said.

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Honduras Unlikely to Be at BRICS Summit, Yet to Request Bloc Membership - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Honduras will unlikely be present at the upcoming BRICS Summit in Russia's Kazan as the country has not asked to join the group yet, but requested admission to the new development bank, Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"Probably we will not [be] present because we haven't requested yet to be part of BRICS itself,"

Reina said when asked about attending the summit in Kazan. "We have requested to be a part of the new development bank of BRICS."

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Honduras Interested in Joining BRICS New Development Bank - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Honduras is interested in becoming part of the BRICS new development bank at the moment, but may request to join BRICS itself after, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Honduras Eduardo Enrique Reina told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

When asked if Honduras would be interested to become part of BRICS, Reina said, "Maybe afterwards."

"For the time being, the interest of Honduras is to become part first of the new Bank of Development of BRICS," he said.

Reina said Honduran President Xiomara Castro presented a request to bank chair and former Brazilian President, Dilma Rousseff, in Shanghai during a visit to China. Honduras is expecting the response from the BRICS bank, he added.

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Honduran Foreign Minister Says Won't Meet With Lavrov at UNGA Due to Scheduling Conflict

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina told Sputnik that he will not have an opportunity to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly this year due to a scheduling conflict.

When asked if he has a meeting scheduled with Lavrov in New York, Reina said, "No, we had a meeting last year. "

"Unfortunately, the agenda made it not possible to have a meeting during this week," Reina said.

Reina noted that Honduras is holding the presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and has a lot of related meetings.

"So unfortunately, we didn't have the time to connect," he added.

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US Wants the Russia-Ukraine Conflict to End - Blinken

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) — The United States is seeking a resolution to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"The United States also wants to end this conflict," Blinken said during a UN Security Council meeting.

Russia began its special military operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Russian President Vladimir Putin called its goal "the protection of people who have been subjected to abuse and genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years."

He noted that the special operation was a forced measure; Russia "was left with no chance to act differently; the security risks created were such that it was impossible to respond by other means."

Western countries including the US have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation. Aid shipments began in 2022 with artillery munitions and training and have escalated to include tanks, advanced air-defense systems, missiles and cluster munitions.

The Kremlin has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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Shifting Issue of Ukraine Responsibility on China 'Irresponsible'-China's Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) – Attempts to shift responsibility, attack, or smear China for the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine are "irresponsible" and will lead nowhere, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday.

"I also wish to make it clear that on the Ukraine issue, any move to shift responsibility onto China or attack and smear China is irresponsible and will lead nowhere," Wang told the UN Security Council (UNSC).

The foreign minister underscored that both China and Brazil have released a document on their position regarding a political settlement to the conflict consisting of six points and have thus played their "due role" in building consensus and promoting peace.

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Americans Can Have 'Fair Vote' in November - Attorney General Garland

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - US Attorney-General Merrick Garland said on Tuesday that he was confident that Americans will be able to vote freely and fairly in November's presidential elections, adding that the authorities would be working to ensure that. "I have complete confidence in the system and complete confidence that people will be able to have a fair vote," Garland told a news conference.

He also said he was confident that all government intelligence agencies and communities, including enforcement and protective services, will be working to safeguard the freedom and integrity of the November 5 election.

Garland's remarks came after repeated doubts about the fairness of the election cast by Donald Trump, former president and Republican nominee for the 2024 White House race. Trump faces incumbent Vice President and Democrat nominee Kamala Harris in the election.

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US Justice Dept. Sues Visa For Alleged Debit Card Monopoly

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department on Tuesday sued Visa for alleged monopoly of the debit card market, accusing it of earning more than \$7 billion annually in artificially high fees imposed upon merchants and banks, who then passed them on to consumers.

"We allege that Visa has unlawfully amassed the power to extract fees that far exceed what it could charge in a competitive market," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. "Merchants and banks pass along those costs to consumers, either by raising prices or reducing quality or service. As a result, Visa's unlawful conduct affects not just the price of one thing — but the price of nearly everything."

The action against Visa comes after Mastercard, another major creditor and card issuer, was accused last year of using illegal tactics to limit competition in the debit card market. Mastercard settled the complaint brought by the Federal Trade Commission.

In Visa's case, it was its first monopoly lawsuit after another suit by the government four years ago to block it from acquiring fintech company Plaid.

Since 2012, US banks that issue debit cards have been required to allow multiple payment networks to handle transactions.

