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9/25/24 Wednesday

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US Escalates Tensions as China Conducts Missile Test in Pacific

Rocketry has played a key role in China's development, helping the country to grow to become the world's second-largest economy. But despite China's "no first use" of nuclear weapons policy, the US' continued provocations may be met with harsher displays of deterrence.

On Wednesday, China announced that they had successfully test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile carrying a dummy warhead into the Pacific Ocean's high seas. The Chinese Defense Ministry said the launch was part of its annual exercises, while the China Central Television reported that the missile fell into the planned sea area.

"This launch was carried out as part of the annual training plan, it is in accordance with international law and international practice, it is not directed against any particular country or target," the ministry said in a statement on WeChat.

KJ Noh, a scholar, journalist and geopolitical analyst specializing in the Asia-Pacific joined Sputnik's Political Misfits on Wednesday to discuss what is surely becoming a second Cold War.

"I think [China is sending] a very clear signal. I mean, there are multiple messages that are being sent. Some people are saying that because there were some high profile firings of the leaders of the rocket force, this is a message from China stating; 'we are still highly functioning, you know, don't get any ideas.' But also in the current geopolitical environment, I think it's a very, very clear signal to the United States," Noh explained.

"The US is preparing for war with China. It has been since at least 2009. It's accelerated its pace. And the Navy just released a navigation plan 2024, which essentially it calendars a date for war with China by 2027. They claim deterrence, but the deterrence is so aggressive and forward leaning that you can only see it as provoking a war," the analyst explained. "Now, the question here is, can the US win a war against China? The simple answer is no."

"So how will it win and fight the war? It's now becoming very public. CNAS, you know, which is very, very important in determining strategic policy, has said that the US must integrate nuclear weapons seamlessly into war games and war planning with China. In other words, war with China will go nuclear," he added. "And so, here, I think China is sending a very clear message; 'you think that you can get away with a nuclear sucker punch? Don't think about it. You think you can have a limited nuclear war in theater? Don't think about it."

The US announced a tariff hike on Friday targeting an array of Chinese-made goods, including a 100% duty on electric vehicles, a 50% levy on Solar cells and 25% on steel, aluminum, EV batteries and key minerals. Automakers warned that the tariff could disrupt supply chains - a warning that the US blatantly ignored.

Washington maintains the suspicion that cars with devices that are connected to the internet or cloud services are vulnerable to hacking attacks. The ban on software could be put into effect as soon as the 2027 model year, with prohibitions on hardware set to occur in January of 2029, Sputnik recently reported.

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“Well, certainly it's not going to protect American jobs. I mean, on that level, it's going to fail because the US doesn't do manufacturing anymore,” Noh explained. “[Are the tariffs] going to protect data? I certainly doubt it. US corporations leak data like a sieve and nothing that they would use China has really shown to have any evidence behind it.”

China, a leader in electric vehicles and components for smart cars, has insisted it respects both the security of its foreign customers and the principles of fair competition.

“But I think the real issue here is a national security issue, but not quite in the way they think it is,” Noh continued. “...the US has actually set up with its electronic panopticon and its connected internet [...] which the US has set up so that it can turn it on and turn it off at will. We know that the US actually does this. If you buy an F-35 from the US and then they don't like what you're doing with the plane or don't like the direction that it's going, they can shut it off mid-flight.”

“[The US] is afraid that China is going to do to the US what the US clearly has the capacity to do around the world. And because of this, it wants to shut down EVs and, essentially, prevent any Chinese EV or Chinese tech, really, internet-connected tech from coming in,” he added.

“China is the world leader in renewables and EVs and new energy vehicles and new energy technologies, essentially going green means going red,” the analyst said. “But, from the US standpoint, they don't want that. They do not want energy transition if it means the Chinese are going to be leading it. So, they would rather be dead than red. The US would rather burn up the planet than give China its place in the sun.”

In one week, the US House of Representatives approved 25 anti-Chinese laws in bipartisan votes. US efforts to undermine China are one of few issues “both Republicans and Democrats can agree on”, US media noted. One of the bills passed included the “Countering the PRC Malign Influence Fund Authorization Act”, which will give $1.63 billion to the State Department and USAID over five years that will fund organizations that spread anti-China propaganda worldwide.

A report from Geopolitical Economy noted that the “second Cold War” seems to be reaching a critical point as CIA Director William Burns referred to China as the “biggest long-term threat”, while “the last two US secretaries of state, Democrat Antony Blinken and Republican Mike Pompeo, gave speeches specifically dedicated to demonizing China.”

“...we know that the USAGM already spends $950 million a year on, essentially, propaganda. This would give another close to $400 million a year to do overseas operations and to essentially do massive propaganda, massive information operations to demonize and delegitimize China,” Noh added.

“...this kind of propaganda is not simply harmful to, you know, the cultural informational sphere. It can be physically dangerous. The other way this can be dangerous is that it results in an increase of attacks on Asian Americans around the world and in the US as well," he added. "When you demonize a group preparing to attack them over here, don't be surprised if people take that message and attack the same people, Asians, over here.”

“But, it signals an escalating information war, which signals a preparation for kinetic war. And it's really about manufacturing consent for war, delegitimizing China, demonizing China, making everybody afraid of China, making everybody think China is a threat. And it also asserts US narrative dominance, which is absolutely necessary because the information sphere is a theater of war."

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'Israel Will Falter or Fall': US Preps for Middle East War Days After Biden's UNGA Speech

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 over 50 years ago the world was also at a “moment of tension and uncertainty.”

On Tuesday, US President Joe Biden delivered his final speech to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) as president. The 81-year-old's remarks seemed to ignore the ongoing crises in Ukraine and the Middle East as he announced that the uniting principles between the US and the world include standing “firm against aggression.”

“We are also working to bring a greater measure of peace and stability to the Middle East. The world must not flinch from the horrors of October 7th. Any country — any country would have the right and responsibility to ensure that such an attack can never happen again,” Biden said in his speech.

The irony of what is likely to be Biden’s final political speech is marked by the fact that under his 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 regarding Israel’s relentless, violent attacks on Palestinians.

“This is [US] foreign policy. And the Biden administration, like the previous administration, talks out of both sides of its mouth; ‘oh, we want peace, we care about the people, but, we are going to stand by Israel no matter what.’ Provide whatever they need so they can continue their genocidal mission that's, you know, creating greater regional conflict,” said Dr. Margaret Flowers, an author and co-editor of Popular Resistance, who joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour on Wednesday. “I mean, this is US foreign policy, to be involved in the world, unfortunately, it's in nefarious and destructive ways.”

“...this administration, like the previous ones, has served the military industrial complex, the wealthy elites and he was not functioning as an effective leader for them because his incompetence, his age was showing through. So, of course, they need a new fresh face. That can be the face of US imperialism, of US racism, colonialism, militarism and I'm sure they sent him a very strong message; ‘time for you to go, bud. We need somebody else to be doing this work for us,’ and that's what he does,” the analyst added.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is “desperate to keep war simmering” so as to draw the US “closer and closer to him”, writes Craig Murray for Consortium News. The journalist noted that while Israel can continue to “assassinate, employ indiscriminate terrorism” and “bombard from the air”, it will not be able to destroy Hamas or Hezbollah, retrieve its hostages nor make Northern Israel safe again for its colonialist settlers.

“Netanyahu’s strategy of assassinations and deadly stunts appears to be an attempt to goad Hezbollah out of their own territory into a suicidal advance into Israel. But Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah is not falling for it,” Murray adds.

“I don't see how Israel is going to recover from this. The world has come together very clearly to say Israel is an illegal occupation, it needs to dismantle itself. As you said the economy is falling. They can't afford this war,” the analyst explained.

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"...Lebanon has been bombing the northern region. The Haifa region. They've bombed air bases. I think just either today or yesterday they hit a Mossad headquarters near Tel Aviv. So, yeah, Israel is continuing to take, you know, a pretty big hit from this. What this is opening up and I think what's been so interesting watching this is that this new Axis of Resistance formed in recent years that includes Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen and they are now, because of this, over the past year have started working more closely together," the analyst said.

The IDF is preparing for "all options in Lebanon" including a ground operation, a representative told Sputnik on Wednesday. The Israeli military may launch more large-scale strikes against Hezbollah targets as well.

It was also reported on Wednesday that US troops in Cyprus are developing various fallout plans including the possible evacuation of citizens from Lebanon if the hostilities there accelerate. Biden also warned on Wednesday that an "all-out war" in the Middle East is possible. The president said himself that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu isn't doing enough to secure a ceasefire deal.

"And so, Israel is opening up a conflict that it's not going to be able to fight well, and it's going to really test the limits of what the US is willing to do. I mean we know now that the Pentagon is sending more troops to the region - that's concerning. But how far is the US really willing to go for Israel?" Flowers explained.

"Speaking of Biden, if he cared about stopping the war, it could not continue if the US stopped its aid to Israel. They could - Biden and Harris could stop this war tomorrow if they cut off the aid to it, and the military support that they're giving through our military," she added. "So, yeah, Israel is going to fall from this whether it continues to linger on for a little bit longer. It falters or it falls right away."

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US escalates tensions as China conducts missile test in Pacific

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Zelensky Leaving Ukrainians to Die for BlackRock, Deep State – Ex-Diplomat

Neoconservative elements in Washington have long sought to respond to the perceived threat of Russian military and diplomatic power, but the interests of large Western financial institutions in seeing the proxy war continue have received less attention.

While politicians wage a propaganda war to ensure continued funding for the Western proxy conflict against Russia, average Ukrainians are left to suffer for the sake of powerful outside interests, according to one whistleblower and former diplomat.

Analyst Andrii Telizhenko, who previously served in Ukraine's government but fled the country after facing opposition to his anti-war beliefs, joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown program Monday, lamenting the fate of hundreds of thousands of young Ukrainian men and women who have sacrificed their lives for the intractable US-backed conflict. The former government official said Kiev has lost 970,000 troops since 2022, confirming previous analysis that has placed the number of Ukrainian deaths during the conflict at close to one million.

"Zelensky… could have stopped this war before it started," said Telizhenko of the controversial figure, whose constitutional mandate as president of Ukraine ended in May. "That's why he has to continue this rhetoric, to stay in power."

"He can't [negotiate] because he's owned by the West, by Washington, by London, by BlackRock, by the military industrial complex, so they're not gonna let him do that," he continued. "They are making money out of this war and getting everything they can out of Ukraine and out of the resources that Ukraine has. So he has no other possibility. He could have stopped it as soon as he became the president in 2019."

"He could have [granted] Donbass… autonomy without losing hundreds of thousands of lives," the former diplomat noted, faulting Zelensky for not following through on a peace plan reached with Russia in Istanbul or implementing the Minsk Accords after campaigning on the issue in 2019.

Ukraine's Western allies have intervened multiple times to prevent Ukraine from reaching a peaceful resolution to its differences with Russia, most recently when the Zelensky regime took part in talks with Moscow after the launch of its special military operation. The United States intervened to put an end to at least two separate rounds of peace negotiations, according to testimony from former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and revelations about the role played by former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Neoconservative elements in Washington have long sought to respond to the perceived threat of Russian military and diplomatic power, but the interests of large Western financial institutions in seeing the proxy war continue have received less attention. The US investment firm BlackRock and Delaware-based bank JP Morgan have launched a massive fund for public and private interests to invest in Ukraine's reconstruction, it was announced earlier this year.

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It has been estimated that some half a trillion dollars could be sought to help the country rebuild. BlackRock CEO Larry Fink has emerged as one of the Democratic Party's most prominent supporters, working behind the scenes with a number of wealthy donors to help Democrats craft campaign strategy as the party ultimately chose to replace President Joe Biden on the presidential ticket.

The investment firm was subjected to significant criticism from Republican presidential candidates during the party's primary earlier this year; BlackRock has publicly supported progressive-leaning environmental, social, and governance (ESG) corporate principles and has made Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) the largest recipient of its campaign contributions.

"Zelensky is… destroying his own country, leaving people to die for BlackRock, for Washington, for London – and Lindsey Graham confirmed it," Telizhenko claimed, referring to the hawkish senator's unyielding support for the proxy conflict. "Ukraine has trillions of dollars… worth of resources. That's why we're fighting this war. This is why Zelensky has to continue this war."

