

10/2/24 Wednesday

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Iran's Attack on Israel Shows Peril of Mistaking Restraint for Weakness

Iran launched a significant retaliatory strike against Israel Tuesday in an operation codenamed Operation True Promise II.

If the country's attack in April demonstrated Tehran's ability to penetrate Israel's vaunted Iron Dome, Tuesday's strike made good on its promise to follow it up with something more substantial if provoked. Iran [claimed](#) it targeted three Israeli military bases in an attack that reportedly struck multiple F-35 fighter jets. The US-provided aircraft would've been used to target Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah last week and would constitute an important part of Israel's military force if it follows through on a threatened invasion of Lebanon.

[Multiple analysts joined Sputnik](#) to comment on the event Tuesday, noting that Tehran has demonstrated substantial military power after practicing restraint for an extended period.

"Are people mistaking restraint with weakness?" asked The Critical Hour host Wilmer Leon, adding, "it seems as though there's a very disciplined tactic here of measured response."

"It does seem so," claimed journalist Robert Fantina, the author of *Settler Colonialism in Palestine and Kashmir*. "It does seem that if people are going to mistake that measured response for weakness, they're going to regret it because they're going to be proven wrong."

"Iran does not want to be attacked by the United States, obviously," the commentator noted.

"And any attack against Israel – even retaliatory, even in self-defense – would bring the United States into the war, unless the response is very measured, very well planned, and not a kind of random carpet-bombing sort of thing. Not the sort of thing that Israel is doing to Lebanon and Gaza."

"So, I think that the government of Iran is waiting and watching, and it's playing the long game. It's not necessarily looking for an immediate victory, but it does want to see progress in peace in the region, and that means the defeat of Israel. How it will do that remains to be seen."

Author and independent journalist Esther Iverem agreed with the assessment, noting that many observers predicted "this attack would be much larger."

"That previous attack was just almost like a showpiece to let Israel know that, 'not only can we hit you, but we can hit you hard. Our missiles can get through your many layers of defense even with all of your protectors in NATO and in the US, basically shooting down most of those key projectiles for you; our main missiles hit their targets and hit them precisely and hard,'" said the radio host, summarizing Tehran's perspective.

Iran [said](#) it deployed its hypersonic Fatteh-2 missile during Tuesday's attack, which is able to maneuver at a speed of about 10,000 miles per hour (over 16,000 kilometers per hour).

Analysts claim the United States would also struggle to frequently replenish Israel's Iron Dome during a prolonged conflict.

US reportedly green-lit Israel's attack on Lebanon The US government allegedly green-lit Israel's military attack on Lebanon, The New Republic wrote. US officials reportedly told Israel that the US would support their decision to bomb Hezbollah targets, even with Biden urging a cease-fire. However, when asked on Monday if he was comfortable with Israel's ground invasion of Lebanon, Biden said, "I am comfortable with them stopping. We should have a cease-fire now." "[Biden is] talking as if he's a spectator of this. He's not a spectator. He's giving all the weapons. The Israelis say it time and time again. They've said that we could not do this without the weapons you give us. So this is an American project," Dr. Jim Kavanagh, an independent journalist who joined The Critical Hour said.

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"Israel might be able to... show off its operations that don't have significant strategical value and are mostly for the public opinion... But, that doesn't scare the Iranians" - Iran-based journalist On Tuesday, Iran launched several hundred ballistic missiles toward Israel in response to the killings of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas Politburo chief Ismail Haniyeh, and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan. "Iran doesn't rely on this strategy that people like to talk about with very particular rhetoric calling Iranian allies as proxies. Iran doesn't rely on that. Iran fights its own wars. Iran retaliates for the murder of its own generals itself," Ehsan Safarnejad, an Iranian-based journalist who joined Sputnik's Fault Lines. "...but there is always that sense of camaraderie and brotherhood between Iranians and particularly people in Lebanon. We are very much close to them." President Pezeshkian accused the US of their complicity in the assassination of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah who died in an Israeli airstrike on Beirut, media reported. "I can say for certain that the US' aggression to both [Iran and Russia] has driven them very, very close to one another. To the point that I would say that Iran and Russia are now on the verge of becoming strategic partners," Safarnejad added. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is now seeking to expand his war in Gaza by invading southern Lebanon. Iran has fired about 400 ballistic missiles into southern and central Israel. At least two people were wounded by shrapnel in Tel Aviv following Iran's missile strike, Sputnik reported, citing Israeli medics. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said in a statement that if Israel responds to the attack, it would be followed by more destructive strikes.

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'Suicidal Venture': What Are Consequences of US Economic, Military Attacks on Russia?

Russia has proven highly resilient, maintaining stronger GDP growth than any country backing the Kiev regime in the wake of Western coercive economic sanctions. The United States and its Western allies have backed military and economic aggression against Russia for a number of years, attempting to impose a "strategic defeat" on the country in its conflict with Ukraine.

US President Barack Obama, along with allies in Canada and the European Union, imposed significant economic sanctions on Moscow shortly after a popular referendum in the territory of Crimea voiced overwhelming support for rejoining the Russian Federation. Russia moved to liberate Crimea – which maintains significant historic and military ties to Russia – after Western support for Ukraine’s Euromaidan coup led an anti-Russian government to take power in Kiev. War commenced in Ukraine’s Eastern territories in the following years and intensified after Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a special military operation in February 2022 to defend residents of the Donbass from Kiev’s aggression. The US and its allies responded with a tightening of their coercive economic measures, but Russia has proven highly resilient, maintaining stronger GDP growth than any country backing the Kiev regime.

Amid ongoing support for Ukraine, Russia has now announced it could ban certain vital exports to Western countries, threatening serious economic consequences for the US and other NATO members. Author and independent journalist Caleb Maupin joined [Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program](#) to discuss the development, noting that – despite the United States’ bluster – the West would likely prove to be far more vulnerable to sanctions than Moscow.

“Nowadays Russia and China are very well integrated into the Western economic system,” Maupin noted. “You can see there are many, many areas in which the two economies – the Western economy and the rising new economy of the East and the BRICS – are very intertwined, and that gives us a layer of security. We should be thankful for that.”

“How many sanctions have they put on Russia? How much has Russia had to respond?” the analyst asked. “There’s still areas where Western European countries are reliant on Russia for certain metals and other things. And there are certainly still cards to be played [by Russia] because that’s how intertwined our economies are, and that is a motivation to not have an all out war, right?”