Visa, however, dominates the market, according to the Justice Department, which says the company prices services in a way that makes it prohibitively expensive for merchants to use rival networks. Visa also pays would-be competitors to stay out of the market, the department alleges.

Visa did not immediately comment on the allegations.

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No Party Should Use Ukraine Crisis to Justify Illegal Sanctions - China's Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday that no party should use the Ukraine crisis as a reason to impose illegal unilateral sanctions or hinder normal business operations.

"No party should make the crisis an excuse to abuse unlawful unilateral sanctions and suppress normal business activities," Wang said during a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

Wang added that China is not responsible for creating the Ukraine crisis and is not involved as a party.

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All Parties Should Abandon Cold War Mentality to Reach Peace in Ukraine – China's Wang

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) – All parties to the conflict in Ukraine should abandon the Cold War confrontation mentality and create necessary conditions for achieving a ceasefire, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday.

"All parties must abandon the Cold War confrontation mentality and play a constructive role for cooling down the situation and create the necessary conditions for achieving a ceasefire at an early date," Wang said during a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Ukraine.

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US Approves Potential \$740 Mln Sale of Stinger Missiles to Egypt - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – The United States approved a potential \$740 million sale of Stinger missiles to Egypt, the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Tuesday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Egypt of Stinger Missiles and related elements of logistics and program support for an estimated cost of \$740 million," the statement said.

The DSCA delivered the required certification to Congress, it added.

Egypt has requested to buy 720 Stinger missiles for vehicle-based use on existing Avenger systems, including 20 Product Verification Flight Test (PVFT) munitions, according to the statement.

The sale will also include spare and repair parts, testing equipment, US government and contractor engineering, and technical and logistics support services, it added.

"This proposed sale will support U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives by helping

to improve the security of a friendly country that continues to be an important force for political stability and economic growth in the Middle East," the DSCA said.

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Nebenzia Says Only Aim of UNSC Meeting on Ukraine to Give Zelenskyy 'Concert Venue'

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday that the Western supporters of Kiev organized a UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting on Ukraine with the only aim of providing Volodymyr Zelenskyy with yet another "concert stage" at the United Nations.

"The only reason behind them convening this meeting is to provide Volodymyr Zelenskyy with yet another concert stage at the United Nations and this time in the chamber of the Security Council," Nebenzia said during a UNSC meeting on the situation in Ukraine.

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Biden Will Visit Germany, Angola on October 10-15 - White House

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will travel to Germany and Angola on October 10-15, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"In Germany, President Biden will meet with German leaders to further strengthen the close bond the United States and Germany share as Allies and friends and coordinate on shared priorities," Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

Biden will reinforce the United States and Germany's commitment to democracy, countering anti-Semitism, strengthening people-to-people ties and advancing cooperation on trade and technology, the statement said. Biden will also thank Germany for its role in supporting Ukraine and contributing to NATO, the statement added.

Biden will travel to Angola on October 13-15, where he will meet with Angolan President Joao Lourenco. The two leaders will discuss collaboration on shared priorities, including bolstering economic partnerships, strengthening democracy and intensifying action on climate security, the statement said.

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US Senate Confirms Geologist Michael Sfraga to Be First US Envoy for Arctic Affairs

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Tuesday confirmed Michael Sfraga, a geologist, to serve as the first US Ambassador for Arctic Affairs.

The Senate confirmed Sfraga's nomination with a 55-36 vote.

Sfraga during his nomination hearings in Congress said US policy on the Arctic cannot ignore

the fact that half of the region belongs to Russia and the two parties must engage in dialogue.

Sfraga faced some backlash from Republicans mostly due to his so-called extensive travel to Russia and China. Sfraga was also criticized for appearing on a panel with Russians who were sanctioned by the United States government, and for negotiating multiple memorandums of understanding with Chinese institutions allegedly tied to the Chinese government's defense and intelligence services.

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Kirby Says Does Not Look Like Moscow Interested in Resuming Talks on New START's Future

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration does not think Russian President Vladimir Putin is interested in resuming talks on the future of the New START Treaty, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"Does not look like he is interested. We made clear where we are," Kirby said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

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us state department approves potential \$470 million sale of stinger missiles to egypt - pentagon

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Szijarto Says Will Meet Lavrov on UNGA Sidelines, Europe Must Stay in Touch With Russia

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto told RIA Novosti he is planning to meet with Russian top diplomat Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) taking place this week in New York.

