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9/30/24 Monday

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UN Walkout Does Not Absolve World For Failure to Confront Israel

On Friday, dozens of UN diplomats walked out of the hall ahead of a speech by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The imagery of Netanyahu giving a speech to a mostly empty room was striking but has not had any appreciable effect on Israel's military campaigns.
Even more than Israel itself, the United States and most of the world have been unmasked by their support or indifference to the Israeli genocide in Palestine and their aggression in Lebanon and Yemen.
"That's kind of the least any state can officially do. Walk out of a speech, it's a symbolic measure, yes," argued Esteban Carrillo, a Lebanese-based journalist and editor for The Cradle on Sputnik's Fault Lines. "It doesn't really change anything. It doesn't change any realities. And the bombs that have been dropped in Lebanon, they are US-made."
As Netanyahu gave his speech to the UN, which he called a "cesspit of antisemitism," US-made bombs continued to drop on the Lebanese capital of Beirut.
"These are USA bombs that are destroying the capital of a UN member state," exclaimed Carrillo. "When they killed the late leader of [Lebanese Shia movement] Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah, they dropped about 82 bunker-buster bombs in a heavily populated area of south Beirut."
Israel has defended its actions in Lebanon by repeating their justifications for Gaza only substituting Hezbollah for Hamas. They have justified attacks on schools and civilian areas by claiming, often without evidence, that militants were using the area as a headquarters.
"We really need to put this into perspective, right? There needs to be a response from the rest of the world, because if they sat on their hands while [Israel] killed so many Palestinians, can we expect them to do the same for the Lebanese?" Asked Carrillo.
On Monday, Israel announced that it had started cross-border raids into Lebanon with special forces ahead of an expected full ground invasion. Meanwhile, the Pentagon announced that the United States will send a "few thousand" more troops to the Middle East if Israel needs assistance.
"The Israeli leadership… They are not shy. They are very straightforward about what they want," argued Carrillo. "The US government, I think, more than Israel, the one that has been unmasked over the past year because they are so good at putting out statements, of suppressing their anger, of calling Netanyahu names, or just saying things, right? They are very good with the words. With actions, they are nowhere to be found. And it's the same for the EU."
"And it's the same for many other powers, let's be honest. Even here in the region, Turkiye, who is constantly calling Netanyahu a Nazi and comparing him to Hitler, [Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan] does that often," Carrillo recalled. "But then, Turkiye could at any point just cut off the gas flow, for example, to Israel if they really wanted to, but they don't want to. They don't want to. It's the same for the Gulf countries. It seems that countries like Palestine, or Lebanon, or Syria, or now even Yemen, they struck that yesterday… They're just 'do what you want with

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them. We don't care about them so much. What we care about is keeping up relations with Israel.' Why? Because [Israel is] an extension of the United States."

Even countries like Iran, which have been directly hit by Israel, have declined to strike back in any significant way. However, Carrillo argues that Iran deserves credit for being at the head of the resistance to American imperialism and the Zionist state.

"Iran has been behind most of these movements for most of the existence of the Islamic Revolution. Iran is a country that has been under sanctions for 50 years or more at this point. Why? Because they stand against the US imperial project and because they stand against the Zionist state and what they have done to the Palestinians," Carrillo continued. "So, if Iran has been paying a price, do they want to pay another price now? Maybe not."

While Carrillo said he does feel some sense of abandonment from the Lebanese people, the stakes couldn't be higher for Iran. "If you see Iran stepping into this particular conflict, you're going to see the US step [up] as well. And then you're going to see things go really sideways, not just for us in Lebanon or the people in Palestine or the people in Syria or Iraq or Yemen, but absolutely everyone.

"So would I like Iran to have stepped in already? Yes, I would have. 100 percent I would have because I would not like to see this country destroyed like the way that it has. But also, I don't want to see a third world war."

Which is the choice the US has thrust on the world with its steadfast support of Israel. Either look away from genocide and unfettered military aggression or kick off World War III.

"And sadly, there's no one to stop them besides these groups, such as Hezbollah, such as Hamas, such as Ansar Allah [aka Houthi] in Yemen," concluded Carrillo. "[Those] are really the only ones standing up to this genocidal regime."

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US Announces New Cyber-Related Sanctions Targeting Russian Nationals, Entities - Treasury

(Updates with more details in paras 3-5)

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - The United States imposed new cyber-related sanctions on seven Russian nationals and two entities, the US Treasury Department said in a notice on its website on Tuesday.

The sanctions target Solar-Invest LLC and Vympel-Assistance LLC along with seven Russian nationals allegedly linked to the cybercrime network Evil Corp and its leader, Russian computer expert and alleged hacker Maksim Yakubets, the notice said.

Evil Corp is responsible for the development and distribution of Dridex malware, which has been used to harvest log-in credentials from hundreds of banks and other financial institutions in over 40 countries, resulting in more than $100 million in theft losses and damages, the Treasury Department said in a statement.

"The United States, in close coordination with our allies and partners, including through the Counter Ransomware Initiative, will continue to expose and disrupt the criminal networks that seek personal profit from the pain and suffering of their victims," the statement said.

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The sanctions are part of a trilateral action with the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the statement added.

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CENTCOM Says First Squadron of Additional Fighter Aircraft Arrived in Middle East

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) – US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Tuesday that three additional aircraft squadrons, F-15E, F-16, and A-10, have started to arrive to the Middle East region with one squadron having already arrived to boost the US defense posture amid a new escalation involving Israel and Hezbollah.

"Three additional aircraft squadrons - F-15E, F-16, and A-10 - are arriving in the region with one squadron having already arrived," CENTCOM said in an X post.

On Sunday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin directed the US military to reinforce defensive air-support capabilities in the coming days. He also ordered the USS Lincoln Carrier Strike Group to remain in the region.

Austin also increased the readiness for additional US forces to deploy to the Middle East if necessary.