"I fled this war because I was against this war and my government – the regime, the Kiev Nazi regime – tried to kill me for fighting for peace," he continued. "A lot of Ukrainians who fled this war, they fled it because… they just don't want to fight, but they want to continue this war so they have the pride of Ukraine winning, and that is it. They don't understand the consequences. The consequences are a World War III situation. Ukraine cannot win this, and Ukraine already has lost when the war started, day one."

"Ukraine is already, unfortunately, done as a country. You can see economically, there's no economy. It's being fed by the West, being supported like Frankenstein, by the West. As soon as the Western support goes out, it's dead. It's a dead body," Telizhenko concluded. "Zelensky is doing what he wants to do because he thinks he's backed up, not just [by] Washington, but he's backed up by the deep state and BlackRock and the elites of the United States and the so-called West, the Anglo-Saxon world. That's why he's acting this way."

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West Shooting Selves in Foot With Militarism, Economic Policy Driving Mass Migration

An inundation of migrants from Ukraine has intensified debates already taking place throughout the continent over immigration, with some observers resenting limited stocks of housing and social benefits going to Ukrainian refugees.

Immigration has emerged as a major subject of debate throughout the Western world in recent years.

Across Europe, mass migration from the Middle East and Northern Africa has become a contentious issue, with critics claiming waves of immigrants are failing to assimilate and putting strain on social welfare programs. The controversy has led politicians to seek a solution, with human rights groups scrutinizing the treatment of migrants by government officials in Libya and Tunisia who have been paid millions of dollars to halt the flow of asylum seekers.

In the United States, irregular immigration from Latin America across the country's southern border has become a topic of concern, playing heavily into the rhetoric of former President

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Donald Trump and other conservative populists. Trump famously promised to construct a border wall between the US and Mexico during his 2016 campaign, an effort that has been continued in part by his successor as observers claim Democratic nominee Vice President Kamala Harris has now also pivoted on the issue.

Politicians across the political spectrum have joined Harris in increasingly expressing skepticism towards immigration, but the shift in rhetoric has not prevented right-wing parties such as Germany's Alternative für Deutschland and France's National Rally from achieving major electoral victories in recent months.

The ascendance of such forces has left Western ruling establishments in disarray as they struggle to adapt to the new political reality. But author and independent journalist Dan Lazare claims Western politicians have no one but themselves to blame for the influx of migrants, pointing the finger at decades of militarism and failed drug and economic policies. The investigative reporter made the claim Monday on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program, pointing to Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

"She's a social democrat – therefore left-wing by American standards – but she is fiercely anti-Russian," Lazare noted. "She has backed the US military effort every step of the way. And she is now calling for Ukraine to be supplied with medium-range missiles with which to strike deep into Russia."

"She's also taking a strong stance against immigration," the journalist noted. "Mainly from the Middle East, of course, but what's amazing is thatthe worse the war gets in Ukraine – and these medium-range missiles will make it a good deal worse – the more refugees it will send fleeing to countries like Denmark."

An inundation of migrants from the Eastern European country has intensified debates already taking place throughout the continent over immigration, with some observers resenting limited stocks of housing and social benefits going to Ukrainian refugees. Ireland was recently forcedto slash weekly benefits for Ukrainian migrants by 80% as critics claim the influx of refugees has worsened the country's housing crisis

Meanwhile, a controversy has arisen in Germany over unemployed Ukrainian migrants, with some politicians saying social benefits should be reduced or jobless refugees should be sent back to Ukraine.

"She is shooting herself in the foot," Lazare said of Frederiksen's support for the Ukraine proxy war. "She is supporting a war which generates refugees who, when they finally make their way to Denmark, are angering growing numbers of citizens who are afraid of what the influx means and fueling the rise of the ultra-right. This is amazingly foolish on her part, but yet she is doing it. She's like an automaton who's marching off the edge of a cliff."

Lazare also highlighted US policies driving immigration across the world, pointing to the impact of failed drug and economic policy in Latin America and the consequences of continuous war in the Middle East. A study by Brown University has estimated that at least 4.5 million people have died in post-9/11 warzones amid the US-backed War on Terror, while millions more have been displaced.

In Latin America, neoliberal economic policy advocated by the United States has impoverished many countries, with a surge of immigration from Mexico taking place after the United States passed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the 1990s. The act's Central

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American equivalent CAFTA has more recently driven migration from countries south of Mexico, especially Guatemala and El Salvador.
The reign of Juan Orlando Hernández after a US-backed coup – who many have referred to as a dictator – also worsened the security situation in Honduras, with hundreds of thousands fleeing the country and heading north.
But Lazare pointed to failed drug policy as a primary cause of migration from Latin America.
"Migration over the southern border [is] caused by years of dreadful US economic policies, which essentially have impoverished broad swaths of Latin America. But even more importantly is the drug war," said Lazare. "I mean, the drug war is capsizing entire nations – Haiti, Ecuador, portions of Central America. I mean, Mexico has reeled under the impact for decades. And so this generates refugees."
"So, instead of stopping and saying, you know, what are we doing here? What are the costs and benefits? Are these policies wise? Is there some alternative? Instead, they step up the drug war and then step up the agitation against immigrants, promise to tighten the border, and then wonder why the radical right is expanding as a consequence."

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China Urges Win-Win Cooperation as US Sees Zero-Sum Game

Beijing has increasingly sought to pursue economic development that provides tangible benefits for partnered countries, building high speed rail and other projects through its Belt and Road Initiative.
The People's Republic of China continues to seek mutually beneficial partnerships with the United States and the rest of the world but US leaders are committed to seeing the Asian country's rise as a challenge to its hegemony, according to writer and peace activist KJ Noh.
Noh appeared on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Monday to discuss the issue as senior Chinese diplomat Wu Hailong accused US Vice President Kamala Harris of failing to see the big picture in the ongoing economic rivalry between the two superpowers.
"You cannot always think that you have to win [and] always assume that others can only lose," said Hailong, referring to comments made by the Democratic presidential candidate during her acceptance speech last month. Harris insisted the United States – not China – should lead the world in advances related to space and artificial intelligence, characterizing the rivalry between the US and China as a "competition for the 21st century."
"Why cannot everyone win?" Hailong asked.
"Why is the US the only one that wins? This perspective is such a small picture and this is the problem with the perceptions of the United States…We do not want to be the leader of the world and more importantly, we do not want to dominate the world and be the next America," the diplomat insisted.
"The Chinese want win-win relations," Noh noted, using a term that is frequently employed in official Chinese public statements. "They want mutually beneficial relations and they believe that this can be done. And it's not simply a policy. It is actually the way the economic system works if you have good mutual equitable relations."

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“I give you something you need, you give me something I need and we both get efficiencies from that. Or I give you something and that helps you develop something, which helps me develop something and we create this kind of knowledge or technical or scientific common. Win-win is how the human species developed. It's how human societies developed and what the US wants to do is it wants to turn it into zero-sum. Win-lose or, rather, you lose, we must win.”
Beijing has increasingly sought to pursue economic development that provides tangible benefits for partnered countries, building high speed rail and other projects through its Belt and Road Initiative. The program seeks to reestablish trade patterns of the historical Silk Road, building infrastructure that helps neighboring countries develop while also enhancing trade with China. China has referred to the initiative as “a key pillar of the global community of shared future,” claiming it will help bridge economic divides caused by uneven economic development in the neoliberal era. “It is imperative to address such global problems as sluggish economic growth, shortcomings in economic governance, and imbalanced economic development,” the country insisted in a recent statement. “It is no longer acceptable that only a few countries dominate world economic development, control economic rules, and enjoy development fruits. The BRI targets development not only for China but for the world at large.”
“The only way the US can [turn development into a zero-sum game] is actually by kneecapping China, or engaging in other underhanded actions, or – more likely and this becomes more and more visible – engaging in hot war,” said Noh. “it's a terrible, terrible policy. But, the question is, does Kamala Harris know what she's doing?”
“The people who are in control are the people from [the Center for a New American Security think tank], it's Kurt Campbell, Michele Flournoy and the other neocons who are in the administration and they will be controlling the foreign policy agenda, which has been set for decades now,” he claimed. “Essentially, it's war with China.”

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China urges win-win cooperation as US sees zero-sum game

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West shooting selves in foot with militarism, economic policy driving mass migration

Author and independent journalist Dan Lazare claims Western politicians have no one but themselves to blame for an influx of migrants, pointing the finger at decades of militarism and failed drug and economic policies.

“She's a social democrat – therefore left-wing by American standards – but she is fiercely anti-Russian,” Lazare said of Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program. “She has backed the US military effort every step of the way. And she is now calling for Ukraine to be supplied with medium-range missiles with which to strike deep into Russia.”

“She's also taking a strong stance against immigration,” the journalist noted. “Mainly from the Middle East, of course, but what's amazing is that the worse the war gets in Ukraine – and these medium-range missiles will make it a good deal worse – the more refugees it will send fleeing to countries like Denmark.”

An inundation of migrants from the Eastern European country has intensified debates already taking place throughout the continent over immigration, with some observers resenting limited stocks of housing and social benefits going to Ukrainian refugees.

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Zelensky leaving Ukrainians to die for BlackRock, deep state – ex-diplomat (Part 1 👉 Part 2)

While politicians wage a propaganda war to ensure continued funding for the Western proxy conflict against Russia, average Ukrainians are left to suffer for the sake of powerful outside interests, according to Ukrainian whistleblower and former diplomat Andrii Telizhenko.

“Zelensky… could have stopped this war before it started,” said Telizhenko of the controversial figure, whose constitutional mandate as president of Ukraine ended in May. “That's why he has to continue this rhetoric, to stay in power.”

“He can't [negotiate] because he's owned by the West, by Washington, by London, by BlackRock, by the military industrial complex, so they're not gonna let him do that,” he claimed on Sputnik’s The Final Countdown program. “They are making money out of this war and getting everything they can out of Ukraine and out of the resources that Ukraine has. So he has no other possibility. He could have stopped it as soon as he became the president in 2019.”

“He could have [granted] Donbass… autonomy without losing hundreds of thousands of lives,” the former diplomat noted, faulting Zelensky for not following through on a peace plan reached with Russia in Istanbul or implementing the Minsk Accords after campaigning on the issue in 2019.

Telizhenko previously served in the Ukrainian diplomatic corps but fled after facing opposition to his anti-war beliefs. The former government official said Kiev has lost 970,000 troops since 2022, confirming previous analysis that has placed the number of Ukrainian deaths during the conflict at close to one million.

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Author and independent journalist Dan Lazare claims Western politicians have no one but themselves to blame for an influx of migrants, pointing the finger at decades of militarism and failed drug and economic policies.

“She's a social democrat – therefore left-wing by American standards – but she is fiercely anti-Russian,” Lazare said of Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program. “She has backed the US military effort every step of the way. And she is now calling for Ukraine to be supplied with medium-range missiles with which to strike deep into Russia.”

“She's also taking a strong stance against immigration,” the journalist noted. “Mainly from the Middle East, of course, but what's amazing is that the worse the war gets in Ukraine – and these

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medium-range missiles will make it a good deal worse – the more refugees it will send fleeing to countries like Denmark."

An inundation of migrants from the Eastern European country has intensified debates already taking place throughout the continent over immigration, with some observers resenting limited stocks of housing and social benefits going to Ukrainian refugees.

"She is shooting herself in the foot," Lazare said of Frederiksen's support for the Ukraine proxy war. "She is supporting a war which generates refugees who, when they finally make their way to Denmark, are angering growing numbers of citizens who are afraid of what the influx means and fueling the rise of the ultra-right. This is amazingly foolish on her part, but yet she is doing it. She's like an automaton who's marching off the edge of a cliff."

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us has begun strategic conversation with china to deal with military risks associated with AI - US ambassador

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New York City Mayor to Be Charged, Indictment Expected to Roil City, US Politics

NEW YORK, September 26 (Sputnik) - New York City Mayor Eric Adams is due to be charged on Thursday in the first indictment of a serving mayor in the city's modern history after an investigation that has already set heads rolling among his most senior staff, his office and reports said.