"I'm going to meet Foreign Minister Lavrov, as this is a habit of ours. Whenever we are here for the General Assembly, we always meet with each other," Szijarto said on Tuesday. "We cannot afford not to be in touch with the Russians."

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US to Announce \$375Mln Aid Package for Ukraine With Medium-Range Cluster Bombs - Official

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The United States will announce a \$375 million aid package as soon as Wednesday that will include medium-range cluster munitions, a US official confirmed to Sputnik on Tuesday.

"Confirmed," the official said when asked to confirm reports on this matter.

Russia has warned on multiple occasions that arms supplies to Ukraine hinder any peace settlement and directly involve NATO countries in the conflict.

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Trump Says US 'Stuck' in Ukraine Conflict, Needs to Get Out

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday the United States is trapped in the conflict in Ukraine and vowed to negotiate an end to it if reelected.

"We're stuck in that war unless I'm President. I'll get it done. I'll get it negotiated. We got to get out," Trump said during a rally.

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Kiev's Request to Use US Long-Range Missiles in Russia to Be Discussed This Week - Kirby

NEW YORK, September 24 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's request to use US-supplied long-range weapons deep in Russian territory will be discussed during Volodymyr Zelenskyy's meeting with President Joe Biden at the White House on Thursday, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"The President has been consistent that our policy is that long-range strike capabilities provided by the US are not to be used against targets in Russia. He has not made a policy change on that," Kirby told reporters. "The President looks forward to talking to President Zelenskyy this week. I'm sure the issue will come up, but he has not changed his view that the use of US weapons, long range weapons against targets in Russia is prohibited."

Russia believes that arms supplies to Ukraine directly involve NATO countries in the conflict.

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UN 'Powerless' Yet Still Vital to Resolve Ukraine, Mideast Conflicts - Former UK Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - The United Nations remains absolutely vital despite being powerless to resolve conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, veteran British diplomat and former UK ambassador to Syria Peter Ford told Sputnik.

"This year's General Assembly takes place against a fraught background in which the UN looks unprecedentedly useless and yet never more indispensable at the same time," Ford said.

"Powerless yet indispensable: that is the fate of the UN."

There is nothing the UN can do, Ford added, as the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza reach new peaks. The UN is powerless to take any action "except wring its hands if the major superpower

on the globe insists on risking pushback while it advances NATO's reach eastwards."

The UN, Ford added, was useless to stop the US from supplying ally Israel with the ability to carry on its war in Gaza while "claiming to deplore the results."

Ford said it is also significant that "arch UN abuser Israel," is angling for a return to UNSC resolution 1701 in Lebanon as a way out of the crisis "it has created."

However, Ford also said the UN system is not yet entirely hindered by the dominance of the superpower.

"At the same time the UN legal structure in the shape of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court has demonstrated by actions taken against Israel for war crimes that the UN system is not yet totally stymied by the control of the superpower, and this on the levels of morality and law, the two counterparts to naked power and the law of the strongest," Ford said.

The UN high-level General Debate week kicked off on Tuesday with the crises in Ukraine and the Middle East expected to be key focus areas.

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US Believes More Sanctions on Venezuela 'Appropriate' Amid Elections Dispute - White House

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The United States believes that placing additional sanctions on Venezuela is the appreciate path forward as Washington disputes the results of the latest presidential election, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"We believe that additional sanctions are the appropriate path forward," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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US Navy Oiler Damaged Near Oman Coast While Supporting Aircraft Carrier - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The USNS Big Horn fleet oiler was damaged in an underwater allision in the Arabian Sea off the coast of Oman, US Naval Institute News reported on Tuesday.

The Navy intends to move the ship to a nearby port using tugboats, the report said, citing Navy officials.

The ship did not suffer fuel leaks and the crew is uninjured, the report added.

The Big Horn is assigned to the strike group for the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier. The ship is the only dedicated oiler working in the Middle East to supply fuel to the Lincoln's airwing and the escorts in the strike group, according to the report.

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on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Israel Envoy to UN Says Erdogan's Comparison of Netanyahu to Hitler 'Beyond Imagination'

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's remarks comparing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to German Nazi leader Adolf Hitler are shameful and "beyond imagination," Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon said on Tuesday.

"The remarks also from the leader of Turkey, shameful remarks comparing our prime minister to Hitler. That's beyond imagination," Danon said.