“When you’re trading with somebody you really don’t want to go to war with them. And the fact that there is economic interplay, give-and-take action between the two countries, that gives us hope that perhaps things could start moving in another direction at some point.”

Maupin noted that other countries, such as Venezuela and Iran, have adapted to Western sanctions, increasingly strengthening the construction of a counterhegemonic bloc against US economic and military might. US sanctions – which are now imposed against people, properties and organizations in one-third of the world’s countries – have driven the development of alternative financial and diplomatic infrastructure, including BRICS, new financial messaging systems, and bilateral currency deals that bypass the use of the dollar.

Meanwhile Western economies have become highly dependent on imports in the age of neoliberalism, perhaps best [demonstrated](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic when US guidance on masks was initially driven by the country’s inability to produce them in sufficient quantities for healthcare workers and the general public. The imposition of sanctions on Russia since 2022 has exacerbated economic problems in the United States and especially in Germany and other Western European countries, whose economies have faltered in the absence of cheap Russian natural gas.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned this week the West would continue to face significant consequences if it intensified its attacks on Russia, saying attempts to impose a “strategic defeat” on Moscow [would represent a “suicidal venture.”](#)

"The idea that you're going to somehow kick Russia out of Crimea, you're going to somehow get all the people in the Donbass who've been fighting for all this time [against] the government imposed on them by the United States... that's not going to happen," said Maupin, noting that people in the Donbass have been fined simply for speaking the Russian language in public. "This is not a realistic scenario for victory. And how many lives are going to be thrown away?" "This Ukrainian scenario for what they call victory is not a realistic situation," he reiterated. "And that is the most important thing to look at this and say a victory – a victory for Ukraine and a strategic defeat for Russia – this isn't a realistic outcome." "How is this a fight for democracy? The people of these regions have voted. They voted back in 2014 to break away. They recently voted to join with the Russian Federation... There is vast overwhelming sentiment in these areas that they don't want to be part of this viciously anti-Russian government that's been imposed on them."

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'Iron Dome Proved to Be a Bust': Iran Strikes Israel in Retaliation for Assassinations

Iran launched a significant retaliatory attack against Israel late Tuesday night, ending months of speculation about how or whether the country would strike back after its provocative killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.

The United States reportedly provided Iran with assurances after the attack against Haniyeh in July that Israel and the US would move constructively towards the establishment of a Palestinian state, ending Israel's military aggression against its neighbors and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, where over 42,000 have died according to figures reported by the territory's health ministry. Tel Aviv's deadly attack against Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon last week dashed hopes of a cessation of violence as Israel claims it is preparing for a broader invasion of Lebanon.

"I've seen the videos and you can see the missiles continue to rain down and hit targets. Israel is imposing a news blackout," former CIA analyst Larry Johnson said. "They don't want the knowledge out there about what happened. But Iran made sure that it was not going to hit and run the risk of killing hundreds or thousands of Israeli civilians."

"They were not going to act like the Israelis," the analyst claimed. "They really consider themselves, if you will, more humane, more honorable, and by virtue of their action, I think they can make that case."

Johnson claimed Iran was forced to strike Israel after false assurances from the United States that Israel would cease attacks on its neighbors after its killing of Haniyeh. Iran previously launched a retaliatory attack on Israel in April after Tel Aviv's bombing of the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Syria killed two Iranian generals. The codename Operation True Promise was announced for the strike.

Iran's Tuesday attack, dubbed Operation True Promise II, appears significantly more substantial than April's strike in which the vast majority of Iranian missiles, rockets and drones were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome. Iran was reportedly able to successfully strike Israeli military targets Tuesday, including an Israeli air base where multiple US-provided F-35 aircraft were hit.

Johnson claimed Israel's attack against Nasrallah would've been launched from an F-35; the fighter jet would be key to any Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

The commentator compared Israel's Iron Dome to the US Patriot missile system, claiming the US is unable to replenish the defense system rapidly enough to allow Israel to fight a long war of attrition.

"Lockheed Martin... can make about one and a half, one and a quarter [missiles] a day," said Johnson. "I think Israel's in a similar situation... [Iran] put Israel on notice, 'If you launch any further strikes against us in any retaliation, we're going to hit you harder next time and with more lethality.' So this right now has a chance to really get out of control."

"I cannot rule out that Israel is going to try to launch some conventional weapons at Iran, but I think they're going to be defeated," Johnson claimed.

"Israel may be tempted to try to use a nuclear device against an Iranian target," he warned. "If that happens then we're going to really be into another dimension, and this is going to get very, very serious. It's already a serious situation, but it will get absolutely dangerous."

The analyst suggested Israel would not be able to support military engagement against multiple enemies, even with the United States backing it up.

"Israel is not in a position to fight a multi-front war and it does not have the strategic depth to fight wars of attrition. And that's exactly what it's got itself into now," Johnson pointed out. "It's not going to be able to finish off Hezbollah in a week. It couldn't even finish off Hamas in 12 months. It's not going to be able to finish off Syria, finish off the Houthis or finish off Iran... That's what Israel fails to understand. It does not have the ability to sustain itself in these kinds of operations for an extended period of time."

"If US ships are involved that are off the coast of Iran, then we'll see Iran react and they may even end up attacking some US ships," he continued. "But they'll certainly retaliate against Israel. Israel is not out of the woods at all, despite all the delusional nonsense that the extreme Zionist supporters are saying when they say, 'oh, Iran didn't touch us, Iran didn't hurt us at all.' Nonsense."

The development comes as Democrats attempt to hold onto the White House in November's presidential election, with former President Donald Trump casting himself as a defender of Israel. Vice President Kamala Harris will attempt to do the same, Johnson claimed, while also trying to prevent a regional conflagration in the Middle East before the election.

"The politics are going to dictate a lot of strategic military decisions, unfortunately," said Johnson.

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

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

America's media class and ruling elites pit people against each other to prevent them from unifying in opposition to endless war, according to online commentator Craig Jardula. The cohost of The Convo Couch and AM Wake Up podcasts joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour

program Tuesday to expound on his claim, decrying the rise of censorship and demonetization of online content.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Pervasive Russophobia Drives 'Total Blackout' of Ukraine's War Crimes – Analyst

Multiple occurrences of war crimes have been attributed to far-right regiments in Ukraine, including the use of cluster munitions and documented instances of torture.