It is not known what charges would be brought against Adams in the indictment expected to be unsealed in a New York court. As of late Wednesday, news services quoted the mayor as saying he had done nothing wrong and would fight the charges all the way.

Being the first of the city's 110 mayors to be criminally charged while in office, Adams said in a video message that whatever accusations are brought against him would be "entirely false, based on lies."

Mayor Adams' attorney Alex Spiro wrote in a statement circulated on the X social media platform that a horde of FBI agents had turned up at Adams office early Thursday to seize the mayor's phone, similar to what had been done in recent weeks with other senior officials in the city's administration under the agency's investigation.

"They send a dozen agents to pick up a phone when we would have happily turned it in," Spiro wrote, accusing the FBI of trying to "create a spectacle."

Spiro also noted that Adams "has not been arrested and looks forward to his day in court." It was not immediately known whether the mayor would self-surrender or be arrested and produced in court or turn up on his own to answer the charges.

Adams' case is expected to add to the high political drama of the US presidential election in

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November. The mayor, a Democrat, represents the party of Vice President Kamala Harris, who is running against former president and Republican Donald Trump.

Adams' indictment will follow the resignations of the city's police commissioner Edward Caban and chancellor of schools David Banks who stepped down over the past two weeks amid the FBI probe against the mayor and his inner circle.

The FBI has not said what it is investigating, but media reports have speculated that the agency is carrying out a probe related to corruption.

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FBI Probes Ukraine-Related 'Deepfake Operation' Targeting Top US Senator – Reports

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) – The FBI is investigating a so-called "deepfake operation" in which an individual allegedly posed as a top Ukrainian official and spoke with US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Ben Cardin, Punchbowl News reported on Thursday, citing three sources familiar with the matter.

The situation became known on Monday when the Senate's security office informed a group of top lawmakers and their aides about the incident, which happened earlier in September, the report said.

The notice revealed that the individual, who impersonated then-Foreign Minister of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba, contacted a senator via Zoom. The document did not mention the lawmaker's name, but the sources revealed that it was Cardin, according to the report.

The individual spoke in a voice similar to Kuleba's and was asking questions about the current conflict in Ukraine, the report said, citing the notice. It added that he inquired, in particular, about the lawmaker's support for using long-range missiles inside Russian territory.

The person was also asking "politically charged questions in relation to the upcoming election … likely trying to bait the senator into commenting on a political candidate," the notice said, as quoted by the report.

The people familiar with the investigation suggested that the Russian government could be behind the effort. They did not rule out that the goal was to use the conversation for "propaganda" purposes, the report added.

Russia has repeatedly refuted accusations of meddling into US internal policies.

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More than Half of Americans 'Disengaged From Politics' Over Misinformation Concerns – Poll

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) – More than half of Americans (54%) say they have disengaged from politics because they cannot tell what is true, according to an Axios-Harris Poll survey released on Thursday.

Additionally, 51% of respondents said that of the type of misinformation they find most concerning is spread by politicians.

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A little over a third of respondents also cited concerns about "social media companies failing to stop misinformation," deceptive uses of AI, and "media personalities spreading revisionist history."

Seventy percent of respondents expect misinformation will have "a lot or quite a bit of impact" on the upcoming presidential election.

The nationwide poll of 2,122 American adults was conducted between September 12-14.

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Putin's Remarks on Nuclear Doctrine 'Totally Irresponsible,' Will Play Badly – Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) – The remarks made by Russian President Vladimir Putin about changes to Russia's nuclear doctrine are "totally irresponsible" and will play badly for Moscow, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday.

"It's totally irresponsible, and I think many in the world have spoken clearly about that while he's been rattling the nuclear saber, including China in the past," Blinken said during a TV interview with MSNBC. "I would just say especially to do that now while the world is gathered in New York including taking about the need for more disarmament, non-proliferation, I think that's going to play very badly around the world."

During the Russian Security Council's permanent meeting on Wednesday, Putin proposed updating the foundations of Russia's state policy in the field of nuclear deterrence.

Putin said that Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in case of aggression, including if the enemy poses a critical threat to Russia, using conventional weapons.

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Vershinin Says UN's 'Pact for Future' Expands NGOs' Participation in UN Bodies

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - The Pact for the Future recently adopted by the UN General Assembly has a number of serious flaws and expands the participation of non-governmental organizations in UN bodies, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin told Sputnik.

On Sunday, the UN General Assembly approved the Pact for the Future, a blueprint to tackle 21st-century challenges from climate change and artificial intelligence to conflicts, inequality and poverty. Russia was among seven nations to oppose the document after its proposed amendment on non-interference in the internal affairs of states failed.

"Let's highlight the main thing, namely, the groundwork is being laid to expand the rights of non-state actors to participate in the work of the United Nations," Vershinin said on the sidelines of the high-level week of the UN General Assembly in New York.

One of the first drafts of the Pact for the Future virtually equated NGOs with states and despite attempts to correct this, the document mentions NGOs 41 times, the deputy minister said.

"I believe such an approach does not meet the interests of the Global South because

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non-governmental organizations need significant resources that only Western countries possess," Vershinin added.
The diplomat noted that there was no normal negotiating process to work out a compromise text of both the pact and its annexes.

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un's 'pact for the future' was adopted in violation of procedures, in absence of real negotiations on document - Russia's Vershinin to Sputnik

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UN's 'Pact for Future' Has Many Flaws, Expands NGOs' Participation in UN Bodies - Russia's Vershinin to Sputnik

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EU Violating Hungary's Sovereignty by Pushing for Migration - Szijjarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - The European Union is seriously violating Hungary's sovereignty by compelling them to let migrants into the country, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.
"The way Brussels is behaving now is a serious breach of our security and sovereignty, because they want us to let in people whom we don't want to let in. We don't need people who attack our police. We don't need people in our country who attack our border guards, who cannot comply with our regulations, and who show no respect for our people, our way of life, or our laws," Szijjarto said in an interview.
The ability for a country to protect its own borders and decide who is granted entry is a matter of sovereignty that no organization has the right to take away, Szijjarto said.

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Szijjarto on Lukoil Stoppage: Such Behavior by Ukraine Not Expected in EU

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's decision to block the flow of oil from Russia's Lukoil to Hungary is not behavior that would be expected of a member of the European Union, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.
"If Ukraine wants to join the European Union, this isn't the way we expect them to behave with EU member states. With just one step, they put the security of oil supplies for two EU member states in jeopardy," Szijjarto said in an interview.

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In July, Szijjarto said that Ukraine stopped the transit of Lukoil products; the Slovak Economy Ministry also confirmed that the country was no longer receiving products from Lukoil.

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Ukraine's Stoppage of Lukoil Flow to Hungary 'Unfriendly' Behavior - Szijjarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's decision to end the flow of oil from Russia's Lukoil to Hungary and Slovakia constitutes unfriendly behavior, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"It would have been a problem if we hadn't taken serious steps to resolve it ourselves. We had to amend the contract, take on more risk, and bear a heavier financial burden… but Ukraine's behavior was not friendly," Szijjarto said in an interview.

In July, Szijjarto said that Ukraine stopped the transit of Lukoil products; the Slovak Economy Ministry also confirmed that the country was no longer receiving products from Lukoil.

The issue is resolved for now, but there is a risk such an incident could occur again, Szijjarto added.

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Russia Will Continue to Work With UN on Access of Its Food to World Markets - Vershinin

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Russia takes global food security very seriously and will continue to work with the United Nations on ensuring access of its food to world markets, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin told Sputnik.

"Naturally, we will continue this work, because for us food security, food security of developing countries, countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, is not an empty phrase. We proceed from the fact that Russia's potential in terms of export of food and fertilizers to the world market is extremely large," Vershinin said on the sidelines of the high-level week of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Russia maintains dialogue with the UN on the issue and considers itself a major guarantor of food security in the world, the deputy foreign minister said.

"Unfortunately, over two years of joint work [with the UN], no significant results have been achieved," Vershinin added.

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Russia Will Continue to Work With UN on Access of Its Food to World Markets - deputy foreign minister to sputnik

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Moscow Hopes US Has 'Enough Sense' Not to Let Kiev Strike Deep Inside Russia - Vershinin

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Moscow hopes the United States has "enough sense and reason" not to allow Kiev to strike deep into Russia, a nuclear power, with US-supplied weapons, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin told Sputnik.

"We would like to believe that the US side has enough sense and reason not to let the situation get to this stage," Vershinin said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in New York.

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.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier that NATO countries are not only discussing the possibility of letting Kiev use Western long-range weapons against Russia, but are essentially deciding whether to get directly involved in the Ukraine conflict. The direct participation of Western countries in the Ukraine conflict would change its essence, and Moscow would be forced to make decisions based on the threats that would be created against Russia, he added.

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moscow hopes us has 'enough sense' not to allow kiev to strike deep inside russia, which is a nuclear power - Vershinin to sputnik

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BRICS ‘Attractive’ Organization to Many Countries - Szijjarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - BRICS is an attractive organization to numerous countries, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"We should learn from BRICS, because BRICS is attractive to many countries, and it is receptive to new members," Szijjarto said in an interview. "Why isn’t the European Union the same way?"

Hungary is eager to work with BRICS, although membership is not on the country’s agenda, Szijjarto said.

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BRICS is an attractive alliance, open to new members – hungary's Szijjarto to ria novosti

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Hungary 'Eager' to Work With All BRICS Countries - Szijjarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Hungary is eager to work closely with all BRICS countries, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"We are absolutely eager to work closely with all the countries in BRICS," Szijjarto said in an interview

However, membership in BRICS is not on Hungary's agenda, Szijjarto said.

The European Union should learn from BRICS, which is "attractive" to many countries, Szijjarto said, adding that he worries about the EU losing influence on the world stage by remaining introverted.

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Lebanese Prime Minister Urges UNSC Members to Pressure Israel to Enter Immediate Ceasefire

(Adds details, background in paras 3-13)

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Azmi Mikati urged all members of the United Nations Security Council to pressure Israel into an immediate ceasefire.

"I am here today hoping come out of this session with a serious solution, based on the joint efforts of all the members of the Security Council to put pressure on Israel to achieve an immediate ceasefire on all fronts and to restore stability and security to our region," Mikati said at a UNSC meeting on Wednesday.

Mikati said the UN was created to promote stability, but is unable to stop the ongoing humanitarian tragedy in the Middle East. Lebanon, he added, has been a victim of cyber, air, and maritime aggression and warned that Israel ground aggression could turn the conflict into an "all-out regional war."

The US and France said they are working with other countries on developing a ceasefire proposal that will enable the parties to discuss a diplomatic solution to the conflict. US Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Robert Wood in the meeting said Washington is "gravely" concerned by reports that hundreds of Lebanese civilians have died in recent days.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin said Moscow calls for an immediate ceasefire and condemns the large-scale military attacks and provocations against Lebanon.

Israel's UN envoy Danny Danon told the UNSC Israel has been conducting precise strikes in Lebanon against Hezbollah command centers, launching sites, missile and weapon stores and their leadership. Danon also alleged that Iran was at the center of the web of violence and the region will not be safe until it is dismantled.

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Iran's foreign minister, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, responded by saying that Israel will pay for its actions and should no longer be a member of the UN. Iran's top diplomat also accused the US of failing to control Israel and said the ongoing supply of military equipment has emboldened Israel to commit heinous acts with impunity.

At the outset of the meeting, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the sovereignty of Lebanon must be respected and the United Nations supports all efforts to strengthen the Lebanese military.

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.

Israel began carrying out massive strikes in southern and eastern Lebanon on Monday. The death toll from the bombardments climbed to 558, Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said. Hezbollah fighters, in turn, fired dozens of rockets toward northern Israel.

A representative of the Israeli army, Avichay Adraee, told Sputnik on Wednesday Israel Defense Forces (IDF) may launch more large-scale strikes against Hezbollah targets.

The Pentagon on Wednesday said the US does not consider a potential Israeli ground incursion into Lebanon imminent. The US military also denied providing any support to Israeli operations with respect to Lebanon.