Earlier in the day, Erdogan said in a speech during the UN General Assembly that Netanyahu must be stopped by an alliance of humanity just like Hitler was. Erdogan said such a goal can be achieved by way of a UN General Assembly recommendation for the use of force against Israel.

On October 7, 2023, the Palestinian movement Hamas attacked Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing more than 1,100 Israelis - both military and civilians - and took hostages. Israel imposed a complete blockade of Gaza and subjected it to bombardments causing mass devastation and a military invasion. More than 42,000 Palestinians have so far been killed during Israel's military operations while the vast majority of the 2.4 million Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced.

The 79th session of the UN General Assembly opened in New York on September 10 and will run until September 28.

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No Plans for Biden to Meet Netanyahu on Margins of UNGA - White House

NEW YORK, September 24 (Sputnik) - There are no plans for President Joe Biden to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly this week, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"There's no plans to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu here at the General Assembly," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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New START Treaty Kept World Safer, US Wanted to Keep it Alive - White House

NEW YORK, September 24 (Sputnik) - The New START arms control treaty kept the world safer and the United States wanted to keep it alive, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"New START was important. It kept us both safer. It kept the world safer, which is why the

United States wanted to stay, but it wasn't the United States who violated compliance," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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Hezbollah Allegedly Urged Iran to Attack Israel as Attacks Escalate - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The Lebanese movement Hezbollah allegedly asked Iran to attack Israel as fighting in the region escalates, Axios reported on Tuesday, citing Israeli and Western officials.

However, the report said that Iran has so far refrained from attacking Israel because Tehran believes now is not the time to do so given that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is participating in the UN General Assembly in New York this week.

On Sunday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reportedly discussed with his Israeli counterpart the possibility of Iran getting directly involved in the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

From September 17-18, pagers and other electronic devices exploded in various parts of Lebanon, killing more than 40 people and injuring nearly 3,500 others. The Lebanese government and Hezbollah have accused Israel of being responsible for the blasts. However, Israeli officials have denied that the country was involved in the incidents.

Israel has also launched hundreds of airstrikes in southern Lebanon in the past several days against what it claims are Hezbollah weapons systems.

Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said at least 558 people have been killed in the airstrikes and more than 1,800 others have been wounded.

On Tuesday, the Israel Defense Forces announced a new wave of attacks on alleged Hezbollah targets in Lebanon.

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Qatar Leader Says World Needs to Take Concrete Steps to Reach Ceasefire in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) – Concrete steps need to be taken to reach an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said on Tuesday in his address to the UN General Assembly.

"There is no point in talking about security, peace and stability in the Middle East region and across the world, if not backed by concrete steps leading to an immediate ceasefire and an end to the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories," Al Than said.

The Qatari leader called the situation in Gaza "the most barbaric, heinous, and extensive aggression" violating human rights and norms.

On October 7, 2023, Israel was subjected to a rocket attack from the Gaza Strip. In addition, Hamas fighters infiltrated the border areas, opened fire on the military and civilians and took

hostages. Israeli authorities say that about 1,200 people were killed during the raid.

The Israel Defense Forces launched Operation Iron Swords in the Gaza Strip and announced a complete blockade of the enclave. The enclave's health ministry said that the death toll from Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip since October 7 had exceeded 41,000.

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Indicted US Rapper P Diddy In Same Cell Block As Crypto Mogul Bankman-Fried - Report

NEW YORK, September 24 (Sputnik) - US rap artist Sean 'Diddy' Combs, in jail on sex trafficking charges, is spending his nights in the same cell block as convicted crypto mogul Sam Bankman-Fried, the New York Times reported Tuesday.

Combs, a 55-year-old singer and record producer and executive who also goes by his stage name Diddy, has been held in a dormitory-style jail block in New York City's Brooklyn borough for nearly a week awaiting trial on charges of racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking, the report said.

Sharing the block is Bankman-Fried, who has been in jail since last year after his bail was revoked by a judge who ruled that the so-called cryptopreneur had violated the conditions of his release.

Bankman-Fried, the 32-year-old founder of the FTX cryptocurrency exchange, was sentenced to 25 years in prison for a sweeping fraud that siphoned billions of dollars of customer money into venture capital investments, political contributions, and other funds that he lavishly spent. He is appealing the conviction.

The Times reported that Bankman-Fried, a vegan, was subsisting on a diet of water, bread, and peanut butter.