On Monday, Israel announced the start of a limited military ground operation in southern Lebanon with reportedly no plans to occupy any areas of the country permanently.

Over the weekend, the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah confirmed that its chief, Hassan Nasrallah, was killed in an Israeli airstrike on the Lebanese capital of Beirut on Friday.

The situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border aggravated after the start of Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip in October 2023. Israel began carrying out massive strikes on southern and eastern Lebanon in late September. Hezbollah retaliated by firing dozens of rockets toward northern Israel.

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US Believes Iran Preparing to Launch Ballistic Missiles Toward Israel – White House

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) – The United States believes Iran is preparing to launch an imminent ballistic missile attack against Israel amid an escalation in the region, a senior White House official said on Tuesday.

"The United States has indications that Iran is preparing to imminently launch a ballistic missile attack against Israel. We are actively supporting defensive preparations to defend Israel against this attack," Axios quoted the official as saying in a statement.

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us announces cyber-related sanctions targeting russian nationals, entities - treasury department

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US Has Indications That Iran Preparing to Imminently Launch Ballistic Missile Attack Against Israel - Axios Reporter, Citing White House

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Biden Might Agree to Advance Ukraine's NATO Bid Before Leaving Office - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden might agree to advance Ukraine's NATO membership bid before leaving the White House in January, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday, citing a Western official familiar with the matter.

The official who was briefed on talks during the recent visit of Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Washington said there were "tentative signs" that Biden might agree to it.

Biden is set to travel to Germany later in October, where he will host a leader-level meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group on October 12.

While NATO membership remains a key goal of politicians in Kiev, only a few of the 32 members of the alliance agree with the idea of accepting Ukraine without reaching a full and lasting ceasefire, the report said. Most of them insist on the importance of having a "defined line" on the map to determine what part of Ukraine the alliance should defend, it added.

Some members suggest taking West Germany's model of NATO membership as an example, according to the report.

However, such a development would require a vast deployment of military forces in the region, which would most likely face opposition from any US administration, Democratic or Republican, the report added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that NATO's expansion to include Ukraine would create a direct national security threat to Russia and that Moscow considers the non-aligned status of Ukraine to be extremely important to put an end to the years-long conflict.

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Kiev's plans to join the bloc were among the reasons why Russia launched its special military operation in February 2022.

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White House Expects Limited Impact From US Port Strike on Fuel, Food Supply at This Time

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - A massive strike that began on midnight at US East and Gulf Coast ports is expected to have a limited impact on the supply of fuel, food, and medicine at this time, the White House said on Tuesday, reiterating President Joe Biden's call for urgent negotiations to end the action.

Dock workers at East and Gulf Coasts went on a strike early Tuesday, an action that could cost the economy billions of dollars each day and cause widespread shortages and price increases.

"President Biden and Vice President Harris are closely monitoring the strike at East Coast and Gulf Coast ports. The President has directed his team to convey his message directly to both sides that they need to be at the table and negotiating in good faith — fairly and quickly," the White House said in a statement.

On Monday, at Biden's direction, Chief of Staff Jeff Zients and National Economic Advisor Lael Brainard convened USMX board members and urged them to find a solution "that accounts for the success of these companies in recent years and the invaluable contributions of ILA workers."

Senior White House and administration officials have been in direct contact with both sides and "work around the clock" to get them to continue negotiating toward a resolution, the White House said.

Biden and Harris are also closely monitoring potential supply chain impacts and assessing ways to address them, if necessary, the statement said.

"The President and Vice President were briefed on Agency assessments that show impacts on consumers are expected to be limited at this time, including in the important areas of fuel, food, and medicine," the White House said.

Biden has directed his Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force to meet daily and prepare to address potential disruptions, if necessary.

He also tasked his team with continuing to engage extensively with labor, industry, state and local officials, ocean carriers, and rail and trucking companies, the statement said.

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RPT: PREVIEW - JD Vance, Tim Walz Set to Clash During Only 2024 US Vice Presidential Debate

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - Republican 2024 vice presidential nominee JD Vance and Democratic nominee Tim Walz are set to participate in a debate on Tuesday evening, which will be the running mates' only chance to make their case to voters.

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The vice presidential debate, hosted by CBS News, will take place in New York City at 9:00 p.m. ET (1:00 GMT Wednesday). There will be 90 minutes of debate time with a pair of four-minute breaks, according to the network.

Similar to the debate between former US President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, there will be no studio audience at the Vance-Walz debate. However, unlike the Trump-Harris debate, Vance and Walz will not actively have their microphones muted when the other is speaking, although the moderators reserve the right to do so.

Trump selected Vance as his running mate in July and said that the US senator would focus on appealing to workers and farmers in states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Minnesota. Vance's 2016 memoir, "Hillbilly Elegy," detailed his experience growing up in Ohio and the Appalachian values of his family, which moved to Ohio from Kentucky.

In August, Harris announced Walz as her running mate, after she replaced US President Joe Biden as the Democratic Party's presidential nominee. Walz, who served in the US House of Representatives before serving as governor of Minnesota, is a "battle-tested leader," Harris said.

The United States will hold federal, state and local elections on November 5, which will determine control of the White House and US Congress.

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Georgia County Lifts Shelter in Place After BioLab Fire Release Chlorine Into Air

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - Rockdale County officials in the US state of Georgia announced that it lifted the shelter in place order after a fire at the BioLab chemical plant released toxic chlorine gas into the air over the weekend.

"Rockdale County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) is lifting the Shelter in Place recommendation and the evacuation zone for Rockdale County effective immediately," the county said in a press release on Monday. "The latest readings from monitoring the last 24 hours via EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) with results showing Rockdale County with an average level of all readings at .09 well below the action level (.5) as of the last reading (September 30 at 4:59 pm)."

Rockdale County Water Resources has tested the water, and it is deemed safe, the release said.

The release said local residents can expect to continue to see clouds from the chemical fire until it is fully dissipated.