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

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Iran FM Says Israel Doesn't Deserve UN Membership, Threatens Global Stability

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said during a UN Security Council meeting that Israel does not deserve membership in the United Nations and poses a threat to international stability.

"Now more than ever, Israel has become a serious threat to international peace and security," he said on Wednesday. "This regime does not deserve membership in the United Nation."

The Iranian foreign minister also said Israel must understand that their actions will not go unanswered. The region, he added, stands on the brink of a broader conflict due to Israel's aggression.

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Szijjarto Says Trump Assassination Attempts Caused by Opposition to War, Migration

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - The assassination attempts against former US President and 2024 Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump are potentially a

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consequence of him speaking out against war and migration, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"If you are against migration, if you are against the war, if you represent your national position, if you are brave enough to speak outside of the liberal mainstream, you're going to be attacked," Szijjarto said in an interview, in response to a question about the Trump assassination attempts.

The attacks are legal, financial, political and physical in nature, Szijjarto said.

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Israel's UN Envoy Says No Peace in Region Until Israel Dismantles Iranian Threat

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon told members of the UN Security Council that Israel believes there can be no peace in the Middle East region until the Iranian threat is dismantled.

"Every drone launched by Iranian proxies, every act of terror on foreign soil, places back to one source: the Islamic regime of Iran," Danon said Wednesday. "It is the spider at the center of this web of violence, and we have to fight this web of violence. There can be no peace in the region until we dismantle this threat."

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Israel Envoy Tells UN Security Council That Israel Doesn't Seek Full-Scale War

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon told members of the UN Security Council that Israel does not seek a full-scale war against Lebanon's Hezbollah movement.

"Israel does not seek a full-scale war," Danon said Wednesday.

Danon noted that Israel has been conducting precise strikes in Lebanon against Hezbollah command centers, launch sites, missile and weapon storage units, and their leadership.

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Lebanese Prime Minister Urges UNSC Members to Pressure Israel to Enter Immediate Ceasefire

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Azmi Mikati urged all members of the United Nations Security Council to pressure Israel into an immediate ceasefire.

"I am here today hoping come out of this session with a serious solution, based on the joint efforts of all the members of the Security Council to put pressure on Israel to achieve an immediate ceasefire on all fronts and to restore stability and security to our region," said

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Lebanese Prime Minister on Wednesday.

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Lebanon Victim of Cyber, Air, and Maritime Aggression That Can Escalate - Prime Minister

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Lebanon is a victim of cyber, air, and maritime aggression that has serious potential to morph into ground aggression and, in turn, an all-out regional war, said the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, Mohammad Najib Azmi Mikati.
"Lebanon is today a victim of an electronic cyber aggression and of air and maritime aggression that can turn into a ground, aggression, and could become an all-out regional war," said Mikati at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

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China Urges Israel to Stop Military Operations in Gaza, Lebanon - Envoy

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - China urges Israel to stop its military operation in Gaza and cease violating Lebanon's sovereignty and security, Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Fu Cong said.
"We urge Israel to make the right decision. Put aside its obsession with the use of force. Stop its military operations in Gaza, stop its violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and security, and stop adventurous acts which could drag the region into a new catastrophe," said Cong on Wednesday at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

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Lebanese prime minister urges all UNSC members to pressure Israel to enter immediate ceasefire

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Lebanon PM tells unsc lebanon a victim of cyber, air and maritime aggression that can turn into ground aggression and all-out regional war

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UPDATE- France, US Working on Temporary Ceasefire in Israel-Lebanon Conflict - Foreign Minister

(Updates with details in paras 4,5)
UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - France and the United States will soon announce plans for a temporary ceasefire of 21 days in the Israel-Lebanon conflict that will allow for negotiations to lower tensions, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said during a UN Security Council meeting.
"We've worked with our American partners on a temporary ceasefire platform of 21 days to allow for negotiations," Barrot said on Wednesday. "This platform will be made public very soon, and we are counting on both parties to accept it without delay in order to protect civilian populations and allow for diplomatic negotiations to begin."
Barrot also said that war is not inevitable and that a diplomatic solution is still possible.
US Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Robert Wood said in later remarks that multiple countries have contributed to the ceasefire proposal and they hope it will lead to calm and enable discussions toward a diplomatic solution.
Wood encouraged the UN Security Council to lend its support for these diplomatic efforts in the coming days.

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US Concerned by Reports of Hundreds of Lebanese Civilian Deaths in Recent Days - UN Envoy

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The United States is gravely concerned by reports that hundreds of Lebanese civilians have died in recent days, said US Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Robert Wood.
"We are gravely concerned by reports that hundreds of Lebanese civilians have died in recent days," said Wood at a United Nations Security Council meeting.

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Russia Calls for an Immediate Cessation of Hostilities in Lebanon - Vershinin

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Russia calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities in the Lebanon region following Israeli strikes, said Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin.
"There's a need to immediately end the unfolding spiral of violence before it spirals completely out of control. We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities," said Vershinin on Wednesday.
Vershinin added that Russia emphatically condemns the large-scale military attacks and provocations against Lebanon.

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US gravely concerned by reports that hundreds of Lebanese civilians have died in recent days - envoy to UN

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US Army Orders $126Mln More Man-Held Stinger Missiles From Raytheon - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The US Army has ordered a $126 million more Stinger missiles from Raytheon, the Defense Department announced.

"Raytheon Missile Defense [of] Tucson, Arizona was awarded a $126,201,540 ... contract for Stinger missiles, ancillary equipment and support," the Defense Department said in a press release on Wednesday.

The contract is scheduled to take five and a half years to fulfill with an estimated completion date of April 30, 2030, the release said.

The US Army Contracting Command located in Redstone Arsenal, Alabama will oversee the project as its contracting activity, the release added.

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Russia condemns the large scale military attack and provocations against friendly nation of Lebanon - Vershinin

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France, US Working on Temporary Ceasefire in Israel-Lebanon Conflict - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - France and the United States will soon announce plans for a temporary ceasefire of 21 days in the Israel-Lebanon conflict that will allow for negotiations to lower tensions, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said during a UN Security Council meeting.

"We've worked with our American partners on a temporary ceasefire platform of 21 days to allow for negotiations," Barrot said on Wednesday. "This platform will be made public very soon, and we are counting on both parties to accept it without delay in order to protect civilian populations and allow for diplomatic negotiations to begin."

Barrot also said that war is not inevitable and a diplomatic solution is still possible to be reached.

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Lebanon Nears Point of No Return, Israeli Strikes Caused Too Many Casualties - French FM

WASHINGTON. September 26 (Sputnik) - French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Lebanon may reach the point of 'no return' as a result of casualties caused by Israeli strikes.
"Lebanon today may reach the point of no return. In point of fact, we're beyond escalation. Israeli strikes have caused far too many casualties," said Barrot at a meeting of the United Nations National Security Council on Wednesday.

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france, us working on temporary ceasefire for 21 days in Israel-Lebanon conflict to allow for talks - foreign minister

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UN Chief Says Lebanese Sovereignty Must Be Respected, Backs Strengthening Its Military

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the sovereignty of Lebanon must be respected and the United Nations supports all efforts to strengthen the Lebanese military.
"Lebanese sovereignty must be respected, and the Lebanese state must have full control of weapons throughout Lebanese territory and we support all efforts to strengthen the Lebanese armed forces," Guterres said on Wednesday evening.

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un chief tells unsc 'hell is breaking loose' in Lebanon

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guterres says Lebanese sovereignty must be respected, un supports all efforts to strengthen Lebanese armed forces

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Iran Foreign Minister Says Hezbollah Can Defend Lebanon, Makes Decisions for Itself

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that the Lebanese movement Hezbollah is capable of defending itself and Lebanon, and makes its own decisions.

"Hezbollah decides for itself, and it is completely able to defend itself and to defend Lebanon and Lebanese people," Araghchi said on Wednesday in response to a question whether Iran could influence Hezbollah's attacks on Israel.

Araghchi added that the UN Security Council must stop Israel's war and enforce a ceasefire.

The Iranian diplomat warned of regional escalation and placed responsibility for such an outcome on Israel's supporters, particularly on the United States.

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US Senate Set to Pass Legislation to Fund Government Until December 20, Send to Biden

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The US Senate is set to pass a continuing resolution to fund the federal government through December 20 and prevent a shutdown, sending the bill to US President Joe Biden's desk for final approval.

The legislation secured the 60 votes needed to pass on Wednesday, although voting continues as of this writing. The US House of Representatives passed the legislation earlier in the day.

The US Congress had to pass appropriations bills or a temporary funding measure before the end of the month to avert a government shutdown.

The White House Office of Management and Budget said that the Biden administration supports the continuing resolution to prevent a shutdown and provide time to pass full-year appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2025 later this year.

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US House Speaker Johnson Says Was Not Able to Schedule Meeting With Zelenskyy

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters that he was not able to schedule a meeting with Ukraine's Volodymr Zelenskyy and might not even be in Washington during Zelenskyy's visit on Thursday.

"No, I wasn't able to schedule a meeting with Zelenskyy this week because I had a very busy one, as you all might have noticed, and I don't even think I'll be in town tomorrow," Johnson said on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Johnson sent a letter to Zelenskyy urging him to fire Oksana Markarova as Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States. Johnson accused Markarova of influencing US domestic politics by organizing a trip for Zelenskyy to Pennsylvania to aid the Democrats, the letter said.

Zelenskyy's trip to Pennsylvania constitutes election interference and has caused Republicans

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to lose trust in Markarova's ability to fairly and effectively serve as a diplomat, the letter added.

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Biden Authorizes $375Mln in Additional Military Aid for Ukraine - Memorandum

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has authorized $375 million in additional military assistance for Ukraine, the White House said in a memorandum.
"By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 621 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), I hereby delegate to the Secretary of State... the authority under section 506(a)(1) of the FAA to direct the drawdown of up to $375 million in defense articles and services of the Department of Defense, and military education and training, to provide assistance to Ukraine and to make the determinations required under such section to direct such a drawdown," the memorandum said on Wednesday.
The State Department said in a separate press release that the new aid package includes additional cluster and HIMARS munitions, Javelin missiles and artillery shells, among other weapons.
US media reported that the United States is expected to announce another $8 billion in security aid packages for Ukraine later this week to align with Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to the White House on Thursday.

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new US Ukraine defense package includes cluster munitions, HIMARS munitions and support, 55mm and 105mm artillery ammo - blinken

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biden authorizes $375mln in defense aid for Ukraine - memorandum

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Blinken Says Biden Admin. Takes Seriously, Tracks Intensely Iran Threats Against Trump

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the TODAY show that the Biden administration has been tracking Iranian threats to Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and other US officials for a long time and takes the matter very seriously.
"This is something we've been tracking very intensely for a long time, an ongoing threat by Iran

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against a number of senior officials, including former government officials like President Trump and some people who are currently serving in the administration," Blinken said on Wednesday. "So it's something we take very, very seriously."

Blinken said he could not provide any further information on the issue but underscored that the US government is taking the threat very seriously.

On Tuesday, the Trump campaign said that US Intelligence officials briefed Trump about alleged threats from Iran to assassinate him, adding that these threats have grown in the past few months.

Trump said in earlier remarks that President Joe Biden should warn Iran that it will face severe consequences, including direct military action, if it attempts to assassinate him.

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US House Passes Resolution Condemning Biden, Harris for Afghanistan Withdrawal

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed a resolution to ensure accountability for the Biden-Harris administration's withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in August 2021.

House lawmakers passed the resolution on Wednesday in a vote of 219 in favor and 194 opposed.

The resolution formally condemns more than a dozen US officials for their role in the withdrawal, including US President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"Following the House Foreign Affairs Committee's explosive report detailing how the Biden-Harris Administration disregarded advice from military commanders on the ground and information on security risks, putting optics over the safety of American servicemembers, House Republicans are bringing forward legislation to hold the Biden-Harris Administration accountable for their catastrophic failures throughout the Afghanistan withdrawal," US House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a statement on the resolution.

Thirteen US soldiers were killed in a terrorist attack during the withdrawal as a result of "reckless decision making" by the Biden-Harris administration, Scalise said.