Anti-Russian sentiment has deep roots in modern Western society, owing in part to the country's military power and historical status as a foil to Western Europe.

In recent years this struggle has acutely played out in the country of Ukraine, which the United States has worked tirelessly to pull into the Western orbit. [2014's Euromaidan coup](#) installed a fiercely anti-Russian government in the Mariinskyi Palace, empowering Ukrainian nationalists with grievances against Moscow dating back to Nazism's mid-20th century march across the continent.

The development led to significant hostility toward ethnic Russians in the country, especially in Ukraine's eastern provinces. Atrocities such as [the Odessa Trade Union House massacre](#)

demonstrated the physical threat posed to Russo-Ukrainians, while the banning of the Russian language in schools and places of business illustrated what observers claimed was a broad suppression of Russian culture.

In the United States, anti-Russian sentiment dating back to the Cold War has been rekindled by claims of Russian interference in US presidential politics – a narrative [frequently not borne out by investigations into the matter](#). Widespread Russophobia has heightened the typically militaristic tenor of Western news reporting, causing coverage of the Ukraine conflict to fall even below the standards of typical war coverage in the United States according to Covert Action Magazine managing editor Jeremy Kuzmarov.

The analyst joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines program Wednesday](#) to discuss the state of journalistic reporting on the ongoing conflict.

"I think that the media coverage has been absolutely abysmal," claimed Kuzmarov, an author of several critical books on US foreign policy. "We've had a decade of Russophobia that we've discussed on the show that's really impacted people considerably. And there's been a total blackout."

"As far as Israel-Palestine, it has gotten through because of the brutality of the Israelis," he continued. "Some of it has been reported in mainstream media, the bombing of hospitals and things like that. But there's been a total blackout on the atrocities committed by the Ukrainian military, including the neo-Nazi Azov battalion*."

"Especially liberal media has been particularly biased and Russophobic, like MSNBC and CNN, as well as alternative media like Democracy Now! that has a following among activists who are more in the peace movement – there's nothing on that network ever. They've never interviewed Eastern Ukrainians who've been victimized by the Ukrainian military or endured shelling of their cities."

The US-based news outlet CNN was embarrassed in late 2022 when, during a piece celebrating Ukraine's advance in the Kherson region, [footage](#) aired by the network appeared to show a man with a Ukrainian flag giving a Nazi salute to a crowd of revelers. The incident was one of many demonstrating the [significant influence](#) of neo-fascists in Ukraine's military and society – a fact that Western media has increasingly taken great pains to ignore.

"Today, increasing reports of far-right violence, ultranationalism, and erosion of basic freedoms are giving the lie to the West's initial [post-Maidan] euphoria," [The Nation](#) reported in 2019.

"There are neo-Nazi pogroms against the Roma, ... book bans, and state-sponsored glorification of Nazi collaborators... What Ukraine's far right lacks in poll numbers, it makes up for with things Marine Le Pen could only dream of – paramilitary units and free rein on the streets."

"Post-Maidan Ukraine is the world's only nation to have a neo-Nazi formation in its armed forces," the report noted. Multiple occurrences of war crimes have been attributed to far-right regiments in Ukraine, including the use of cluster munitions and documented instances of torture. One [video](#) from late 2022 showed the summary execution of several surrendering Russian soldiers, who were shot in the legs before being gunned down. Such cases have received little attention as media [focuses](#) on often dubious pro-Ukraine stories.

Western portrayals of the Ukraine conflict as a struggle for democracy and human rights are belied by the actual [nature](#) of the Ukrainian government, which has legitimized neo-Nazi gangs in the domestic as well as the military sphere. Five years ago Kiev [announced](#) the National Druzhina paramilitary group would serve as poll watchers in the country's national elections.

The group [swears](#) fealty to politician Andriy Biletsky, who once [vowed](#) Ukraine would “lead the White Races of the world in a final crusade...against the Semite-led Untermenschen [subhumans].”

“There's a deeply ingrained Russophobia that goes back to Cold War and Hollywood film and how they present the Russians as the enemy in a demonized way,” said Kuzmarov, who claimed that anti-Russian sentiment has prevented an honest discussion about the nature of Ukraine's government. “That has seeped so deeply in our culture that Americans can't wake up and smell the coffee as to what's gone on here, the catastrophe, the Vietnam-type situation that they support in Ukraine.”

The analyst observed that the conflict has become deeply polarized in the United States, noting it is “becoming a popular issue for the Republican Party now. That may be one reason why the young lefties aren't coming strong against the Ukrainian war, because the main politicians speaking out against it are people on the right. People they hate [like] Marjorie Taylor Greene, Donald Trump, and Robert Kennedy, who defected into the Republican Party.”

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US Congress ‘Happy to Be Lied to’ in Service of American Imperialism – Analyst

One analyst claimed lawmakers were “very happy to be lied to” by the US Secretary of State, claiming they “would have denounced Blinken for the truth.”

Secretary of State Antony Blinken is facing calls to resign after a damning [report](#) suggested he willfully misled Congress to keep US military aid flowing to Israel.

Analysis by the investigative reporting nonprofit ProPublica revealed that Blinken defied the findings of multiple government bodies that concluded Israel was deliberately blocking humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Blinken ignored the advice of multiple officials with the State Department and US Agency for International Development (USAID), testifying before lawmakers that Tel Aviv was not interfering with the flow of aid.

US law [forbids](#) the provision of military equipment to any country obstructing American humanitarian assistance.

Journalists Dan Lazare and Robert Fantina joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Wednesday to discuss the scandal, which has led the director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations to call on Blinken to resign.

“This is business as usual,” said Fantina. “The United States doesn't respect international law and doesn't respect its own laws if those laws somehow get in the way of its quest for power and profits. So the fact that Blinken lied to Congress, blatantly lied – and this wasn't something that was inconsequential, this caused the starvation, the continued starvation and the slaughter of innocent people.”

“We've said before that the United States is enabling this genocide by continuing to arm Israel and by increasing its arms shipments to Israel,” he continued. “So the fact that Blinken is lying should really surprise no one. Other international organizations that aren't affiliated with any nation have said repeatedly for months that Israel is blocking humanitarian aid. And yet the United States denies this, or at least Blinken did.”