Early on Monday morning, Rockdale County officials said chlorine was detected in the air after a fire broke out on Sunday at the Biolab plant, a manufacturer of pool and spa treatment products, in Conyers, Rockdale County.

The fire prompted the evacuation of approximately 17,000 people.

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Biden Keeps Refugee Admissions Limit at 125,000 For 2025 - White House

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is maintaining the US refugee admissions limit at 125,000 next year, the White House said in a memorandum.

"The total admissions among all of the regions may not exceed 125,000," the memorandum stated on Monday.

According to the White House, Biden is allowing up to 50,000 refugees from Africa; 20,000 from East Asia; 3,000 from Europe and Central Asia; 50,000 from Latin America and the Caribbean; and 45,000 from the Near East and South Asia.

Biden has set the refugee admissions limit to 125,000 each year of his presidency.

The State Department said in a separate statement that refugee resettlement is orderly and subject to rigorous vetting.

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Pentagon Says Can Not Rule Out Iran Will Not Attack After Israel Killed Nasrallah

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - US Defense Department deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh told reporters they cannot rule out that Iran would not decide to attack Israel after the killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah last week.

"We can't rule out that they won't respond," Singh said on Monday.

Singh also said that the Defense Department cannot rule out that Hezbollah or militant groups in Iraq and Syria won't respond to Nasrallah's death as well.

The Defense Department is deploying additional F-16, F-15E, A-10, F-22 fighter aircraft to the Middle East to bolster the US defense posture amid an escalation of fighting in the region, Singh said.

This augmented force consists of an additional few thousand US troops who are tasked with the protection of US forces and Israel, if needed, Singh added.

On Sunday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin provided an update on the United States' response to the escalation of events in the Middle East.

Austin directed the US military to reinforce defensive air-support capabilities in the coming days, and ordered the USS Lincoln Carrier Strike Group to remain in the region.

Austin also increased the readiness for additional US forces to deploy to the Middle East if necessary.

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US House Committee Subpoenas Mayorkas for Records Of Walz' Ties to China

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - The US House Oversight Committee announced that Chairman James Comer issued a subpoena to Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro

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Mayorkas demanding records of Minnesota Governor and Democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz' ties to China's government.

"Chairman Comer issued a subpoena to DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for intelligence reports, documents, and communications in its possession related to Governor Timothy Walz's connections to the CCP," the committee said on Monday.

The committee explained that it is requesting additional information because whistleblowers provided a non-classified Microsoft Teams group chat among DHS employees that contains information about the Governor that is relevant to its investigation.

Moreover, the House panel said it has also learned that further relevant information regarding the Governor has been memorialized in both classified and unclassified documents in the control of DHS.

The committee noted that it began to investigate Walz' ties to China long before he was nominated to be Democratic nominee Kamala Harris' running mate.

In August, the House Oversight Committee said that Walz has had significant interactions with China, beginning in 1993 when he organized a school trip to the country, with expenses covered by the Chinese government.

Later, Walz founded a company to facilitate similar trips until 2003 and continued to visit China frequently while also holding a fellowship at a Chinese university, according to the committee.

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Boeing Wins $6.9Bln to Provide Small Diameter Bombs to Ukraine, 2 Other States - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - Boeing won a contract worth $6.9 billion for production and delivery of small diameter bombs for Ukraine, Japan, and Bulgaria, the US Defense Department said in a press release.

"The Boeing Co., St. Louis, Missouri, was awarded a ceiling $6,900,000,000... contract for Small Diameter Bombs Increment One. This contract provides for Lots 20-29 production and delivery of Small Diameter Bombs, and a guaranteed minimum Lot 20 award," the release said on Monday. "This contract involves Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to Japan, Bulgaria, and Ukraine."

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Fed Reaffirms 2 More Rate Cuts This Year If US Economy Does As Expected - Powell

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve will do two more rate cuts before the end of the year, in follow-through to September's 50-basis point snip, if the US economy "performs as expected," the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Monday.

"It'll depend on the data but, ultimately, that's what the baseline is — if the economy performs as expected, that would mean two more cuts this year, a total of 50 (basis points) more," Powell told a business seminar in the US capital.

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The US economy grew 3% per annum in the second quarter of 2024, unchanged from the previous quarter and a notch above Wall Street's 2.9% projection, the Commerce Department reported last week.

The Fed cut US interest rates on September 18 for the first time in four years, dropping 50 basis points to bring the peak rate Americans pay for their borrowings to 5%. Prior to that, rates topped off at a two-decade high of 5.5% due to inflation on a tear from the trillions of dollars of relief spending and the breakdown of supply chains caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Fed has signaled that it is open to cutting another 50 to 100 basis points from rates before the year-end if inflation continues to decline and the job market remains in peril.

Inflation, as measured by the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) Price Index, grew by 2.2% per annum in August, expanding at its slowest pace since February 2021.

The Fed's Summary of Economic Projections, meanwhile, showed that the forecast for unemployment among Americans had been raised to 4.4% this year, from a previous 4%. The United States added just 142,000 non-farm payrolls in August, some 23,000 jobs below Wall Street estimates. In comparison, non-farm payrolls grew by 315,000 in April.

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US Aviation Agency Requiring SpaceX Probe Falcon 9 Rocket Mishap During Crew-9 Launch

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) - The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced in a statement that it is requiring SpaceX to investigate a mishap that occurred over the weekend when the second-stage booster rocket on the Falcon 9 rocket carrying the Crew-9 mission to the International Space Station landed outside of its designated zone on the return to Earth.

"The FAA is aware an anomaly occurred during the SpaceX NASA Crew-9 mission that launched from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida on September 28," the statement said on Monday. "The incident involved the Falcon 9 second stage landing outside of the designated hazard area. No public injuries or public property damage have been reported. The FAA is requiring an investigation."

SpaceX founder Elon Musk over the weekend grounded future scheduled launches of the Falcon 9 rocket until an investigation into the mishap was completed and fixed.