It is well past time to hold officials accountable for their lack of planning and disregard of security risks during the withdrawal, Scalise added.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) -

RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY

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* President Vladimir Putin proposed discussing updating the foundations of Russia's state policy of nuclear deterrence during a meeting of the Russian Security Council on nuclear deterrence.
* The nuclear triad remains the most important guarantee of the security of Russia and its citizens, Putin said.
* A number of clarifications have been proposed in defining the conditions for Russia's use of nuclear weapons, Putin said.
* Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in case of aggression, including if the enemy poses a critical threat to Russia by using conventional weapons, Putin said.

MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS
* Iraqi-based militia Kataib Hezbollah warned of the possibility of strikes against US facilities in Iraq in the event of "any aggression inside Iraq" and called on Iraqi armed groups to increase operations against Israel, Abu Ali al-Askari, the group's security chief, said on Wednesday.
* Shiite militias of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq said they had used drones to attack an important target in Eilat in southern Israel.
* Defense Department deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh said the United States does not consider a potential ground Israeli incursion into Lebanon imminent.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* US President Joe Biden will unveil a new joint effort to support the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine involving more than 30 countries, the US National Security Council announced on Wednesday.
* Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelenskyy does not have to accept Brazil’s or China's peace proposals but it is important to start peace talks, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said.
* France will continue to supply Ukraine with arms and help ensure security in the long term, French President Emmanuel Macron said.
* The United States and its allies will become direct participants in the conflict against Russia if they let Ukrainian forces strike deep into Russian territory with Western-supplied weapons, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin told Sputnik.
* Biden said that he is planning to announce a series of actions aimed at accelerating support for Ukraine’s military.

EXPLOSION IN CALIFORNIA
* Local authorities in California's Santa Barbara County are investigating an explosion near the Santa Maria courthouse, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff Public Information Center said on Wednesday.
* Two individuals have non-life threatening injuries and a suspect has been detained following an explosion at the Santa Maria courthouse in southern California, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office said.

NORD STREAM INVESTIGATION
* Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti that it is scandalous and outrageous that two years after the Nord Stream sabotage, no serious investigation has taken

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place to date.
* The September 2022 sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines should be regarded as state terrorism if a state or states were involved, Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.
* The cost of the operation to blow up the Nord Stream pipeline amounted to about $300,000 and were financed from private sources, Spiegel reported.
* Germany has issued several arrest warrants as part of the investigation into the Nord Stream bombings, German government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said.

US PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
* Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to an artillery munitions factory in Pennsylvania earlier this week could represent foreign interference in the US elections, Republican Congressman Paul Gosar said in a statement to Sputnik.
* The US House Oversight Committee is investigating the Biden administration's use of taxpayer-funded resources to fly Zelenskyy to Pennsylvania to campaign for US Vice President Kamala Harris, the panel said

BRICS
* 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.
* BRICS countries' contribution to global economy exceeds indicators of G7 and it continues to grow, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.
* Russian President Vladimir Putin said he is expecting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Kazan for the BRICS summit, where they are expected to hold a bilateral meeting.

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UPDATE - US House Passes Bill to Sanction Certain Chinese Communist Party Members

(Adds details in paras 3-4, White House position in para 5, Chinese Embassy statement in para 6)
WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed legislation on Wednesday to sanction members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) engaged in certain activities, despite objections from the White House and Chinese Embassy in Washington.
House lawmakers passed the bill, dubbed the Sanctioning Tyrannical and Oppressive People within the Chinese Communist Party (STOP CCP) Act, in a vote of 243 in favor and 174 opposed.
The legislation 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.
Lawmakers also amended the bill to include interfering in US elections on the list of sanctionable conduct, as well as to add Chinese state-owned enterprises engaged in the illicit fentanyl trade to the sanctions list.

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The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said that the Biden administration opposes the legislation. The bill's mandatory sanctions would likely cut off any channels of communication between the US and Chinese governments and undermine the administration's efforts to build diplomatic consensus on China, OMB said.

The legislation would cause "irreparable damage" to US-China relations if signed into law, the Chinese Embassy in Washington told Sputnik on Wednesday. China strongly deplores and opposes the bill and has made serious demarche to the US side on the issue, Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyi said in a statement.

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US House Passes Bill to Sanction Certain Chinese Communist Party Members

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Biden Says Ukraine's Defense Industry Six Times Larger Than Year Ago

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that Ukraine's military industry has grown sixfold over the past year.

"Ukraine's defense industry forged in the fire is six times larger than it was a year ago," Biden said in his remarks during the signature ceremony of a new multilateral effort to support Ukraine.

To date, the United States has provided Ukraine with nearly 55 packages of military assistance worth more than $55 billion while the total amount of aid since the beginning of the conflict in 2022 has topped $175 billion.

Earlier in the day, Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said that the Ukrainian military is more than 80% dependent on supplies of Western weapons.

Russia has been conducting a special military operation in Ukraine since February 24, 2022. President Vladimir Putin has said that the operation aims to "protect people subjected to genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years." He said that it is necessary to remove military

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forces and Nazi elements from Ukraine to achieve these goals.

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US House Passes Legislation to Fund Federal Government Until December 20, Avoid Shutdown

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed a continuing resolution to fund the federal government until December 20, sending the bill to the US Senate for consideration.

House lawmakers passed the legislation on Wednesday in a vote of 341 in favor and 82 opposed, with two-thirds support required to pass under suspension of the rules.

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

The White House Office of Management and Budget said that the Biden administration supports the continuing resolution to prevent a government shutdown and ensure there is time to pass full-year Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bills later this year.

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Biden Says Will Announce Actions on Thursday to Accelerate Support for Ukraine's Military

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that he is planning to announce a series of actions aimed at accelerating support for Ukraine's military.

"Tomorrow, I will announce a series of actions to accelerate support for Ukraine's military," Biden said in his remarks during the signature ceremony of a new multilateral effort to support Ukraine.

Reuters reported earlier on Wednesday that the United States is preparing $8 billion in additional security assistance packages for Ukraine in light of Volodymyr Zelenksyy's visit to the White House this week.

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US Working to Secure More Energy Generation for Ukraine This Winter - Official

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States is working to secure additional energy generation for Ukraine this winter, US Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment Jose Fernandez said on Wednesday.

"We're now working on securing additional energy generation for Ukraine. It is important that Ukraine is able to thrive this winter," Fernandez said on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

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The United States is also engaging companies to discuss possible investments in Ukraine, some of which may be possible to do at the moment, Fernandez also said.

The State Department is seeing much interest on the part of US and other foreign companies in exploring opportunities to invest in Ukraine.

The 79th session of the UN General Assembly opened on September 10. The annual debate will take place from September 24-28 and on September 30.

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US Too Occupied to Offer Any Free Trade Agreement to India Soon - State Dept.

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States is highly unlikely to propose a free trade agreement with India because Washington is currently occupied negotiating agreements with other countries, US Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs Amy Holman said on Wednesday.

"I would see it highly unlikely that we would be proposing any free trade agreement with India at the current time because we're negotiating other arrangements with other countries," Holman told reporters.

However, the United States is very interested in deepening and broadening its relationships with India across many sectors, Holman added.

Holman further said that the United States has specifically seen more collaboration with India in semiconductor resilience areas.

The 79th session of the UNGA opened on September 10. The annual debate will take place from September 24-28 and on September 30.

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Canadian Parliament Defeats Tory Non-Confidence Motion Against Trudeau Government

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – The Conservative non-confidence motion against the Government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been defeated at the Canadian House of Commons (HoC).

On Tuesday, the leader of the official opposition, Conservative Pierre Poilievre, introduced the motion at the Canadian Parliament. The move was followed by a debate session.

“Mr. Poilievre seconded by Mr. [John] Nater move that the House has no confidence in the Prime Minister and in the Government,” HoC Speaker Greg Fergus told the session. “Yays 120, Nays 211. I declare the motion defeated."

The motion marks the first attempt to bring down Trudeau's government since the end of the "confidence-and-supply agreement" that bound the New Democratic Party to the Liberals and ensured the survival of their minority government since March 2022.

The next Canadian federal elections are scheduled to take place on or before October 20, 2025.

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Trump to Hold Rally in Butler, Returning to Site of July Assassination Attempt - Campaign

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump will return to Pennsylvania on October 5 to hold a rally at the location where an assassination attempt in July left him wounded and one audience member dead, the Trump campaign said in a press release on Wednesday.

"On Saturday, October 5th, 2024, President Donald J. Trump will return to Butler, Pennsylvania to hold a rally on the very same ground where he came within a quarter of an inch of losing his life less than three months ago," the press release said.

Trump plans to honor Corey Comperatore for sacrificing his life to protect his family and will also recognize David Dutch and James Copenhaver, who were wounded, while expressing gratitude to law enforcement, first responders, and the community for their support after the attack, the release said.

In July, Thomas Matthew Crooks attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. The gunman shot Trump in the ear, killing one audience member and wounding two others. A Secret Service sniper killed Crooks.

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US State Dept. Declines to Provide Evidence of RT's Alleged Non-Journalistic Activities

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - A senior US State Department official accused RT on Wednesday of engaging in activity beyond legitimate journalism but declined to provide specific evidence.

US Ambassador at Large from the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy Nathaniel Fick was asked during a briefing if the public should expect official explanations from the US government with particular signs that Russian news agencies were trying to meddle in the US elections.

"RT has engaged in activity that is well beyond the scope of what I think most of us would describe as legitimate journalism. Information operations are not the same as journalism. I will stop [here]," Fick said.

Fick alleged there is evidence from a global community of researchers, but did not provide details.

Earlier in September, the US unveiled new Russia sanctions over alleged election meddling, including against some RT executives.

The Kremlin said the measures are meant to suppress the work of journalists and allegations of Russian interference in US elections are baseless.

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US Announces $920Mln Foreign Military Direct Loan Agreement With Romania - Embassy

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – The United States has signed a direct loan agreement with Romania worth $920 million, including to finance the purchase of US-made Abrams tanks and co-production of ammunition, the US Embassy in Bucharest announced on Wednesday.

"The United States is pleased to announce a $920 million Foreign Military Financing (FMF) direct loan agreement with Romania," the embassy said in a press release. "The U.S. government is providing up to $60 million in FMF grant funding toward the cost of this loan, which will help accelerate Romania's major military modernization program, including purchases of U.S. defense equipment such as Abrams main battle tanks and coproduction of ammunition."

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US Prepares $8Bln Ukraine Aid Packages in Light of Zelenskyy Visit to White House -Reports

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States is preparing $8 billion in additional security assistance packages for Ukraine in light of Volodymyr Zelenksyy's visit to the White House this week, Reuters reported on Wednesday.

Zelenskyy is scheduled to meet with US President Joe Biden at the White House on Thursday to discuss the latest developments in the conflict in Ukraine, including the Zelenskyy's so-called victory plan to end the crisis.

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Pentagon Wants to Provide Ukraine With White Phosphorus Munitions - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – The United States considers the possibility of providing Ukraine with white phosphorus munitions, the NBC News reported aid on Wednesday, citing sources familiar with the matter.

Senior Pentagon officials have recommended sharing such munitions with Kiev for use on the battlefield. However, the report said that the White House rejected that idea several times.

The US military uses those munitions for smoke screens and to light up battlefields, but human rights activists have condemned their use in populated areas because of chemical burns to the skin.

The Biden administration declined to approve the deal due to concerns that white phosphorus could harm civilians, two officials said.

However, if approved, the announcement would not likely list the chemical, as it was with previous military deliveries that Washington has sent to Kiev without public notifications, the

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report added.

A commander of one of the units of the 1197th regiment of the Russian armed forces told Sputnik in June that the Ukrainian armed forces used a drone carrying white phosphorus munitions against a town near the city of Energodar (also known as Enerhodar) in the Zaporozhye (also known as Zaporizhzhia) Region this March during the presidential election in Russia.

White phosphorus is an incendiary weapon that ignites on contact with air and is very difficult to extinguish. The toxic chemical sticks to the flesh and can burn it to the bone, causing severe injuries and lifelong suffering. The United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons bans the use of air-delivered incendiary weapons in populated areas over health and environmental risks.