The human rights organization Amnesty International [affirmed](#) Israel was stemming the flow of humanitarian assistance earlier this year, characterizing Tel Aviv's actions as a "tightening" of its "16-year-long suffocating blockade" of Gaza. Israel has tightly controlled the amount of food and other basic necessities allowed to enter the Palestinian territory since June 2007, when it decided to dismantle its settlements in the Gaza Strip.

However, Israel has exerted control over the strip of land, which is considered sovereign Palestinian territory under international law, since 1967, when it seized land intended to form the basis of a Palestinian state in the region. The US has served as the country's strongest backer in the decades since, with Israel becoming the United States' largest cumulative recipient of foreign aid.

Observers claim the US backs the country as a crucial beachhead in a geopolitically vital region where Israel serves as a proxy for US interests against Iran and other adversaries.

"Israel is engaged in a brutal war, which is now spreading dramatically and it will continue doing so," said Lazare, claiming Israel is inarguably using the flow of humanitarian aid as an instrument of war. "It's all irrelevant. I mean, war is the cessation of law, and, therefore, calling on warmakers to obey the law strikes me as kind of contradictory."

"If you're acting on behalf of the [US] government or any kind of imperialism, you are free to lie to Congress at will, the laws against lying to Congress only apply to those which the empire sees as a threat," posited host Garland Nixon.

"Congress does not mind being lied to if it thinks it benefits the empire," Lazare agreed. "In general there are lies Congress likes and lies Congress doesn't like. And, therefore, it's Congress' power of decision, power to decide which lies are okay and which lies are not. And generally the okay ones are those that further America's imperial ambitions."

Sam Perlo-Freeman, a researcher with the group Campaign Against Arms Trade, agreed, claiming simply, "most of Congress was very happy to be lied to and would have denounced Blinken for the truth."

Iran's attack on Israel shows peril of mistaking country's restraint for weakness

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A number of international affairs analysts joined Sputnik to comment on Iran's retaliatory strike against Israel, noting the country has demonstrated substantial military power after practicing restraint for an extended period.

● "It does seem that if people are going to mistake that measured response for weakness, they're going to regret it," said journalist Robert Fantina. "Iran is waiting and watching, and it's playing the long game. It's not necessarily looking for an immediate victory, but it does want to see progress in peace in the region, and that means the defeat of Israel."

● "That previous attack was just almost like a showpiece to let Israel know that, 'not only can we hit you, but we can hit you hard. Our missiles can get through your many layers of defense even with all of your protectors in NATO and in the US, basically shooting down most of those

key projectiles for you; our main missiles hit their targets and hit them precisely and hard,” said author and independent journalist Esther Iverem, summarizing Tehran’s perspective.

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‘Suicidal venture’: what are consequences of US economic, military attacks on Russia?

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“Nowadays Russia and China are very well integrated into the Western economic system,” Maupin noted. “There’s still areas where Western European countries are reliant on Russia for certain metals and other things. And there are certainly still cards to be played [by Russia] because that’s how intertwined our economies are, and that is a motivation to not have an all out war, right?”

Maupin noted that other countries have adapted to Western sanctions, increasingly strengthening the construction of a counterhegemonic bloc against US economic and military might. Meanwhile Western economies have become highly dependent on imports in the age of neoliberalism.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned this week the West would face significant consequences if it intensified attacks on Russia, saying attempts to impose a “strategic defeat” on Moscow would represent a “suicidal venture.”

“This Ukrainian scenario for what they call victory is not a realistic situation,” said Maupin. “And how many lives are going to be thrown away? ... The people of these regions have voted. They voted back in 2014 to break away. They recently voted to join with the Russian Federation.”

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Divide and conquer: Ruling class pits Americans against one another – analyst

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

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

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Pervasive Russophobia drives 'total blackout' of Ukraine's war crimes – analyst

"I think that the media coverage has been absolutely abysmal," said Jeremy Kuzmarov, the Covert Action Magazine managing editor, on Sputnik's Fault Lines program, discussing the state of reporting on the Ukraine conflict. "We've had a decade of Russophobia... that's really impacted people considerably."

"There's been a total blackout on the atrocities committed by the Ukrainian military, including the neo-Nazi Azov battalion," he continued. "Especially liberal media has been particularly biased and Russophobic... They've never interviewed Eastern Ukrainians who've been victimized by the Ukrainian military or endured shelling of their cities."

Multiple occurrences of war crimes have been attributed to far-right regiments in Ukraine, including the use of cluster munitions and documented instances of the torture.

Western portrayals of the Ukraine conflict as a struggle for democracy are belied by the actual nature of the Ukrainian government, which has legitimized neo-Nazi gangs in the domestic as well as the military sphere.

“There's a deeply ingrained Russophobia that goes back to Cold War and Hollywood film and how they present the Russians as the enemy in a demonized way,” said Kuzmarov, who claimed that anti-Russian sentiment has prevented an honest discussion about the nature of Ukraine's government. “That has seeped so deeply in our culture that Americans can't wake up and smell the coffee as to what's gone on here, the catastrophe, the Vietnam-type situation that they support in Ukraine.”

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US Congress ‘happy to be lied to’ in service of American imperialism – analyst

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“This is business as usual,” said Fantina. “The United States doesn't respect international law and doesn't respect its own laws if those laws somehow get in the way of its quest for power and profits... So, the fact that Blinken is lying should really surprise no one. Other international organizations that aren't affiliated with any nation have said repeatedly for months that Israel is blocking humanitarian aid. And yet the United States denies this, or at least Blinken did.”

The human rights organization Amnesty International affirmed Israel was stemming the flow of humanitarian assistance earlier this year, characterizing Tel Aviv's actions as a “tightening” of its “16-year-long suffocating blockade” of Gaza. Analysis by the investigative reporting nonprofit ProPublica revealed that Blinken defied the findings of multiple government bodies that concluded Israel was deliberately blocking humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

Blinken ignored the advice of multiple officials with the State Department and US Agency for International Development (USAID), testifying before lawmakers that Tel Aviv was not interfering with the flow of aid. US law forbids the provision of military equipment to any country obstructing American humanitarian assistance.

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“Congress does not mind being lied to if it thinks it benefits the empire,” Lazare agreed.