It was not known what Combs was eating. The artist's lawyers initially argued that the conditions at Brooklyn jail were too "horrific" for a defendant awaiting trial.

The Times quoted a spokeswoman for the US Bureau of Prisons as saying the agency does not comment on "conditions of confinement, including housing assignments" of detainees.

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White House Says Supports US House Temporary Government Funding Bill

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration supports legislation in the US House of Representatives to fund the federal government until December 20, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said on Tuesday.

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

"The Administration calls for swift passage of this bill in both chambers of the Congress to avoid a costly, unnecessary Government shutdown and to ensure there is adequate time to pass full-year Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations bills later this year," OMB said in a statement of

administration policy.

The administration appreciates the inclusion of language that protects nutritional assistance for vulnerable families, the statement said.

However, the administration is disappointed by Republicans' decision to block funding requested to avoid "severe disruptions" to government services, including effectively ceasing operations of the Small Business Administration disaster loan program, the statement said.

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Boeing Must Make 'Significant' Changes, Shift Culture to Ensure Safety - US Aviation Chief

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - Boeing needs to implement significant reforms and change its culture to improve safety and production quality, the head of the US Federal Aviation Administration, Michael Whitaker, said in testimony to a House panel on Tuesday.

"As a result of systemic production quality issues, Boeing must make significant changes to transform its quality system and ensure the right layers of safety are in place," Whitaker said. "There must be a shift in the company's safety culture to holistically address its systemic quality assurance and production issues."

Lawmakers during the hearing expressed disappointment over Boeing's dismal safety record. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Sam Graves said US aviation has been the gold standard but recent incidents "have called that into question."

Boeing has been plagued by safety failures and criminal charges in recent years. In January, a mid exit door plug blew out of a Boeing 737-9 MAX on an Alaska Airlines flight, forcing the FAA to ground all such aircraft.

In July, Boeing agreed to plead guilty and pay \$243.6 million to settle criminal fraud charges in connection with fatal crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia in 2018-2019 that killed a total of 346 people.

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Son of Alleged Trump Assassin Arrested on Child Pornography Charges - Filings

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The son of a man charged in connection with an assassination attempt against former President Donald Trump has been arrested on unrelated child pornography charges, according to court documents filed in the US District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina.

Last week, the US Secret Service opened fire on what appeared to be a man in a sniper's nest near a golf course where Trump was playing at the time. Police later arrested Ryan Routh in connection with the incident and charged him with two firearm-related offenses.

Ryan Routh's son, Oran Routh, is charged with receipt of child pornography and possession of child pornography, the criminal complaint, filed on Monday, said.

The FBI searched Routh's home in Greensboro, North Carolina, on September 21 as part of an

investigation unrelated to child exploitation, an affidavit in support of the complaint said.

Routh was allegedly in possession of a device with hundreds of child pornography files, the affidavit said.

The court filed an arrest warrant for Routh on Monday and on Tuesday the court filings indicated that police had arrested Routh.

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New Flexible Satellite Communications System Boosts Connectivity in Orbit - Northrop

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman has successfully tested a new hybrid communications satellite (SATCOM) system to ensure uninterrupted connectivity while satellites move into different constellations and change their orbits, the company announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"Northrop Grumman successfully completed its first over-the-air demonstration of a hybrid SATCOM solution, providing seamless connection with Viasat and a commercial proliferated low Earth orbit (PLEO) communications provider," the release said.

The demonstration validated resilient, uninterrupted connectivity while rapidly switching between constellations and orbits, the release said.

The hybrid SATCOM terminal is capable of hosting nine modems with network routing and encryption and alternates for potential failures, the release added.

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US Consumer Confidence Down Most in 3 Years as Worries Over Jobs Grow

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - US consumer confidence has plunged the most in three years as Americans increasingly worry over the weakening job market, the Conference Board, a multi-organization initiative dedicated to tracking the economy, said on Tuesday.

The Consumer Confidence Index, a monthly reading issued by the Conference Board for nearly five decades, slid to 98.7 for September from 105.6 in August for the biggest one-month decline since August 2021.

"Consumers' assessments of current business conditions turned negative while views of the current labor market situation softened further," Conference Board Chief Economist Dana Peterson said in a statement.

Each of the five components the organization samples fared worse on the month, with the biggest fall coming among those aged 35-54 and earning less than \$50,000, Peterson said.