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Canada Concerned by Lebanon Escalation, Urges Parties to Prevent Broader Conflict – Joly

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government is concerned about the ongoing escalation between Lebanon's Hezbollah and Israel and urges all sides to work toward de-escalation, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said on Wednesday.

"I share the concerns of many Canadians regarding what's going on in Lebanon and in the Middle East. This conflict must stop. We need urgent de-escalation by parties, to prevent, of course, a broader conflict across the region," Joly told reporters from Parliament Hill.

The minister noted that back in May she traveled to the region in order to secure agreement with "key countries" including Lebanon on coordinating the evacuation of Canadian nationals.

The Canadian government was also able to secure agreements with other Mediterranean countries such as Cyprus, Greece and Turkey, Joly said. Military assets have been prepositioned in the region for several weeks now, and this will ensure a rapid reaction in the event of an evacuation, she added.

On Friday, Joly said that close to 45,000 Canadians are in Lebanon. The top diplomat has repeatedly called on nationals to leave the country as soon as possible given the increasingly volatile and unpredictable situation, and potential challenges in providing consular service in the event of a full-fledged conflict.

Israel began carrying out massive strikes in southern and eastern Lebanon on Monday. The death toll from the bombardments has climbed to 558, Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said. Hezbollah fighters, in turn, fired dozens of rockets toward northern Israel.

This escalation was preceded by series of explosions of pagers and walkie-talkies in Lebanon from September 17-18, which killed over 40 people and injured nearly 3,500 others. It is still unknown what caused thousands of devices to explode simultaneously. Hezbollah and the Lebanese authorities blamed 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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US Imposing New Sanctions Related to Hezbollah, Iran - Treasury

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States imposed new sanctions on one individual, four entities, and nine vessels for being allegedly involved in illicit trade benefitting Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force, the US Department of the Treasury announced in a release on Wednesday.

"Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned more than a dozen entities and vessels for their involvement in the shipment of Iranian crude oil and liquid petroleum gas to Syria and East Asia on behalf of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF) and Hezbollah," the release said.

Among the blocked vessels are four ships related to the fleet of US-sanctioned Syrian national Abdul Jalil Mallah and his brother Luay al-Mallah, who is being targeted by the new measures.

The sanctioned vessels are the Panama-flagged Confidence P; the Sao Tome and Principe-flagged Nova' the Panama-flagged Rival; and the Iran-flagged Tiyara, the release said.

In addition, the United States has designated Luay al-Mallah-owned and Turkey-based Oryx Denizcilik Limited Sirketi, the release said.

The sanctions target Marshall Islands-registered and China-based Star Ocean Shipmanage Ltd. for operating the Panama-flagged vessels Eternal Success, Eternal 8 and Eternal Peace, which allegedly facilitated trade for the benefit of the IRGC-QF, the release added.

The Hong Kong-based Tai Feng Hai Shipping Ltd. and its Panama-flagged vessel Feng Tai are similarly sanctioned for transporting IRGC-QF-owned products, according to the release.

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Szijjarto Says Disagrees With CNN on Many Things, But No Plans to Shut It Down

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti that he disagrees with CNN on many things but Budapest has no intention to shut down the broadcaster in the country like the United States is seeking to do with Russian media.

"I don't agree with many things that are said on CNN, for example. Should we then just make a decision to cut CNN only because they usually circulate fake news about Hungary? Would that be an acceptable reaction, to cut CNN in Hungary? Of course not," Szijjarto said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

He also wondered "why it's considered acceptable to cut any media outlet."

Earlier in September, the US State Department tightened the operating conditions for Rossiya Segodnya, RT and their subsidiaries, designating them as "foreign missions." Under the Foreign Missions Act, they will be required to notify the department of all personnel working in the United States and disclose all real estate they own.

Russia will respond with restrictions on the dissemination of information by US media outlets in

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Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Sputnik.

Earlier on Wednesday, the TikTok video-sharing app blocked the account of RIA Novosti with more than two million subscribers, just a few days after similar actions were taken against the accounts linked to Sputnik and RT International.

Meta (banned in Russia for extremism) earlier banned RT and Rossiya Segodnya from its apps globally.

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US PREPARES $8 BILLION IN ARMS AID PACKAGES FOR ZELENSKIY VISIT - reuters

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Oil Plunges in Yo-Yo Action to Previous Session as China Worries Usurp Mid-East Tensions

NEW YORK, September 25 (Sputnik) - Crude prices tumbled more than 2% on Wednesday, giving back all of the previous session's gains, as worries about slack demand in China usurped concerns over wars in the Middle East and news of encouraging US energy consumption.

UK North Sea Brent crude finished the New York trading session down $1.71, or 2.3%, at $73.46 per barrel. The global benchmark for crude gained 1.7% on Tuesday.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled down $1.87, or 2.6%, at $69.69 per barrel. The US crude benchmark finished Tuesday's trading up 1.7%.

Top oil importer China has doled out one stimulus package after another since the 2020 outbreak of coronavirus pandemic, but none have brought lasting impact. Analysts are urging Beijing to focus on quality measures that could effectively restart the economy.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed there will be no rest to his country's bombardment of Lebanon until residents in northern Israel can return safely to their homes.

The fighting between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Lebanon's Hezbollah in the oil-rich Middle East has escalated as the conflict between the IDF and Palestinian movement Hamas continues to rage. More than 42,000 Palestinians have died in the nearly year-long Gaza war while more than 560 Lebanese have been killed in Lebanon in three days of bombings.

In the United States, the government reported encouraging draws last week in inventories of crude fuel products. Stockpiles of crude fell 4.471 million barrels on the week while those of gasoline and distillates slid 1.538 million and 2.227 million, respectively.

The combination of the Middle East situation and positive US energy data would have ideally provided a bullish backdrop for oil but crude traders said China appeared to be a bigger concern, given the worries about demand.

"My concern is that predictions of peak oil demand are leading to a massive underinvestment in fossil fuels that leaves us vulnerable to major price moves" in the future, Phil Flynn, analyst at the Price Futures Group brokerage in Chicago, said.

Peak oil demand refers to the point at which global demand for petroleum products begins to

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decline. This could happen for a variety of reasons, including: Increased adoption of electric or hydrogen vehicles.

September has been a volatile month for crude, with prices in a yo-yo pattern after two straight months of losses.

"While I want to believe that it will be a few days of strength before the market starts to drop again … I am truly struggling and find myself wondering what to think here," Scott Shelton, crude futures broker at ICAP in North Carolina, said.

WTI is down 5% 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 down more than 1%, after rallying more than 20% earlier in the year.

Brent is off 7% 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 4%, after rallying more than 20% earlier in the year.

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Zelenskyy Need Not Accept Brazil's or China's Peace Plans But Peace Talks Must Start -Lula

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy does not have to accept Brazil's or China's peace proposals but it is important to start peace talks, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Wednesday.

"They [Ukraine] don't have to accept Brazil's proposal and China's proposal," Lula said during a press conference at the UN. "We just have an assumption that it's important to start the conversations toward peace. But Zelenskyy, if he were smart, he would have said something different that the solution is a diplomatic solution, not a military solution."

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Szijjarto Sees 'Incoherence' in US Sanctions on Rossiya Segodnya, RT

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States is demonstrating "incoherence" in publicly defending media freedom while imposing sanctions on the Rossiya Segodnya news agency and RT, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

Earlier in September, the United States imposed sanctions on Russia's media groups Rossiya Segodnya and TV Novosti for their alleged disinformation campaigns on behalf of Moscow. Meta (banned in Russia for extremism) also banned RT and Rossiya Segodnya from its apps globally for alleged foreign interference.

Earlier in the day, the TikTok video-sharing app blocked the account of RIA Novosti with more than two million subscribers, just a few days after similar actions were taken against the accounts linked to Sputnik and RT International.

"When we talk about media freedom and demand no censorship, everyone should be able to say and broadcast whatever they want. But I don't see the coherence between these arguments

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and the action of closing down media outlets," Szijjarto said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Szijjarto said he understands that the US government does not like what RT says.

"But my question is: from now on, are there countries or authorities who are allowed to judge media outlets based on what they say and then close them down? And are these the same countries and authorities who are pushing others to let media flourish and be diverse? For me, that's not coherent. That's my problem. Maybe I'm not smart enough to understand these kinds of things, but for me, it's a problem I need to understand," the minister added.

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Biden to Announce Joint Effort of Over 30 Countries on Ukraine's Recovery – White House

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden will unveil a new joint effort to support the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine involving more than 30 countries later in the day, the US National Security Council (NSC) announced on Wednesday.

"President Biden will convene a leader-level event on the margins of UNGA to launch the Joint Declaration of Support for the Recovery and Reconstruction of Ukraine. President Biden will announce that more than 30 countries and the European Union have joined this historic declaration," the NSC said in a press release.

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Brazil president says Zelenskyy does not have to accept Brazil or China's proposal, but it's important to start conversations towards ukraine peace

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OHCHR Fulfilling West's Orders With Biased Reports on Human Rights - Vershinin

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) assesses the human rights situation in various countries in a biased manner, effectively fulfilling Western countries' orders, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin told Sputnik.

"We know that this office is prone to biased approaches to assessing the human rights situation in various countries. In essence, they are fulfilling the West's orders," Vershinin said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly high-level week in New York. "After all, flaws are found in those countries that conduct independent foreign and domestic policies."

At the same time, OHCHR prefers to ignore many instances of discrimination and other human rights violations in EU member states, Canada, Australia and the United States, the senior diplomat observed.

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"Trends such as growing discrimination against people of African descent, against Roma, migrants and indigenous peoples are being ignored. So are Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, Nazism, and finally, Russophobia," Vershinin said.

The High-Level Week of the 79th UN General Assembly began on Tuesday in New York with the participation of several hundred heads of state and foreign ministers.

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US House Speaker Asks Zelenskyy to Fire Markarova as Ambassador to US - Letter

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson sent a letter to Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday, urging him to fire Oksana Markarova as Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States.

"I demand that you immediately fire Ukraine's Ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova," the letter said.

Johnson accused Markarova of influencing US domestic politics by organizing a trip for Zelenskyy to Pennsylvania to aid Democrats. The trip constitutes election interference and has caused Republicans to lose trust in Markarova's ability to fairly and effectively serve as a diplomat, the letter said.

Johnson will not meet with Zelenskyy during his time at the US Capitol this week due to a scheduling conflict, Punchbowl News reported on Wednesday.

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Russia Says US, Allies Involving Themselves in War to Stay Afloat in Ukraine Conflict

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) — The United States and its allies, through NATO and the European Union (EU), are further involving themselves in war with Russia to stay involved in Ukraine, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday.

"The US and its allies, through NATO and the EU, further drag themselves into war with Russia in order to keep afloat in Ukraine," Polyanskiy said during a UN Security Council meeting.

Polyanskiy added that the root cause of the crisis is not solely the US efforts to save Ukraine's government or Russia's response to security threats from Kiev, but rather deeper issues that became clear during the recent NATO summit, revealing the US's long-term goal of defeating Russia on the battlefield.

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."

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Szijjarto on US Sanctions Against RT: I've Been Their Guest, Never Had Problems

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti on the heels of US sanctions against RT and Rossiya Segodnya that he has appeared on RT many times and "never had any kind of problems."

"I enjoyed being a guest on Russia Today on many occasions. I never had any kind of problems, even when we didn't agree. When that happened, we had a debate, which is normal," Szijjarto said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Earlier in September, the US State Department tightened the operating conditions for Rossiya Segodnya, RT and their subsidiaries, designating them as "foreign missions." Under the Foreign Missions Act, they will be required to notify the department of all personnel working in the United States and disclose all real estate they own.

Russia will respond with restrictions on the dissemination of information by US media outlets in Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Sputnik.

Earlier on Wednesday, the TikTok video-sharing app blocked the account of RIA Novosti with more than two million subscribers, just a few days after similar actions were taken against the accounts linked to Sputnik and RT International.

Meta (banned in Russia for extremism) earlier banned RT and Rossiya Segodnya from its apps globally.