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'New Day' for World as Myth of Israeli Invincibility Shattered – Analyst

Although the damage caused by its attack was relatively minimal, Iran landed a significant psychological blow by penetrating Israel's vaunted Iron Dome defense system with ease, according to one expert.

Officials have claimed no Israeli fatalities after Iran's retaliatory strike against the country Tuesday, but the US ally's former projection of power and deterrence in the region may prove to be the most significant casualty of the day's events, according to one commentator.

The claim was made by Beirut-based journalist Esteban Carrillo on [Sputnik's Fault Lines program Wednesday](#) after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched almost 200 missiles towards Israeli territory. Israel has made efforts to downplay the damage it suffered while Tim Walz and JD Vance boasted of the United States' ability to intercept a portion of the projectiles during Tuesday's vice presidential candidates' debate.

But Iran has claimed some 90% of missiles hit their intended targets while Israeli and US officials have refused to clarify how many projectiles were intercepted, with Israel's military censor [forbidding](#) the publication of details about the attack. A restaurant in Tel Aviv was reportedly [damaged](#) – a symbolically important strike at the heart of Israel's cultural and economic mecca – while multiple missiles [landed](#) at or near Israel's Nevatim Airbase, Tel Nof Airbase and the headquarters of the Mossad.

Although the damage caused by the attack was relatively minimal, Iran landed a significant psychological blow by penetrating Israel's vaunted Iron Dome defense system with ease, according to Carrillo.

"This is not like the Israeli Air Force when they come into Lebanon, when they go into Gaza or Syria [and] they leave hundreds or dozens of civilians killed every single time when they drop bombs," noted the analyst. "The Iranians targeted exactly what they wanted to target... multiple air bases, including the one that, apparently, the attack that killed Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah [was launched from]. The base where the planes took off for that, when they dropped about 100 heavy bombs in the middle of Beirut."

"Really, it's a new day," Carrillo declared. "It's a new day for Israel. It's a new day for Iran, for the US, for the resistance axis, for the entire world. And, I think it's also very important to highlight what Iranian officials said afterwards... This is Iran's legitimate right to self-defense, as they claim Israel has when they destroy Lebanon, when they destroy Gaza."

"Iran waited for three months, almost to the day, after the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh," he continued, referring to Israel's provocative killing of the former Hamas leader in Tehran in July. "They gave the US time, they gave a chance for a ceasefire in Gaza, just like Hezbollah did. And just like the other factions of the Axis of Resistance have done, giving enough time for negotiation to end. But we have seen now for months on end that Israel sabotages these negotiations day in and day out."

Israel's regional deterrence has historically rested on its Iron Dome defense system and the support it enjoys from the United States and other Western allies. The Iron Dome has allowed Israeli citizens to live in relative security while US weapons and military support have carried the implicit threat of a significant retaliation against any attack.

But Iran's use of hypersonic missiles – a technology not yet possessed by Israel or any of its allies – has proven that Tehran has the ability to bypass the Iron Dome and strike any target within Israeli territory. The country's newly-revealed vulnerabilities have led to a significant exodus of Israeli citizens, with an estimated half a million [fleeing](#) within the first six months' of Israel's operation in Gaza, dealing a significant blow to the country's economy.

Meanwhile, Israel's most important ally has found itself boxed in by the upcoming presidential election as US President Joe Biden works feverishly to prevent the outbreak of a regional war that could sink Democrats' chances in November. The Biden administration has worked behind the scenes to attempt to rein in Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, dissuading it from carrying out a larger retaliatory attack the last time hostilities with Iran broke out in April.

The combination of political and material factors has frustrated Israel's ability to respond to danger on multiple fronts.

"They do not have the winning hand," said Carrillo. "In the morning, they actually started trying to come into Lebanon. They have been trying to enter Lebanese territory, Israeli troops."

"They are getting cut down," he claimed. "They are getting ambushed. They are getting sent back with their tails between their legs because they do not have the winning hand. So Iran last night warned Israel, 'Do not miscalculate. Do not miscalculate. Do not think that you can, at this point, hit us again. Because if you do, if you come and you hit Iran,' they are saying, 'you are going to face our wrath. You are going to quickly collapse. This is going to be the end of you.'"

"How are we now going to supply Israel in another war?" asked host Jamarl Thomas, suggesting the United States is being stretched thin by providing arms in conflicts around the globe. "Against what, three states? Four states? Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, and Iran? And the Houthis. Five states. How are we going to supply weapons for this larger war while the war in Ukraine also continues at a steady pace?"

"Don't forget about Taiwan too," Carrillo noted, "this planned escalation against China which is also in the wings, which is also something that the US hasn't given up on... Diplomacy is a foreign word for [the US government]... a dirty word even... US officials seem really just hellbent on lining their pockets with money from the weapons companies because at the end of the day, war is just a money-laundering machine."

'New day' for world as myth of Israeli invincibility shattered – analyst (

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Officials have claimed no fatalities after Iran's retaliatory strike against Israel Tuesday, but the US ally's former projection of power and deterrence in the region may prove to be the most significant casualty of the day's events, according to Beirut-based journalist Esteban Carrillo on Sputnik's Fault Lines program.

"The Iranians targeted exactly what they wanted to target... multiple air bases, including the one that, apparently, the attack that killed Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah [was launched from]," he noted. "It's a new day for Israel. It's a new day for Iran, for the US, for the resistance axis, for the entire world."

“They gave the US time, they gave a chance for a ceasefire in Gaza... But we have seen now for months on end that Israel sabotages these negotiations day in and day out.”

Israel's regional deterrence has historically rested its Iron Dome and the support it enjoys from the US. But Iran's use of hypersonic missiles has proven that Tehran has the ability to bypass the defense system and strike any target within Israeli territory. Meanwhile, the US has found itself boxed in by the upcoming presidential election as President Biden works to prevent the outbreak of a regional war that could sink Democrats' chances in November.

“They are getting cut down [in Lebanon],” Carrillo claimed. “They are getting ambushed. They are getting sent back with their tails between their legs because they do not have the winning hand. So Iran last night warned Israel, ‘Do not miscalculate.’”

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After Tuesday's attack, has Iran eclipsed Israel's deterrence capacity? (Part 2  Part 1)

Beirut-based journalist Esteban Carrillo claimed the balance of power in the Middle East has changed after Iran's attack against Israel Tuesday, with Iranian hypersonic capabilities and other events on the ground limiting Israel's options.