"Consumers were also more pessimistic about future labor market conditions and less positive about future business conditions and future income," Peterson added.

The Federal Reserve's Summary of Economic Projections showed last week that the forecast for unemployment among Americans had been raised to 4.4% this year, from a previous 4%.

That heightened worries about the labor market, especially after the United States added just

142,000 non-farm payrolls in August, some 23,000 jobs below Wall Street estimates. In comparison, non-farm payrolls grew by 315,000 in April.

The Fed cut US interest rates last week for the first time in four years, dropping 50 basis points to bring the peak rate Americans pay for their borrowings to 5% from a previous two-decade high of 5.5%. The central bank has indicated that it was open to cutting another 50 to 100 basis points before the year-end.

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US Puts Visa Restrictions on Travel Agencies Driving Irregular Migration - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The United States imposed visa restrictions on multiple travel agencies from around the world that allegedly knowingly facilitate illegal migration to the United States, the State Department said on Tuesday.

"The United States is imposing visa restrictions today on multiple executives of travel agencies in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East," the State Department said in a press release. "These companies prey on vulnerable people by operating services designed primarily to facilitate irregular migration to the United States through countries in Europe and the Western Hemisphere."

The United States will continue to work with partner governments and the private sector to crack down on factors contributing to illegal migration, the release added.

Earlier this month, the State Department imposed visa restrictions on senior officials of a European charter flight company for facilitating irregular migration to the United States through Nicaragua.

The State Department has been regularly imposing visa restrictions on such officials amid a growing trend of charter flight companies targeting migrants seeking access to the United States.

President Joe Biden has had three consecutive years of record-breaking illegal migration on the US southern border but earlier this year he took executive action that has deterred the influx in the last year of his presidency.

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Erdogan Says It Is Important to Ensure Ukraine's Sovereignty Through Diplomacy, Dialogue

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) –Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that ensuring Ukraine's sovereignty through diplomacy and dialogue is important.

"It is very important that diplomacy and dialogue will ensure territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine," Erdogan said in an address to the UN General Assembly.

He warned that arms deliveries to the conflict zone interfere with a peaceful settlement. "As the arms race accelerates, the space for diplomacy is shrinking," he added.

Erdogan also admitted that while the conflict has continued for over two years, the international

community is still far from resolving it.

Russia repeatedly said that arms supplies to Ukraine hinder any peace settlement and directly involve NATO countries in the conflict.

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Vancouver Grain Workers Union, Terminal Elevators Assn. Resume Talks Amid Strike -Minister

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The Grain Workers Union (GWU) Local 333 and the Vancouver Terminal Elevators' Association have agreed to resume negotiations alongside federal mediators just an hour after a strike action began, Labor Minister Steven MacKinnon said on Tuesday.

Members of the GWU Local 333 at the Vancouver grain terminals went on strike at 7:00 a.m. PT (14:00 GMT) this morning. The union gave a 72-hours notice prior to their action.

"I spoke with both GWU and the Vancouver Terminal Elevators Association yesterday. At my request, parties have agreed to resume negotiations alongside federal mediators," MacKinnon said via the social media platform X.

The parties must work out an agreement, MacKinnon also said.

The minister emphasized that Canadian farmers and businesses need to get their harvests to markets following a "bumper" crop summer.

The Grain Workers Union Local 333 has said it seeks to improve the lives and living conditions of its more than 750 members operating in the Port of Vancouver and Prince Rupert.

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Majority of Canadians Want Less Immigration in 2025 Than in 2024 - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) – Close to 65% of Canadians would like the federal government to accept fewer immigrants in 2025 than in the current year, a Nanos poll for CTV News revealed on Tuesday.

When asked whether Canada should accept more, about the same, or fewer immigrants, 64% said that the country should take in fewer immigrants in 2025 than the government's target of 485,000 for 2024, the poll said.

Twenty-six percent said Canada should accept about the same number of immigrants, whereas only 5% said it should seek to welcome more than the 2024 target.

The poll also showed that Canadians are more likely to say the country should accept fewer refugees in 2025, compared to the current cap of 76,000 for 2024. Nearly half (46%) said Ottawa should welcome fewer, 35% want the numbers to remain about the same, and only 15% would want to see more people accepted into Canada.

Among other findings, 49% support and 23% "somewhat support" reducing the number of new immigrants until housing becomes more affordable in the country.