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'No Possibility' of Military Solution to Ukraine Conflict - Brazilian President

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - There is no possibility of a military solution to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Wednesday.

"The war between Ukraine and Russia is a war that didn't even have to start, and by starting, my idea is that there is no possibility for a military solution to come into place in that war. We need a diplomatic solution there," Lula said during a press conference at the UN.

Brazil has been insisting on peace talks, Lula said.

However, peace talks will not take place unless Ukraine and Russia agree, Lula added.

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OHCHR Ignores Impact of Unilateral Sanctions on Human Rights - Russian Foreign Ministry

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UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White - The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) turns a blind eye to the impact of unilateral sanctions on human rights, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin told Sputnik.

"We see that the issue of the impact of unilateral coercive measures on human rights falls out of the focus of OHCHR. This is a significant issue. Unilateral coercive measures are being used, again, as a tool of pressure on governments they [the West] do not like. I am talking about so-called sanctions," Vershinin said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly high-level week in New York.

Moscow notes cases of some countries applying economic sanctions against others, their political opponents, under the pretext of alleged violations of human rights by those governments, the senior diplomat said.

The High-Level Week of the 79th UN General Assembly kicked off on Tuesday in New York with the participation of several hundred heads of state and foreign ministers.

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Trump Says Ukraine Conflict Could've Been Settled If Biden Didn't Continue Inciting Crisis

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States could have helped broker peace in Ukraine if President Joe Biden had avoided inciting the ongoing crisis, former President Donald Trump said on Wednesday.

"A deal could have been made if we had a competent president instead of a president that egged it all on," Trump said during a campaign rally in North Carolina.

Trump further said that the Biden administration fuels the conflict by continuing to provide financial and security assistance to Ukraine.

The Republican presidential nominee has previously pointed out that Biden's remarks about expecting Ukraine to be admitted into NATO provoked Russia.

Moscow has long expressed concerns about the Western alliance moving closer to its border and sought security guarantees that Ukraine would never join NATO.

US officials have noted that the reason Ukraine hasn't been invited to join NATO is because it has to undertake a number of reforms to weed out corruption in its government and also because it would immediately drag the alliance into a direct war with Russia.

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Pentagon Says Israeli Ground Incursion Into Lebanon 'Not Imminent'

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh said on Wednesday that the United States does not consider a potential ground Israeli incursion into Lebanon imminent.

"It doesn't look like anything [Israeli ground incursion] is imminent. What we're seeing on that northern border is an increase in the tit-for-tat, going back and forth strikes between Israel and

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Lebanese Hezbollah, and that is our concern," Singh said during a press briefing.

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US Not Providing 'Any' Support to Israel's Military With Respect to Lebanon – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – The United States is not providing "any" support to the Israeli military with respect to Lebanon, with US forces in the region being there for self-protection, Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh said on Wednesday.

"We are not supporting their [the Israeli military] operations when it comes to Lebanon. The support that you're seeing, or what you're seeing when it comes to US forces in the region is for our own force protection," Singh said during a press briefing.

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UNRWA Does Not Have Enough Funds for Activities, Seeks $80Mln by 2025 - Lazzarini

UNITED NATIONS, September (Sputnik) - The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is seeking $80 million until the end of the year because it has no funds to continue its activities, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini told reporters on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"We are still seeking $80 million to end the year. So we still do not have enough funds to do all what we need to do," Lazzarini said.

The main donors are from Europe and the wider collective West as well as from the Arab world.

"But this year we also had quite a lot of contributions coming from the Global South," Lazzarini added.

In July, Lazzarini said that all states that stopped funding UNRWA with the exception of the United States had resumed their financial support for the agency.

Israel shared data with UNRWA in January on the alleged involvement of some of its staff members in the October 7 attack. Israel vowed to hold accountable anyone involved in acts of terror.

The United States, Finland, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Australia, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom and several other countries responded by suspending funding for UNRWA.

In early February, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed an independent review panel led by former French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna to examine UNRWA's activities.

The final report was published on April 22, saying that Israel had provided no evidence of the agency's workers allegedly being members of terrorist organizations. Following the announcement, many nations resumed funding the agency.

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Nord Stream Sabotage Should Be Treated as State Terrorism if State Involved - Szijjarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The September 2022 sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines should be regarded as state terrorism if a state or states were involved, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"It's really a scandal because if there's an attack against critical infrastructure that affects the entire continent, it must be considered as a terrorist attack, and if it turns out that a state or states had something to do with this attack, then it's state terrorism and should be considered as such," Szijjarto said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

The Nord Stream pipelines, built to deliver gas under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany, were hit by explosions on September 26, 2022. Denmark, Germany and Norway have left Russia out of their investigations into the attack, prompting Moscow to launch its own probe on charges of international terrorism.

Russia has repeatedly requested data on the explosions from the European countries, but has never received it, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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US Sanctions Ex-Haiti Parliamentarian for Alleged Human Rights Abuses - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States is sanctioning a former member of Haiti's parliament and the current leader of the Gran Grif gang for their alleged involvement in human rights abuses, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"The United States is today sanctioning a former member of Haiti's parliament, Prophane Victor, for his role in forming, supporting, and arming gangs that have committed serious human rights abuse in Haiti, as well as the current leader of the Gran Grif gang, Luckson Elan, for his involvement in serious human rights abuse related to gang activity in Haiti's Artibonite department," Miller said.

Miller noted that Victor and Elan have been identified in a report by a United Nations Panel of Experts as being significantly responsible for the ongoing unrest in Haiti.

Miller quoted the report as saying that the levels of violence and cruelty by the gangs in Haiti are unprecedented, with regular indiscriminate attacks against the population and obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

On February 29, gang violence erupted in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince. The gangs said their goal was to prevent the country's prime minister from returning to Haiti and took control over parts of the city. The gangs also stormed Haiti's largest prison and freed an unspecified number of inmates. Following the events, the Haitian government declared a state of emergency in the capital region.

Haiti has long been mired in a socio-economic and political crisis that escalated after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in 2021. The country has faced an unprecedented increase in the activities of criminal groups that engage in extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and

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control entire areas of the country, as well as foreign interference.

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Indonesia Has 'Pretty Good' Relations With Russia, Does Not See Any Issues - Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September (Sputnik) - Russia and Indonesia have "pretty good" relations without any issues between them, Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs of Indonesia Lluhut Binsar Pandjaitan told Sputnik.

"I think our relationship with Russia is pretty good. I don't see any issues. Russia also has a long history with Indonesia," Pandjaitan said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

When asked if the current sanctions imposed on Russia by the collective West impact the cooperation between the two countries, Pandjaitan said, "Well, I don't know how to comment about that."

"Because these imposed sanctions against Russia, it depends on the country that raised this issue," Pandjaitan added.

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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US Not supporting Israeli operations in Lebanon, US forces in the region is for American force protection - pentagon

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Trump Says Biden Should Warn Iran of Severe Consequences Over Threats

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said on Wednesday that President Joe Biden should warn Iran that it will face severe consequences, including direct military action, if it attempts to assassinate him.

On Tuesday, the Trump campaign said that US Intelligence officials briefed Trump about alleged threats from Iran to assassinate him, adding that these threats have grown in the past few months.

"I have been threatened very directly, and I appreciate the agencies that we've been meeting with, but we've been threatened very directly by Iran, and I think you have to let them know because the best way to do it is through the Office of the President; that you do any attacks on former presidents or candidates for president, your country gets blown to smithereens," Trump

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said during a campaign speech in the state of North Carolina.
Trump emphasized at the campaign rally that no threat or enemy will intimidate him.
In a separate statement on Tuesday night, Trump mentioned that Iran has already made "moves" that didn't work out, but is expected to try again. However, it's unclear if Trump meant that multiple Iranian plots to assassinate him were foiled.
Moreover, the former US president said the "entire US military is watching and waiting" to see how the situation unfolds.
The White House and Pentagon did not immediately respond to Sputnik's request for comment on this matter.

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Two Injuries Reported, One Person Detained in Explosion at California Courthouse - Police

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Two individuals have non-life threatening injuries and a suspect has been detained following an explosion at the Santa Maria courthouse in southern California, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office said on Wednesday.
"We have two reports of non-life threatening injuries," the sheriff's office said in a statement via X. "One person of interest detained immediately. Scene remains active."
Earlier, the sheriff's office said law enforcement was reporting to the Santa Maria courthouse due to an explosion.

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two non-life threatening injuries, one person detained in explosion at santa maria courthouse in California - authorities

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Sheriff's Office Says Investigating Reported Explosion at Santa Maria Courthouse

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Local authorities in California's Santa Barbara County are investigating an explosion near the Santa Maria courthouse, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff Public Information Center said on Wednesday.
"Santa Maria Courthouse: report of an explosion. Please avoid the area. The scene has not been deemed safe. More info to follow," the Santa Barbara County Sheriff Public Information Center said on X.
The investigation is ongoing.

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UPDATE - US House Panel Says Probing Use of Taxpayer Funds to Fly Zelenskyy for Harris Campaign

(Update: adds background, details in paras 5-6)
WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The US House Oversight Committee is investigating the Biden administration's use of taxpayer-funded resources to fly Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Pennsylvania to campaign for US Vice President Kamala Harris, the panel said on Wednesday.
"Chairman [James] Comer today is opening an investigation into the Biden-Harris Administration using taxpayer-funded resources to fly Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to Pennsylvania to campaign for Vice President Kamala Harris ahead of the 2024 presidential election," the panel said via social media platform X.
The Biden administration attempting to use a foreign leader to benefit the Harris campaign would constitute an abuse of power and misuse of taxpayer funds, the statement said.
The panel sent letters requesting information on the matter to US Attorney General Merrick Garland, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and White House Counsel Edward Siskel.
Earlier this month, the Biden administration transported Zelenskyy on a US Air Force plane to Pennsylvania to discuss the Ukraine conflict with government officials and visit an arms factory. Zelenskyy also participated in an interview with The New Yorker, in which he was critical of 2024 Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and running mate JD Vance.
On Wednesday, US Congressman Paul Gosar told Sputnik that Zelenskyy's visit could represent foreign interference in US elections. The money used to support Ukraine's conflict with Russia would be better focused on finding a pathway to peace, Gosar said.

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Bloc Quebecois to Push for Trudeau's Fall if Two Bills Not Passed by November - Leader

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The Bloc Quebecois (BQ) will begin discussions with opposition parties represented at the House of Commons if the Government of Justin Trudeau fails to pass two bills by October 29, Bloquiste leader Yves-Francois Blanchet said on Wednesday.
On Wednesday, Blanchet informed that the BQ - a federal party that supports independence for the French speaking province - would not support the Conservative non-confidence motion against Trudeau. The leader however warned that if necessary and if the Liberals refused to deliver on the party's demands, the Bloc would have enough time "to make them fall".
"We must obtain the irreversible implementation … of C-319 and C-282," Blanchet said during a press conference ahead of the coming non-confidence vote. "If these two bills are not established as irreversible laws by October 29, the Bloc Quebecois will initiate negotiations based on the fact that the government refused to be useful, at least to Quebecers, on

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fundamental interests, and will begin discussion with other oppositions aimed at toppling the government."

The BQ is thus seeking the adoption of Bill C-319 - An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (amount of full pension); and Bill C-282 - An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management), in order to keep the Trudeau Government afloat.

The position of Trudeau's Liberals was left weakened after the termination of the "confidence-and-supply" agreement that bound the New Democratic Party (NDP) to the Liberals and ensured the survival of their minority government since March 2022.

Although both the BQ and NDP have expressed their intention to defeat Wednesday's non-confidence motion and to look at each vote on a case-by-case basis, the parties have acknowledged that an election could happen anytime if the Liberals do not assist in advancing their respective agendas.

The next Canadian federal elections are scheduled to take place on or before October 20, 2025.

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Nord Stream Sabotage Should Be Treated as State Terrorism if State Involved - Szijjarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The September 2022 sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines should be regarded as state terrorism if a state or states were involved, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"It's really a scandal because if there's an attack against critical infrastructure that affects the entire continent, it must be considered as a terrorist attack, and if it turns out that a state or states had something to do with this attack, then it's state terrorism and should be considered as such," Szijjarto said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

The Nord Stream pipelines, built to deliver gas under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany, were hit by explosions on September 26, 2022. Denmark, Germany and Norway have left Russia out of their investigations into the attack, prompting Moscow to launch its own probe on charges of international terrorism.