“Do not think that you can, at this point, hit us again,” Carrillo said on Sputnik's Fault Lines program, summarizing the message sent by Tehran's attack. “Because if you do, if you come and you hit Iran,’ they are saying, ‘you are going to face our wrath. You are going to quickly collapse. This is going to be the end of you.”

Meanwhile, questions have been raised about the United States' capacity to continue arming its Israeli ally as it faces commitments across the globe.

“How are we now going to supply Israel in another war?” asked host Jamarl Thomas, suggesting the US is being stretched thin by providing arms in various conflicts. “Against what, three states? Four states? Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, and Iran? And the Houthis. Five states. How are we going to supply weapons for this larger war while the war in Ukraine also continues at a steady pace?”

“Don't forget about Taiwan too,” Carrillo noted, “this planned escalation against China which is also in the wings, which is also something that the US hasn't given up on... Diplomacy is a foreign word for [the US government]... a dirty word even... US officials seem really just hellbent on lining their pockets with money from the weapons companies because at the end of the day, war is just a money-laundering machine.”

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US, Israel Believe Only US Air Force Can Destroy Iran Nuclear Facilities - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 3 (Sputnik) - Only the US Air Force is capable of destroying Iran's nuclear infrastructure, The New Yorker reported, citing US and Israeli officials.

The officials do not believe that Israeli's air force can singlehandedly destroy Iran's infrastructure, particularly its underground nuclear enrichment site in Fordow, the report said on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, US President Joe Biden said he did not support Israel attacking Iran's nuclear facilities.

The New Yorker suggested that Israel may nonetheless attempt an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities and pressure the US to complete the mission.

Iran fired a massive barrage of missiles at Israel on Tuesday in response to the killings of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan. The Israeli military said about 180 ballistic missiles were fired, most of which were intercepted.

Russia has serious concerns about Israel's signals regarding a possible retaliatory strike on Iran, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told Sputnik earlier on Thursday. Nuclear facilities must never be targeted in any armed conflict, the deputy minister warned.

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Over 75% of Palestinians Say US Has Not Done Enough to Safeguard Civilians in Gaza - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 3 (Sputnik) – Over three-quarters of Palestinians living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem believe the United States has failed in its mission to safeguard civilians in Gaza, a new Gallup poll revealed on Thursday.

"In surveys conducted in July and August, Palestinians living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem were asked to what extent they agree that 'the U.S. has made acceptable efforts to push for the safeguarding of civilians in Gaza.' Seven in 10 Palestinians surveyed (69%) strongly disagree, while 76% disagree overall. About one in 10 (11%) agree that the U.S. has done enough to protect civilians," the poll said.

In addition, 71% disagree that the US has done enough to ensure Palestinians in Gaza receive humanitarian aid, including 58% who "strongly disagree," the poll added.

Sixty-eight percent of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem expressed confidence that the US can significantly influence Israeli government policies, according to the poll.

"Further, 70% believe the U.S. holds significant influence over Israeli military operations, including 57% who strongly agree. Fewer than one in five Palestinians in the two territories surveyed disagree to some extent that the U.S. has major influence over Israeli policies (18%) or military operations (18%)," the survey said.

Overall, only 5% approved of the job performance of the US leadership. This is the lowest

result since 2006, according to the survey. "The 88% of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem who disapprove of U.S. leadership marks a new high," it added.

The poll is based on face-to-face interviews conducted from July 7-August 10, with a random sample of 1,000 adults aged 15 and older living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

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Biden Praises Mauritius, UK Agreement on Chagos Archipelago – White House

WASHINGTON, October 3 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden praised on Thursday the agreement between Mauritius and the United Kingdom that grants the former sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, according to a release.

"I applaud the historic agreement and conclusion of the negotiations between the Republic of Mauritius and the United Kingdom on the status of the Chagos Archipelago," Biden said in the release.

He noted that it "affirms Mauritian sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, while granting the United Kingdom the authority to exercise the sovereign rights of Mauritius with respect to Diego Garcia."

The atoll of Diego Garcia is the site of a joint US-UK military facility. The agreement secures the operation of the base for the next 99 years.

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UK Hands Sovereignty of Chagos to Mauritius to Ensure Future of US-UK Military Base

MOSCOW, October 3 (Sputnik) - The United Kingdom has agreed to hand sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius in a deal to secure the operational future of the joint US-UK military facility on Diego Garcia, according to a joint statement by the UK and Mauritius published on Thursday.

"Under the terms of this treaty the United Kingdom will agree that Mauritius is sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. At the same time, both our countries are committed to the need, and will agree in the treaty, to ensure the long-term, secure and effective operation of the existing base on Diego Garcia which plays a vital role in regional and global security," the joint statement said.

Under the deal, the UK will be authorized to exercise the sovereign rights and authorities of Mauritius with respect to Diego Garcia for an initial period of 99 years.

Mauritius will now be free to implement a program of resettlement on the Chagos Archipelago, except for Diego Garcia.

The UK will create a new trust fund and provide other support for the benefit of Chagossians, the statement said.

The two countries said the treaty will open "a new era of economic, security and environmental partnership" between the two nations.

To enable the partnership, the UK will provide a package of financial support to Mauritius, including an "indexed annual payment for the duration of the agreement" and the "establishment of a transformational infrastructure partnership."

The deal was reached with the full support and assistance of the United States and India, the statement added.

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UK Hands Over Sovereignty of Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius in a Deal to Secure Future of US-UK Military Facility - Statement

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Mali's Probe Into Ukraine's Ties to Terrorists Should Not Take Long - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, October 3 (Sputnik) - Mali's investigation into Ukraine's involvement with terrorists in Africa should not take long since Kiev has already publicly acknowledged such cooperation, Malian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Abdoulaye Diop told Sputnik.

"This investigation was just opened a few days ago, but I don't think there is much to do, because Ukrainian officials themselves proclaim openly on record their implication and their involvement with terrorist networks in providing them with intelligence, equipment, and even claiming that additional things will happen," Diop said.

The results of the investigation will be published by the Malian authorities in due course, the minister added.

The UN Security Council "remains silent" on the complaint Mali sent in August in connection with Ukraine's support for terrorists, Diop said.