This is the second minor road bump SpaceX has experienced in the span of a month that has required the grounding of the Falcon 9 rocket.

In August, the FAA briefly grounded SpaceX's reusable Falcon 9 rocket after the first-stage rocket of the spacecraft failed to land upright on a drone ship at sea.

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us awards Boeing $6.9Bln Small Diameter Bomb Contract for Ukraine, 2 other states - pentagon

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 1 (Sputnik) -

MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

* Israel has already launched reconnaissance operations in Lebanon, including small ground missions involving special forces, US media reported on Monday, citing Biden administration officials.
* About one million Lebanese - nearly a quarter of its population - have become refugees since the start of Israeli bombardment of the country on September 23, Nasser Yassin, Lebanon's head of emergency disaster management, said.
* The United States will maintain its engagement with Israeli and Lebanese counterparts, along with other nations to work towards a ceasefire, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.
* US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said she will not project about a potential Israeli ground operation in Lebanon, but Washington does not want the conflict to spread.

RUSSIA-IRAN TALKS

* Russia is interested in taking cooperation with Iran to a higher level, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said on Monday.
* Iran intends to seriously strengthen relations with Russia, and resolve controversial issues in cooperation with each other, Iranian First Vice President of Iran Mohammad Reza Aref said.
* Economic relations between Russia and Iran are developing in all areas, including trade, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

HURRICANE HELENE IN US

* The death toll from Hurricane Helene in the United States could be as high as 600, White House Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood Randall said on Monday.
* The US authorities do not know the full extent of the damage caused by Hurricane Helene, and the assessment could take several days, Sherwood Randall said.
* US President Joe Biden said that he expects to visit areas in the southeastern parts of the United States impacted by Hurricane Helene this week, and has been holding off to avoid creating disruptions.

GLOBAL OIL MARKETS

* Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Monday that he sees no problem in the fact that global oil prices have been volatile in recent weeks, and that he is confident that they will recover to around $80 per barrel.
* World oil prices decreased by almost 17% at the end of the third quarter, the trading data showed.

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CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Volodymyr Zelenskyy's peace formula is not the only peace plan on Ukraine that can be discussed and supported, Swiss Foreign Ministry Communications Chief Nicolas Bidault told Sputnik on Monday.

* The Russian military has eliminated more than 18,900 Ukrainian soldiers and 133 tanks during military operations in the border areas of the Kursk Region, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* The International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors present at the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) have been briefed on the consequences of the strike on the Raduga substation in Energodar, the plant administration said.

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PREVIEW - JD Vance, Tim Walz Set to Clash During Only 2024 US Vice Presidential Debate

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Similar to the debate between former US President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, there will be no studio audience at the Vance-Walz debate. However, unlike the Trump-Harris debate, Vance and Walz will not actively have their microphones muted when the other is speaking, although the moderators reserve the right to do so.

Trump selected Vance as his running mate in July and said that the US senator would focus on appealing to workers and farmers in states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Minnesota. Vance's 2016 memoir, "Hillbilly Elegy," detailed his experience growing up in Ohio and the Appalachian values of his family, which moved to Ohio from Kentucky.

In August, Harris announced Walz as her running mate, after she replaced US President Joe Biden as the Democratic Party's presidential nominee. Walz, who served in the US House of Representatives before serving as governor of Minnesota, is a "battle-tested leader," Harris said.

The United States will hold federal, state and local elections on November 5, which will determine control of the White House and US Congress.

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Deaths of Migrants on Mediterranean Route to Europe Fluctuate Greatly - Russian UN Mission

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UNITED NATIONS, September 30 (Sputnik) - The number of migrant deaths on the Mediterranean route to Europe fluctuates and hasn't decreased significantly, the Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Monday.

"We note the decrease in the number of victims as compared to last year by 42%, however, this decrease does not seem so significant if we recall that last year the number of deaths at sea increased by 77%," Polyanskiy told his colleagues on the UN Security Council.

Moreover, the overall number of deaths is now over 24,000 people, he added.

At the end of September, a boat carrying mostly Tunisian migrants sank off the Tunisian island of Djerba, killing at least 12 people.

In 2023, an estimated 212,100 attempts by migrants to cross the central Mediterranean to Europe from Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia were reported, according to the UN Refugee Agency.

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Extent of Damage From Hurricane Helene Yet to Be Assessed, Could Take Days - White House

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) – The US authorities do not know the full extent of the damage caused by Hurricane Helene, and the assessment could take several days, White House Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall said on Monday.

"We honestly do not know the full extent of the damage. It probably will take several more days as communities begin to be opened by the debris clearance on the roads, and we can get in and really understand what happened," Sherwood-Randall told reporters.

She admitted that initial information in such situations is often wrong and urged people to wait.

The official also said that 600 people are missing in the wake of Hurricane Helene. She cautioned however that those might not all be deaths. According to the latest media reports, 121 people have been confirmed dead as a result of the hurricane in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee.

US President Joe Biden said earlier on Monday that he expects to visit areas in the southeastern parts of the United States impacted by Hurricane Helene this week.

As of Monday afternoon, over 1.8 million customers remain without power in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Virginia in the aftermath of the hurricane, according to the Poweroutage.us web portal.

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White House Urges US Port Workers Mulling Strike to Continue Negotiating Deal

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is urging US port workers preparing for a possible strike to return to the negotiating table with their employers to continue efforts to seek a fair agreement, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Monday.

Dock workers at US ports across the country are preparing to go on a strike early Tuesday that

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could cost the economy billions each day and cause widespread shortages and price increases.
"We encourage all parties to come to the bargaining table and negotiate in good faith," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing. "Senior officials from the White House, Labor Department and Transportation Department are in touch with the parties to urge them to return to the table and negotiate in good faith towards the agreement that benefits all sides, and do it fairly and quickly"
The White House noted that it supports collective bargaining between American workers and employers to come to a fair agreement on wages.
The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) said in a statement on Sunday that its 85,000 members would start a strike at 12:01 am on Tuesday, October 1, 2024 and halt work at all Atlantic and Gulf Coast ports from Maine to Texas.
JPMorgan has said the strike could cost the economy as much as $5 billion per day, or about 6% of gross domestic product.