Russia has repeatedly requested data on the explosions from the European countries, but has never received it, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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US Attorney General Says Routh Stalked Trump for Weeks Leading Up to Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - US Attorney General Merrick Garland said on Wednesday that evidence reveals Ryan Routh stalked former President Donald Trump for several weeks leading up to his assassination attempt on the Republican presidential nominee.

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On Tuesday, the US Justice Department announced it charged Routh with attempting to assassinate Trump. Routh was initially charged with two firearm-related offenses.

"Evidence uncovered in the investigation sheds new light on the defendant's activities in the month before the attempted assassination, and it supports the charge of attempted assassination," Garland said. "[Evidence] includes cell site records indicating that on multiple days and times in the weeks leading up to the assassination attempt, the defendant was repeatedly in the immediate vicinity of the Trump International Golf Course and of the former president's residence at Mar a Lago."

Garland further said that federal investigators also recovered a box that Routh left with a witness several months ago, which contained a handwritten letter addressed to "The World," stating: "This was an assassination attempt on Donald Trump, but I failed you."

The investigation is still in its early stages and remains active, Garland added.

On September 15, the US Secret Service opened fire on Routh, who was allegedly armed with a high-powered rifle on the perimeter fencing of the golf course where Trump was playing at the time.

The attempted assassination charge carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

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US House Panel Says Probing Use of Taxpayer Funds to Fly Zelenskyy for Harris Campaign

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The US House Oversight Committee is investigating the Biden administration's use of taxpayer-funded resources to fly Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Pennsylvania to campaign for US Vice President Kamala Harris, the panel said on Wednesday.

"Chairman [James] Comer today is opening an investigation into the Biden-Harris Administration using taxpayer-funded resources to fly Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to Pennsylvania to campaign for Vice President Kamala Harris ahead of the 2024 presidential election," the panel said via social media platform X.

The Biden administration attempting to use a foreign leader to benefit the Harris campaign would constitute an abuse of power and misuse of taxpayer funds, the statement said.

The panel sent letters on the matter to US Attorney General Merrick Garland, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and White House Counsel Edward Siskel.

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Absence of Serious Investigation Into Nord Stream Sabotage 'Outrageous' - Szijjarto

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti that it is "scandalous" and "outrageous" that two years after the Nord Stream sabotage, no serious investigation has taken place to date.

"It's also truly scandalous that after two years, no one has a say, and no serious investigation

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has taken place. The so-called investigations that are happening now seem more like a joke or a tragedy from this perspective. If a real, serious investigation had occurred, there should have been some outcome by now. What's happening is unserious, and it's outrageous," Szijjarto said in an interview on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

The Nord Stream pipelines, built to deliver gas under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany, were hit by explosions on September 26, 2022. Denmark, Germany and Norway have left Russia out of their investigations into the attack, prompting Moscow to launch its own probe on charges of international terrorism.

Russia has repeatedly requested data on the explosions from the European countries, but has never received it, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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Panama Interested in Cooperation With Russia on Climate Issues - Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - Panama would like to cooperate with Russia on climate matters, the country's Environment Minister Juan Carlos Navarro told Sputnik on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

When asked whether Panama would be interested in cooperation with Russia on environmental and climate issues, Navarro said, "Absolutely. With everyone and anyone."

"I would be interested in learning more about Russia so I can understand them," he said. "I think that the environment and climate change is something that the entire world should agree with. And I also believe very strongly in liberty and in freedom."

Navarro also shared that "unfortunately" relations between Russia and Panama are relatively limited.

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UNRWA Polio Vaccine Campaign in Gaza Reaches 90% of Children Under 10 - Lazzarini

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) polio vaccine campaign in the Gaza Strip has reached 90% of children under the age of 10 years, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"We have been successful recently with the polio campaign. Ninety percent of the children below the age of 10 have been reached. This shows that when there is a will, we can make things happen," Lazzarini said.

The UNRWA campaign aims to vaccinate 640,000 children under the age of 10 in Gaza, Lazzarini added.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said polio vaccination in Gaza would take place from September 1-12 in the city of Deir al Balah, then in Khan Yunis and Rafah, and finally in Gaza City and the northern part of the Gaza Strip.

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In July, the Gaza Health Ministry declared a polio epidemic in the Palestinian enclave. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) called for a humanitarian pause in the fighting between Hamas and the Israeli forces to allow children to be vaccinated.

Hamas said it supported the humanitarian pause and Israel confirmed on Saturday that it would open a humanitarian corridor for medical personnel and designate safe areas for administering the vaccines for a short period of time.

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UPDATE - US Deploys Troops to Cyprus Amid Middle East Conflict Concerns - Reports

(Updates with more details, background in paras 5-6)

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States has deployed dozens of military personnel to Cyprus amid concerns about the need to potentially respond to escalating hostilities in the Middle East, CNN reported on Wednesday.

The US troops in Cyprus are developing a range of contingency plans, including a potential evacuation of US citizens from Lebanon in the event of a war with Israel, the report said, citing two US officials.

Cyprus helped to facilitate the evacuation of foreign nationals from Lebanon in 2006 during a war between Israel and Lebanese movement Hezbollah.

Earlier on Wednesday, Politico reported that the US warned Israel that strikes on Hezbollah could derail diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict in the Gaza Strip and lead to a regional war.

US President Joe Biden also said on Wednesday that an "all-out war" is possible in the Middle East.

The Pentagon declined to confirm the reports to Sputnik. The Pentagon pointed to comments by its spokesperson Pat Ryder earlier this week regarding a "small number" of US military personnel sent to the Middle East out of an abundance of caution.

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Gaza One of Worst Environments for Humanitarian Workers - UNRWA Chief

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The Gaza Strip is one of the worst environments for humanitarian workers, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini told reporters on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"I think the work is complicated in Gaza for anyone. It's one of the worst environments for humanitarian workers," Lazzarini said. "But despite that, our colleagues are capable to deliver."

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

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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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UNRWA Does Not Have Enough Funds for Activities, Seeks $80Mln by 2025 - Lazzarini

UNITED NATIONS, September (Sputnik) - The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is seeking $80 million until the end of the year because it has no funds to continue its activities, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini told reporters on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"We are still seeking $80 million to end the year. So we still do not have enough funds to do all what we need to do," Lazzarini said.

The main donors are from Europe and the wider collective West as well as from the Arab world.

"But this year we also had quite a lot of contributions coming from the Global South," Lazzarini added.

In July, Lazzarini said that all states that stopped funding UNRWA with the exception of the United States had resumed their financial support for the agency.

Israel shared data with UNRWA in January on the alleged involvement of some of its staff members in the October 7 attack. Israel vowed to hold accountable anyone involved in acts of terror.

The United States, Finland, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Australia, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom and several other countries responded by suspending funding for UNRWA.

In early February, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed an independent review panel led by former French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna to examine UNRWA's activities.

The final report was published on April 22, saying that Israel had provided no evidence of the agency's workers allegedly being members of terrorist organizations. Following the announcement, many nations resumed funding the agency.

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UNRWA Hopes US to Resume Funding in March 2025 - Commissioner-General

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is hopeful that the United States will resume funding the agency in March 2025 and remains in constant contact with the State Department about it, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"The United States, for the time being, has frozen [funding] until March 2025. This has been a decision from the Congress, and I hope that after March, the funding will resume," Lazzarini said. "We are in constant contact with the State Department, but for the time being, their hands are tied by a Congress decision."

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In July, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that only Congress can lift the ban on UNRWA funding after it concludes its internal investigation into the circumstances of the October 7 attack on Israel.

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Approving Strikes Deep Into Russia Will Make US Direct Participant in Conflict - Vershinin

UNITED NATIONS, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States and its allies will become direct participants in the conflict against Russia if they let Ukrainian forces strike deep into Russian territory with Western-supplied weapons, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin told Sputnik.

"We have already repeatedly given an assessment of this scenario. The assessment of this scenario was given by the president of Russia. It is clear that in this case it will be confirmed that the US and its allies are becoming direct participants in military actions against Russia, which is a nuclear power," Vershinin said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier that NATO countries are not only discussing the possibility of letting Kiev use Western long-range weapons against Russia, but are essentially deciding whether to get directly involved in the Ukraine conflict. The direct participation of Western countries in the Ukraine conflict would change its essence, and Moscow would be forced to make decisions based on the threats that would be created against Russia, he added.

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US Deployed Troops to Cyprus Amid Middle East Conflict Concerns- Reports

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The United States deployed dozens of military servicemembers to Cyprus amid concerns about the need to potentially respond to escalating hostilities in the Middle East, CNN reported on Wednesday.

The US troops in Cyprus are developing a range of contingency plans, including a potential evacuation of US citizens from Lebanon in the event of a war with Israel, the report said, citing two US officials.

Cyprus helped to facilitate the evacuation of foreign nationals from Lebanon in 2006 during a war between Israel and Lebanese movement Hezbollah.

Earlier on Wednesday, Politico reported that the US warned Israel that strikes on Hezbollah could derail diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict in the Gaza Strip and lead to a regional war.

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Biden Says All-Out War Possible in Middle East

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WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday an all-out war is possible in the Middle East amid a new escalation between Hezbollah and Israel.
"All-out war is possible," Biden said during The View talk show hosted by ABC Channel commenting on the situation in the Middle East.

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Helene Upgraded to Category 1 Hurricane, US Landfall Expected Thursday - NHC

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said on Wednesday that Helene has been upgraded to a category 1 hurricane.
"Helene becomes a hurricane ... expected to bring life-threatening storm surge, damaging winds, and flooding rains to a large portion of Florida and the southeastern United States," the NHC said in an advisory.
NHC data shows that the hurricane is expected to heavily impact the Florida panhandle and southern Georgia by Thursday evening.
The hurricane is expected to weaken to a tropical storm when it makes its way up to South Carolina by Friday morning, according to the NHC.

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Biden Says He Was Confident He Would Beat Trump in Election

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that he was confident that he could beat his predecessor Donald Trump in the election.
"I was confident I would beat Trump," Biden said during The View talk show hosted by the ABC channel.

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Gunman Hijacks Los Angeles Bus After On-Board Fatal Shooting, Leads Police on Chase - LAPD

WASHINGTON, September 24 (Sputnik) - Los Angeles police have arrested a gunman who hijacked a bus early Wednesday after fatally shooting one of the passengers and leading law enforcement on a chase for nearly an hour, according to a statement.
"Around 12:45 am, LAPD began receiving radio calls related to an incident on a bus in the area of Manchester and Figueroa. Officers located the bus stopped at 117th and Figueroa. Officers attempted to communicate with the driver but the bus pulled away and a pursuit ensued," the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) said on in a statement on X.
Police called in SWAT because they suspected the gunman was holding hostages on the bus.

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Spike strips were used to stop the vehicle, and the suspect was apprehended, while one passenger was found with multiple gunshot wounds.

The gunshot wound victim was transported to the hospital and later died. The driver and other passengers were shaken but uninjured, the statement said.

South Bureau Homicide detectives are now investigating the incident and searching the bus for evidence.

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US Lawmaker Says Zelenskyy Visit to Pennsylvania Foreign Election Interference

WASHINGTON, September 25 (Sputnik) - Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to an artillery munitions factory in Pennsylvania earlier this week could represent foreign interference in the US elections, Republican Congressman Paul Gosar said in a statement to Sputnik on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Punchbowl News reported that tensions have risen between Zelenskyy and Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump this week after the Ukrainian leader recently 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.

"Kamala Harris is not even trying to hide the foreign interference in our elections," Gosar said regarding Zelenskyy's trip to Pennsylvania. "It is the height of hypocrisy and completely irresponsible that she is openly campaigning across the country with Zelenskyy. It would be a far better use of his time and the hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars America has wasted on the war if Zelenskyy was in his country focused on finding a pathway to peace."

In an interview with The New Yorker this week, 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."

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