"For some unknown reason it remains unanswered," Diop noted.

On July 30, the Senenews news outlet reported that Mali and Mauritania were investigating the involvement of Ukrainian military instructors in the years-long conflict in Mali on the side of the rebels.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said earlier that the fact Ukraine was cooperating with terrorists from the Sahel region was not surprising and Moscow had been actively drawing the attention of the international community to those actions.

In early August, nine Senegalese public organizations said that a video published by Ukrainian defense intelligence spokesperson Andriy Yusov confirming Kiev's involvement in the attack on the Wagner Group in Mali, was additional evidence of Ukraine's support for armed groups in that country.

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Un security council remains silent on mali's complaint over ukraine's rebel support, Bamako doesn't know why – foreign minister to sputnik

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results of mali's investigation into kiev's ties to terrorists in sahel will be published in due course – Malian foreign minister to sputnik

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Mali's Probe of Kiev's involvement With Terrorists will Not Take Long, Ukraine acknowledges support for armed groups - Foreign Minister to sputnik

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Mali Hopes to Apply for BRICS Membership in 'Near Future' - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, October 3 (Sputnik) - Mali is interested in joining the BRICS group of nations and hopes to apply for membership soon along with other Sahel countries, including Burkina Faso and Niger, Malian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Abdoulaye Diop told Sputnik.

"Mali is interested. Of course, we have not reached the point to put up an application, but that conversation is going on with our Russian friends and also with some other BRICS members," Diop said in an interview on the margins of the UN General Assembly. "I do hope that in the near future, our country, collectively with the Confederation of the Sahel, would approach BRICS for membership."

BRICS represents a model of multilateralism and could make Mali's voice better heard in the international arena, the minister said.

The alliance could also provide additional economic opportunities to the country, like using national currencies in trade and receiving funding from the New Development Bank, Diop added.

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Race to Provide Aid Amid Mass Destruction From Hurricane Helene - Advocacy Group

WASHINGTON, October 3 (Sputnik) - Hurricane Helene has severely impacted the US state of North Carolina - among several other states - where thousands of displaced residents are struggling in shelters amid mass debris, power outages and fuel shortages, advocacy group Democracy Green Executive Director Sanja Whittington told Sputnik.

"The current state: mass debris and fallen trees that are blocking roads, trapping folks in their homes. The trees have damaged certain homes and folks have been displaced to shelters that lost housing," Whittington said.

Power has not been available in some 37 counties while fuel shortages have severely impacted residents in the McDowell, Rutherford, Burke, Hendersonville, Canton and other counties, Whittington said.

In addition, there are mass water shortages and grocery stores outside the radius of the western part of North Carolina are limiting the purchase of water to one pack per household or they are completely sold out, she said.

"In the areas within the impact zones there is a water shortage," Whittington said.

According to Whittington, Democracy Green is the only group serving every impacted county in the western part of North Carolina, including the areas outside of the town of Asheville, which has been in the focus of the media and the major aid organizations.

However, this separation is affecting donations, forcing the aid providers to fundraise while concurrently providing relief, Whittington said.

Whittington also said that residents need to be aware that the relief efforts will be ongoing for the next several months or longer.

"We will have a big need for volunteers/aid in one-to-three months when the media coverage dies down. That is when folks are forgotten even though they are still in critical need," Whittington added.

Hurricane Helene caused widespread destruction in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina. The hurricane is reportedly the second deadliest in the United States in more than half a century, with a death toll of more than 160 people.

Formed in 2018 during Hurricane Florence to provide rescue aid to affected residents, Democracy Green has transformed into a primarily advocacy organization focused on environmental and climate justice.

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Trump Says Will 'Save' Imprisoned Silk Road Founder Ross Ulbricht

WASHINGTON, October 3 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said that he will save Ross Ulbricht, who is currently serving life in prison without the possibility of parole for his role in founding and operating the darknet marketplace Silk Road.

"I will save Ross Ulbricht," Trump said on Wednesday via Truth Social.

Ulbricht was convicted in 2015 on charges including engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise, distributing narcotics, conspiracy to commit money laundering, conspiracy to commit money laundering, conspiracy to traffic fraudulent identity documents and conspiracy to commit computer hacking.

Ulbricht unsuccessfully appealed his conviction to the US Supreme Court in 2018.

In May, Trump said during a speech at the Libertarian National Convention that he would commute Ulbricht's sentence on day one of his presidency if reelected in 2024.

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US Justice Dept. Says Charged 68 Defendants in Crackdown on White Supremacist Gang

WASHINGTON, October 3 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department said it charged 68 people in connection with a criminal case against a California-based white supremacist gang.

"Federal and local law enforcement today arrested 42 members and associates of the SFV Peckerwoods, a San Fernando Valley, California-based white supremacist street gang, on a 76-count federal grand jury indictment alleging they engaged in a years-long pattern of racketeering activity that included trafficking of drugs - including fentanyl - illegal firearms possession, and COVID-19 benefits and loan fraud," the Justice Department said in a statement on Wednesday.

The indictment charges 68 defendants with crimes including conspiracy to violate the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, distribution of controlled substances, bank fraud and firearm violations, the statement said.

Law enforcement officers seized dozens of pounds of fentanyl, methamphetamine and heroin, as well as illegal firearms, during the investigation, the statement said.

The Peckerwoods are a white supremacist street gang with ties to the Aryan Brotherhood and other organized crime groups, the statement said.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 3 (Sputnik) -

US ACTIONS CONCERNING IRAN

* The United States will discuss with Israel a potential response to the latest Iranian missile attack given that Washington believes Israel has a right to respond, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

* The United States is exploring ways to impose new sanctions and strengthen enforcement of existing sanctions on Iran, Miller said.

* US President Joe Biden said that he did not support possible Israeli attacks on Iranian nuclear sites in response to its latest missile strikes against Israel.

ISRAEL DECLARES UN SECRETARY-GENERAL PERSONA NON GRATA

* Israel declared UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres persona non grata and banned him to enter to the country, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said on Wednesday.

* Israel is disappointed with Guterres' approach to the Middle East conflict and his reaction to Iran's latest missile attack on the Jewish state, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon said.