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US Death Toll From Hurricane Helene Could Reach 600 – White House

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) – The death toll from Hurricane Helene in the United States could be as high as 600, White House Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood Randall said on Monday.
“The current data we have looks like there could be as many as 600 lost lives. But we do not have any confirmation of that,” Sherwood Randall told reporters.

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US to Augment Forces in Mideast Including With F-15, F-22, F-16 Fighter Jets - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The United States will send additional squadrons of fighter jets to the Middle East to bolster its defense posture amid an escalation of fighting in the region, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters on Monday.
"The forces due to rotate into theater to replace them will now instead augment the in-place forces already in the region," Singh said. "Again, I won’t talk specific timelines or numbers for OPSEC [Operational Security] reasons, but can tell you these augmented forces include F-16, F-15E, A-10, F-22 fighter aircraft and associated personnel."
On Sunday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin provided an update on the US response to the escalation of events in the Middle East following Israel's strikes in Lebanon.
Austin directed the US military to reinforce defensive air-support capabilities in the coming days, and ordered the USS Lincoln Carrier Strike Group to remain in the region.
Austin also increased the readiness for additional US forces to deploy to the Middle East if necessary.

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us death toll from hurricane helene could be as high as 600 - white house

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US in Talks With Israel on Military Operations But Decisions Remain Its Call - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The United States has been in discussions with Israel about the latter's military operations in Lebanon, but the decisions on the timing, purpose and pace of the operations remain for Israel to determine, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"We have been engaged in conversations with them about those operations, but the timing, purpose, tempo of those, let them speak to it," Miller said during a press briefing.

Miller made the comment in response to a question regarding what Israel has communicated to the United States regarding its military actions.

The spokesperson said Israel has informed the United States about its operations, including the planned limited ground operation focused on destroying Hezbollah infrastructure near the Israeli-Lebanese border.

Earlier on Monday, US media reported that Israel has indicated in communications with the United States that it plans to launch a limited operation in Lebanon and that the operation will commence imminently.

The situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border worsened after the start of Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip in October 2023. Israel began carrying out massive strikes on southern and eastern Lebanon last Monday. The Lebanese movement Hezbollah retaliated by firing dozens of rockets toward northern Israel.

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US to Augment Forces in Middle East, Including With F-16s, F-15Es, A-10, F-22 Fighter Aircraft - Pentagon

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Trump Says Working With Musk to Provide Starlink Internet for Hurricane Helene Relief

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he is working with billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk to provide Starlink satellite internet service to places impacted by Hurricane Helene.

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"I just spoke to Elon. I'm getting him. We want to get Starlink hooked up because they have no communication whatsoever, and Elon will always come through," Trump said during remarks in Valdosta, Georgia.

At least 100 people have been reported as killed by Hurricane Helene, which had severe impacts in the states of Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina.

US President Joe Biden said that he expects to visit impacted areas sometime this week.

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Turkish Cypriot Leader Says Tasked Technical Committees to Talk to Cyprus on Cooperation

UNITED NATIONS, September 30 (Sputnik) - Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar told Sputnik that he has tasked his technical committees with reaching out to Cyprus on a number of issues of common interest.

"I have asked them [for] good neighborly relationships. Now at the moment, I have technical committees in my presidency talking with their technical committees in the south, because we are living in the same island," Tatar said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. "If you are in the same island, you can cooperate on many issues. You can cooperate on the management of water, energy, health, cultural heritage, economy, energy resources, irregular migration."

"We can do things together to protect our island," he added.

Cyprus, however, does not want to get too involved, according to Tatar.

"Because them cooperating with Turkish Cyprus in the north would mean effectively, according to them, recognizing the Turkish Cypriot state," he said. "Therefore, they kind of stay away. They don't cooperate with us. Because they don't cooperate, we suffer, but they also suffer. If we cooperate, it's good for the future of the whole island."

Any final settlement on Cyprus must involve "two sovereignties, two states on the island," Tatar stated.

"Let's cooperate. Let's work for peace. Let's work for progress," he added.

Cyprus has been divided into Greek and Turkish territories since 1974. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was declared in 1983 with the backing of Ankara. It is recognized only by Turkey.

The Greek Cypriots want a United Nations-led settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, while Turkish Cypriots insist on a confederation of Cyprus.

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Fed Set On 2 More Rate Cuts of 50 Basis Points or More Each This Year If US Economy Performs as Expected - Powell

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US Says Will Continue Engaging With Israeli, Lebanese Counterparts for Ceasefire

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) — The United States will maintain its engagement with Israeli and Lebanese counterparts, along with other nations to work towards a ceasefire, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"We are going to continue to engage with our Israeli counterparts, with Lebanese counterparts, with other countries around the world to reach that objective," Miller said during a press briefing.

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US Not Evacuating American Citizens From Lebanon at This Time - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The United States is not currently evacuating American citizens from Lebanon, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday, in the wake of Israel's assassination of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah.

"We're not evacuating American citizens from Lebanon at this time," Miller said during a press briefing.

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N. Cyprus Could Join EU If Solution to Cyprus Issue Reached - Tatar

UNITED NATIONS, September 30 (Sputnik) - Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar told Sputnik that northern Cyprus could consider joining the European Union if a solution to the decades-long Cyprus issue is found.

"If you make an agreement, that means that you have achieved a solution in Cyprus - two states, neighborly relationship between the 2 communities and living side by side by the good of our people," Tatar said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. "It means to me that we are in Europe, that I have to ask my people for a referendum."

Tatar noted that if it is in the EU, the island could have daily movements, people coming and settling in the north and in the south.

"Being both of us in Europe would help to facilitate the agreement that would be signed within the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots," he said. "I think it could be a win-win situation. Turkey may support this because Turkish Cypriot state within European Union can be a bridge between Turkey and the Europe Union."