About 40% of those polled believe that reducing the number of newcomers would make the economy stronger (22%) or somewhat stronger (18%). In contrast, only 20% believe it would make it weaker or somewhat weaker, with the same proportion believing that it would have no impact.

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Turkey's Erdogan Tells UNGA Coercive Measures Should Be Considered Against Israel

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) – In his address to the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for consideration of the possibility of applying coercive measures against Israel for failure to comply with UN Security Council resolution 2735 on a ceasefire in Gaza.

“In the absence of the implementation of UN Security Council resolution number 2735, coercive measures against Israel should be put on the agenda,” Erdogan said in his remarks.

Erdogan also suggested that as in the case of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu must be stopped by an alliance of humanity, including by way of a UN General Assembly recommendation for the use of force against the country.

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Nearly Two-Thirds of US Voters Think More Trump Assassination Attempts Likely - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - A majority of likely voters in the United States anticipate more assassination attempts against former President Donald Trump before Election Day, a new Rasmussen Reports poll revealed on Tuesday.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents, 65%, believe that Trump is likely to experience future assassination attempts, including 32% who believe it is very likely, the poll report said.

Twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents do not believe that another assassination attempt against Trump is probable and 14% are unsure, the poll report said.

In July, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, shooting him in the ear, killing one audience member and wounding two others.

Last week, the US Secret Service opened fire on a man they spotted in a sniper's nest near a golf course where Trump was playing at the time. Police later arrested a suspect in the case and charged him with two firearms-related offenses.

The survey polled 1,114 likely US voters on September 18-19 and 22. The poll has a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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Johnson Says He's Not Sure If He'll Meet Zelenskyy When He Visits Congress on Thursday

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) — US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Tuesday that he was unsure if he and other House lawmakers would meet with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy during his visit to Congress on Thursday.

"I don't know if it's on the schedule or not. Our Thursday is very fluid here, depending on the CR, so we'll see what happens," Johnson said during a press briefing.

Zelenskyy is reportedly set to visit Congress on Thursday and meet with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and a bipartisan group of Senators. He will also meet with President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at the White House.

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G7 Unveils Industry Guidance to Prevent Evasion Exports to Russia - US Bureau of Industry

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - The Group of Seven nations has unveiled joint guidance for industry on preventing evasion of export controls and sanctions imposed on Russia, the US Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) said on Tuesday.

"Today, the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the European Union (G7) published for the first time ever joint guidance for industry on preventing evasion of the export controls and sanctions imposed on Russia," BIS said in a statement.

Russia must be prevented from obtaining components it requires to produce drones but G7 anti-diversion efforts are doomed to fail without cooperation with the industrial sector, Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement Matthew Axelrod said in the statement.

The guideline outlines priority areas such as items that pose a heightened risk of being diverted to Russia; red flag indicators of potential export control and/or sanctions evasion; and best practices for industry to use to address the red flags and conduct enhanced due diligence, the statement said.

The guidance will protect common "high priority" list items from being misappropriated, prevent reputational harm and mitigate liability risk, the statement added.

It will also support the success of coordinated export controls and sanctions, according to the statement.

The countries of the collective West have imposed a comprehensive sanctions regime on Russia, targeting the country's economy, energy and banking services, among other areas, after Moscow launched a special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022. Russia has repeatedly said that the Western sanctions have failed.

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Biden Says Diplomatic Solution in Mideast Still Possible Despite Escalation

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday in his address to the UN General Assembly that a diplomatic solution in the Middle East remains a possibility despite current escalation.

"Full-scale war is not in anyone's interest. Even if the situation has escalated, a diplomatic solution is still possible," Biden said.

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Biden Says in UNGA Speech US Will Strengthen Partnerships, Alliances Across Indo-Pacific

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (Sputnik) - The United States will strengthen its network of alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, President Joe Biden said in a speech at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday.

"We are going to continue to strengthen our network of alliances and partnerships across the Indo-Pacific," Biden said.

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Biden at UN General Assembly Says US Will Not Let Up on Support for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said in his address to the UN General Assembly on Tuesday that the United States will not let up on supporting Ukraine amid the ongoing conflict with Russia.

"We cannot grow weary, we cannot look away and we will not let up on our support for Ukraine. Not until Ukraine wins a just and durable peace," Biden said.

Russia believes that arms supplies to Ukraine hinder any peace settlement and directly involve NATO countries in the conflict.

biden at unga says we are going to strengthen our partnerships and alliances across indo-pacific