If there is an agreement and Ankara's support, Tatar suggested, Turkey will open its ports to vessels from the island.

"Turkey will open its air space. So there could be a lot of advantages if you can strike a balance and establish peace," he said. "But for us to be able to do that, they have to accept our

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sovereignty."
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The Greek Cypriots want a United Nations-led settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, while Turkish Cypriots insist on a confederation of Cyprus.

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N. Cyprus Wants Direct Flights With Russia to Boost Trade - Turkish Cypriot Leader

UNITED NATIONS, September 30 (Sputnik) - Northern Cyprus would like to improve ties with Russia and hopes to have direct flights with the country one day, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar told Sputnik.
"I would like to basically improve our relationship with the Russians because from what I can see, people come from Russia, their children go to our schools, and the culture is not so different," Tatar said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. "I like the Russians very much. I want Russian people to economically prosper … I want the Russians at least through Turkey to have a better connection with North Cyprus. I wish the Russians a better future and to improve our relationship with Russia."
According to Tatar, at least 25,000 Russians live in northern Cyprus and the self-proclaimed republic would like Russia to establish a consulate there.
"I want [Russia] to establish a new office in the north," he said. "Its very welcome that Russia [would have] a consulate in the north or embassy in the north."
Direct flights between Russia and northern Cyprus would be very beneficial as they would boost trade, Tatar said.
"I hope one day that we can have direct flights from Russia," he said. "Because of the international regulations, there are some difficulties. But at least through Antalya and other airports in Turkey, we can have touchdown flights which would increase the relationship between Russia and North Cyprus. We can have more people coming. We can have more trade. We can have other cultural events and basically try to improve our relationship because Russia is a big nation, powerful nation."
Cyprus has been divided into Greek and Turkish territories since 1974. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was declared in 1983 with the backing of Ankara. It is recognized only by Turkey.
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US Cements Asylum Rule That Curbs Illegal Migration on Southern Border - Homeland Security

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WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has cemented a new asylum rule that helped curb the record level of migrants arriving on the US southern border under Joe Biden's presidency, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said on Monday.

"Today, the Biden-Harris Administration took additional steps to implement the action announced in June to strengthen border security," DHS said in a press release. "President Biden has issued an updated Proclamation to amend the June Proclamation that temporarily suspended and limited the entry of noncitizens across the southern border that will ensure these measures stay in place until we see a sustained decrease in unlawful entries at the border."

In June, President Joe Biden issued an executive order temporarily barring migrants who illegally cross the US southern border from claiming asylum in the United States.

The Biden administration's actions reinforce this new rule to ensure it will stay in place for the foreseeable future.

The asylum rule will be temporarily discontinued only after the 7-day average of encounters between the ports of entry on the southern border falls below 1,500 encounters per day for 28 consecutive days, the release said, adding that this will help ensure that the drop in encounters is a sustained decrease and not the result of a short-term change.

The asylum restrictions will snap back into place whenever illegal crossings on the southern border break the threshold.

Although illegal crossings on the US southern border remain high, Biden's new asylum rule has helped cut the number of illegal crossings by about a half when compared to each of the previous three years of the current administration.

US Customs and Border Protection data shows that there were more than 107,000 migrants apprehended on the US southern border in August, down from nearly 233,000 in August 2023; 204,000 in August 2022; and 210,000 in August 2021.

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us not evacuating american citizens from lebanon at this time - state dept.

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us will continue to engage with israeli, lebanese, other counterparts to work toward ceasefire

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Turkish Cypriot Leader Says Cyprus Should 'Wake Up to Reality,' Give Up Federalism

UNITED NATIONS, September 30 (Sputnik) - Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar told Sputnik that for any talks to start between the two parts of the island, Cyprus should recognize the reality on the ground and abandon the idea of federalism.

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"We have now celebrated 40th year of the TRNC [the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus]. And now the Greek Cypriots are saying basically, let's try federalism again," Tatar said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. "For me to abolish my state and go and become a kind of piece of minority in that kind of setup, it's absolutely unbelievable and not acceptable. Therefore, I have asked [Cyprus President Nikos] Christodoulides on many occasions to reconsider the situation because you have to wake up to the reality in Cyprus. You have to look at what is happening on the ground."

Tatar stated that "real politics" is that "if you visit Cyprus, you will you will find a big state in the south, a big state in the north."

"How do you merge these two? Absolutely impossible," he said. "We are not a minority. We have two peoples in Cyprus."

Tatar said that northern Cyprus insists on a two-state solution, and that Turkey's interests should be taken into account in any potential agreement.

"Any kind of solution should involve Turkish concern. If there is no Turkish concept, then there will not be stability for a political kind of equilibrium, unity, obviously," he said.

Tatar argued that federalism sought by Cyprus would involve "single sovereignty" and mean that Turkey would have to pull all troops out. It means that Turkish Cypriots would not be secure, he stated.

Cyprus has been divided into Greek and Turkish territories since 1974. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was declared in 1983 with the backing of Ankara. It is recognized only by Turkey.

The Greek Cypriots want a United Nations-led settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, while Turkish Cypriots insist on a confederation of Cyprus.

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US Making Efforts to Avoid Another January 6 After 2024 Election - DHS

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The US government is making efforts this year to avert another historical event like the January 6 riot that took place in 2021 challenging the results of the US presidential election, Homeland Security Under Secretary for Intelligence Kenneth Wainstein said on Monday.

"There will be some who will probably try to take things into their own hands to try to disrupt the election process past the election day," Wainstein said. "Of course, we saw that on January 6, and a lot of effort is going into making sure that doesn't happen again this year."

Wainstein underscored that Americans have the right to challenge the results of a US election if they have doubts that the vote was conducted correctly.

According to the US Justice Department, since January 6, 2021, more than 1,488 individuals have been charged in nearly all 50 US states for crimes related to the Capitol riot, and nearly 550 of those individuals have been charged with the felony of assaulting or impeding US law enforcement.

On January 6, 2021, after then-US President Donald Trump's election defeat, a group of his

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supporters breached the US Capitol in an attempt to halt Congress's Electoral College vote count.

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US Authorizes Certain Russia-Related Transactions Through January 8, 2025 – Treasury

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) – The US Department of the Treasury on Monday published a new general license authorizing certain transactions involving the Russian Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance through January 8, according to the document published on Monday by the US Department of the Treasury.

"U.S. persons […] are authorized to pay taxes, fees, or import duties, and purchase or receive permits, licenses, registrations, certifications, or tax refunds to the extent such transactions are prohibited by […] Prohibitions Related to Transactions Involving the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the National Wealth Fund of the Russian Federation, and the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, provided such transactions are ordinarily incident and necessary to the day-to-day operations in the Russian Federation of such U.S. persons or entities, through 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time, January 8, 2025," the license reads.

Western countries and their allies rolled out a comprehensive sanctions campaign against Russia after it launched its military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, including the imposition of an oil price cap on Russian crude oil exports and the blocking of Russia's sovereign assets and banks. Moscow says that Western sanctions against Russia have failed.

Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Economic Cooperation Department Dmitry Birichevsky said in September that Russia is no longer dependent on the US currency; the share of the dollar and euro in settlements on Russian export operations is currently less than 20%.

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N. Cyprus Wants Direct Flights With Russia to Boost Trade - Turkish Cypriot Leader

UNITED NATIONS, September 30 (Sputnik) - Northern Cyprus would like to improve ties with Russia and hopes to have direct flights with the country one day, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar told Sputnik.

"I would like to basically improve our relationship with the Russians because from what I can see, people come from Russia, their children go to our schools, and the culture is not so different," Tatar said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. "I like the Russians very much. I want Russian people to economically prosper … I want the Russians at least through Turkey to have a better connection with North Cyprus. I wish the Russians a better future and to improve our relationship with Russia."

According to Tatar, at least 25,000 Russians live in northern Cyprus and the self-proclaimed republic would like Russia to establish a consulate there.

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"I want [Russia] to establish a new office in the north," he said. "Its very welcome that Russia [would have] a consulate in the north or embassy in the north."

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Canadian Foreign Minister Joly Says War Cannot Happen in Lebanon 'Full Stop'

UNITED NATIONS, September 30 (Sputnik) - Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly on Monday told the UN General Assembly that war cannot happen in Lebanon "full stop."

"There cannot be war in Lebanon, full stop," Joly said when addressing the escalating tensions on Lebanon's southern border between Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah and Israel.

Canada is among the countries urging Hezbollah and Israel to accept an immediate ceasefire as a means to create space for dialogue, Joly said.

Families in Southern Lebanon and in Northern Israel must be allowed to safely return to their households, she said.

Joly qualified the multiple crises affecting the Middle East as an unspeakable tragedy and a senseless war going against human dignity.

Earlier on Monday, US media reported that Israel has indicated in communications with the United States that it plans to launch a limited operation in Lebanon and that the operation will commence imminently.

The situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border worsened after the start of Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip in October 2023. Israel began carrying out massive strikes on southern and eastern Lebanon last Monday. The Lebanese movement Hezbollah retaliated by firing dozens of rockets toward northern Israel.

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Ryan Routh Pleads Not Guilty to Attempted Assassination of Trump - Filing

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WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - Ryan Routh pleaded not guilty to charges related to his alleged attempt to assassinate former US President Donald Trump, according to court proceedings filed after an arraignment hearing on Monday.

Routh pleaded "\not guilty to five federal charges and demanded a jury trial, the filing said.

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

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

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US Will Not Project on Possible Israeli Invasion, Against Conflict Spreading - Envoy to UN

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Monday she will not project about a potential Israeli ground operation in Lebanon, but Washington does not want the conflict to spread.

"I am not going to project what could happen or may not happen in the future. We have been clear in our position that we want to see deescalation," Thomas-Greenfield told reporters. "We do not want to see this spread, and we want to find a path to peace so that Palestinians and Israelis have safety, and Lebanese and Israelis living on the northern border find security and safety as well."

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NORAD Claims Russia's Su-35 Aircraft Conducted 'Unsafe' Maneuver Near Alaska

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) on Monday accused a Russian Su-35 fighter jet of allegedly conducting an unsafe maneuver during an intercept by a US aircraft near Alaska earlier this month.

"On Sept 23, 2024, NORAD aircraft flew a safe and disciplined intercept of Russian Military Aircraft in the Alaska ADIZ [air defense identification zone]. The conduct of one Russian Su-35 was unsafe, unprofessional, and endangered all - not what you'd see in a professional air force," US Northern Command chief Gen. Gregory Guillot said.

On September 24, the Russian Defense Ministry said two Russian Tu-95 strategic missile carriers had completed a scheduled 11-hour flight over the neutral waters of the Bering Sea near the western coast of Alaska.

This was the second fly-over by Russian military airplanes this month. On September 11, Russian Tu-160 strategic bombers carried out a flight over the neutral waters of the Barents and Norwegian Seas as part of the Ocean-2024 exercise.

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Motive of Trump Assassination Attempt in Butler Still Unclear - Homeland Security Official

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - US authorities still have not uncovered the motive for the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania, in July, Homeland Security Under Secretary for Intelligence Kenneth Wainstein said on Monday.

"Unclear exactly what the motivation is at that this point," Wainstein said during remarks at the University of Virginia Miller Center.

Wainstein noted that the FBI is still investigating the motive.

On July 13, Thomas Matthew Crooks attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Butler. The gunman shot Trump in the ear, killing one audience member and wounding two others. A Secret Service sniper killed Crooks.

Trump is scheduled to hold another rally in Butler on October 5, according to his campaign team.

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US Energy Department Says Secured $1.52Bln Loan to Restart Michigan Nuclear Power Plant

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Energy (DOE) announced in a statement on Monday that it has finalized a $1.52 billion loan to restart a nuclear power plant in the state of Michigan.

“DOE, through its Loan Programs Office, announced the closing of a loan guarantee of up to $1.52 billion under the Inflation Reduction Act’s Energy Infrastructure Reinvestment program to Holtec Palisades to help finance the restoration and resumption of service of an 800-megawatt nuclear generating station in Covert Township, Michigan,” the statement said.

The Palisades Nuclear Plant ceased operations in May 2022. The plant will be restarted and upgraded to produce power until at least 2051, the statement said.

The loan guarantee is a first-of-its-kind effort by DOE to restart a US nuclear power plant, which will generate carbon pollution-free energy and expand a union workforce, the statement said.

The Biden administration is working “around the clock” to ensure that nuclear energy continues to power the country for generations to come, the statement added.

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Biden Says Will Visit Areas in US Impacted by Hurricane Helene This Week

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said that he expects to visit areas in the southeastern parts of the United States impacted by Hurricane Helene this week,

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and has been holding off to avoid creating disruptions.

"I'm committed to traveling to impacted areas as soon as possible, but I've been told that it would be disruptive if I did it right now," Biden said.

The president said he expects to visit these areas "later this week" but did not specify a particular location.

Biden also said that he promised the governor of the US state of North Carolina that he would visit and expected to be there by Wednesday or Thursday.

The western part of North Carolina has been hit particularly hard, resulting in water, electricity, communications and roads being out of service.

At least 100 people have been reported killed as of Monday after Hurricane Helene tore through the southeastern states of Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee last week.

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US Veteran Affairs' Employees Improperly Accessed Medical Records of Vance, Walz - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - At least a dozen employees of the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) improperly accessed medical records belonging to vice-presidential candidates JD Vance and Tim Walz over the summer, the Washington Post reported on Monday, citing people familiar with the ongoing investigation into the incident.

VA investigators believe that by viewing Walz and Vance's medical records without proper authorization, the employees violated federal health privacy laws although their motives remain unclear, the report said.

Some employees tried to explain their actions by stating to investigators that they did so out of curiosity to see the vice-presidential candidates' medical history amid a public interest in their past.

While investigators are trying to determine whether the records have been shared, VA officials believe suspects were not able to gain access to any disability compensation records.

The breach occurred in July and August and was later discovered during a security check of high-profile health accounts.

Before their political careers, Walz served in the Army National Guard and Vance served in the Marine Corps. Vance criticized Walz for purportedly lying about the details of his military service but thanked him for serving.

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Israel Assures US Has No Plans for Major Incursion Into Lebanon - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) - Israeli officials have assured their US counterparts that Israel does not plan to conduct a major incursion into Lebanon following the limited

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operation in the country's southern parts, the New York Times reported on Monday, citing US administration officials.

US officials believe that they managed to dissuade Israel from conducting a major ground invasion of Lebanon following nearly a week of intense bombings, including in Beirut, the report said.

At the same time, Israel is set to proceed with a limited operation in southern Lebanon with no plans to occupy any parts of the country or to invade with significant conventional forces, according to the report.

Earlier on Monday, US media reported that Israel has indicated in communications with the United States that it plans to launch a limited operation in Lebanon and that the operation will commence imminently.

The situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border worsened after the start of Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip in October 2023. Israel began carrying out massive strikes on southern and eastern Lebanon last Monday but the Lebanese movement Hezbollah retaliated by firing dozens of rockets toward northern Israel.

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UNSC Adopts Resolution Authorizing Extension of Security Mission in Haiti Until Oct. 2025

UNITED NATIONS, September 30 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council on Monday adopted a resolution authorizing an extension of the mandate of the Multinational Security Support (MSS) in Haiti for another year until October 2025.

All 15 UN Security Council members voted in favor of the resolution, which was presented by the United States and Ecuador.

"The Security Council … decides to extend the present mandate of the MSS mission as authorized in resolution 2699 (2023), to October 2025, and reiterates the call to Haiti and the leadership of the MSS mission to update regularly the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the progress of deployment," the resolution said.

The UN Security Council also encouraged the MSS mission to accelerate its deployment.

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 rise in criminal gang violence, such as extortion and kidnappings. The gangs now control swathes of the country.

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Georgia County Still Shut Down After Chemical Plant Fire Releases Chlorine Into Air

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) – The Rockdale County in the US state of Georgia remains on lockdown with a shelter in place order still in effect after a fire at a chemical plant released chlorine into the air over the weekend, local authorities said on Monday.

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"Rockdale County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), based on information received from the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), strongly advises all Rockdale County residents to continue to shelter in place. Additionally, in the best interest and safety of the public and all citizens, it is recommended that businesses close operations until shelter-in-place is lifted," the authorities said in a statement.

Chlorine was detected in the air after a fire broke out on Sunday at a plant for Biolab, a manufacturer of pool and spa treatment products, in Conyers, Rockdale County.

The authorities recommend that the residents avoid using air conditioners and keep windows closed.

Parts of Interstate 20 will remain closed on the recommendation of the Georgia Department of Transportation, according to the statement. The decision is based on "unpredictable path and wind direction, which could change the direction of the irritants in the air," according to the statement.

The fire prompted the evacuation of approximately 17,000 people.

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Blinken Announces $148Mln for Counter-Terrorism Effort in Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia

WASHINGTON, September 30 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced $148 million in funding on Monday to boost border security and counter-terrorism operations in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia.

"I can announce that the United States will provide $148 million to enhance civilian-led border security, and counterterrorism operations across sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia," Blinken said in his opening remarks at a ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State terrorist group (IS, banned in Russia).

He also announced a $168 million contribution to the US-led coalition against IS' annual stabilization pledge drive for Iraq and Syria.

He said the funds would go toward critical demining operations, essential services like water and electricity, education and economic opportunities.

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