- * Israel's decision is "unheard of" and Russia calls on the United Nations to react to this outrageous act, Russian Ambassador to the world body Vassily Nebenzia said.
- * Declaring Guterres persona non grata shows that Israel does not allow any role for the United Nations to resolve the Middle East conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.
- * Israel's decision to declare Guterres persona non grata is counterproductive, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

- * The Biden administration is still actively discussing whether to provide longer-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) to Ukraine, Deputy US Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Wednesday.
- * Hungary blocks the European Union's plan to send instructors and advisers to train the Ukrainian military and demands that the plan be revised, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said.
- * The Russian military have eliminated more than 19,550 Ukrainian soldiers and 135 tanks during military operations in the border areas of the Kursk region, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

- * OPEC refuted on Wednesday the Wall Street Journal reports claiming that Saudi Arabia's energy minister allegedly warned oil prices would fall to \$50 if the OPEC+ production targets are not met.
- * The world is emerging from seasonal increased demand for oil, but overall this year consumption growth will be high at 1.8 million barrels per day, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.
- * The global oil market reacts sharply to the escalation in Middle East, but this was already partially embedded in price, Novak said.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

- * Three people have been killed in an Israeli strike on a building in one of the central districts of Damascus, the Syrian Defense Ministry said on Wednesday.
- * About 1.2 million people have been displaced as a result of ongoing Israeli attacks in southern Lebanon, caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said.
- * The Palestinian movement Hamas' military wing, Al Qassam Brigades, said that it is responsible for a shooting attack in Tel Aviv on Tuesday night that left seven people dead.

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US Sentences Russian National to Nearly 4 Years in Prison For Illegal Transactions - DOJ

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - A US federal judge sentenced Russian citizen Feliks Medvedev to nearly four years in prison for illegally transferring funds, the US Department of Justice said on Wednesday.

"Feliks Medvedev has been sentenced to three years, 10 months in prison for conducting an unlicensed money transmitting business which transferred over \$150 million in Russian money," the Justice Department said in a press release.

The release added that Medvedev will also serve three years of supervised release and was also ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine. Medvedev was convicted of the charges on February 7, 2024, after he pleaded guilty.

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US Prosecutors Say Trump's Conduct in Jan. 6 Case Not Subject to Presidential Immunity

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - US Special Counsel Jack Smith has provided new details about former President Donald Trump's alleged effort to overturn the 2020 election, claiming that none of his conduct is protected by presidential immunity and saying he must stand trial for his alleged crimes, a court filing revealed on Wednesday.

In July, the US Supreme Court had ruled that Trump was immune to prosecution on the basis of official acts conducted as part of his role as US president.

"None of the conduct is subject to immunity," Smith stated in the 165-page court filing, which US District Judge Tanya Chutkan unsealed on Wednesday.

Smith noted that Trump had told advisers he planned to declare victory before all ballots were counted if preliminary results showed him leading in the 2020 election.

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UPDATE - Oil Prices Up Again On Israel-Iran Watch, But Sharply Off Peaks After US Stock Build

(Updates with settlement prices for crude and additional comments in paragraphs 3-4, 6-7)

NEW YORK, October 2 (Sputnik) - Oil markets rose again on Wednesday, bracing for Israel's response to Iran's air attacks, though crude prices settled sharply off their peaks after government data showed a weekly build in US crude stockpiles.

The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported substantial increases in crude and gasoline balances for the week ended September 27, cooling some of the ardor in crude benchmarks that had rallied as much as 4% for a second day running on tensions related to the Iran-Israel face-off.

UK North Sea Brent crude hit a one-month high of \$76.14 per barrel before settling at \$73.90 in New York — up 34 cents, or 0.5%.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rose to a two-week peak of \$72.48 before retreating to \$70.10 — up 27 cents, or 0.4%.

Iran fired almost 200 ballistic rockets at Israel on Tuesday, with many of the missiles intercepted though a few found their targets, a spokesman for Israel Defense Forces said. The spokesman added Israel did not anticipate further threats from Iran but maintained that the attack "was

serious and will have consequences.”

Israeli Military Chief Herzi Halevi followed that up by saying Wednesday that Israel will respond to Iran’s attack and can strike “any target in the Middle East.” Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, added that Israel’s response would be “painful.”

Analysts at Piper Sandler told clients in a Wednesday note that Israel might take aim at Iran’s oil industry to hit Tehran’s income and degrade its ability to wage war. “The next turn in this retaliation spiral may very well involve oil – via the degrading of Iran’s oil capacity or Iran’s proxies attacking oil and gas shipping from the Persian Gulf,” the note said.

Crude prices bolted higher, extending Tuesday’s final gain of 2%, on that observation and the remarks by Halevi and Danon.

But the EIA’s bearish weekly report crude and fuel balances sapped much of those gains.

Crude inventories rose by 3.889 million barrels during the week ended September 27, after rising 4.471 million the week prior. Industry analysts had expected a deficit of 1.43 million for the latest week.

Gasoline stockpiles built by 1.119 million barrels versus expectations for a rise of just 200,000 barrels. In the prior week, gasoline balances fell by 1.538 million barrels.

Distillates were the only component on the oil complex with a bullish inventory situation for last week. Distillate balances fell by 1.284 million barrels, beating forecasts for a 2.0 million barrel draw. In the prior week, distillate inventories fell by 2.227 million barrels.

The inventory data leaned bearish “in stark contrast to the current geopolitical backdrop driving prices higher today,” Matt Smith, lead oil analyst for the Americas at Kpler, said in comments carried by CNBC.

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All Sides in Mideast Row Must Prioritize Diplomacy to Maintain Global Stability - Ex-Envoy

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - All the parties involved in the Middle East crisis must immediately end military confrontation and prioritize diplomacy in order to maintain global stability, former Iranian Ambassador to Germany Seyed Hossein Mousavian told Sputnik.

On Tuesday, Iran launched several hundred ballistic missiles toward Israel in response to the killings of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that his government was not seeking a war with Israel but would confront any threat in a resolute manner.

"For the sake of peace and stability in the region and the world, all sides should halt the ongoing confrontation and prioritize diplomacy," Mousavian said, adding that the Middle East is close to a regional conflict.

Israel interpreted Iran's restraint after the assassination of Haniyeh as a weakness, Mousavian said.

Mousavian pointed out that an Israeli commander suggested attacking Iran’s nuclear facilities, which would be a strategic mistake that will lead to Iran transitioning from a "Threshold Nuclear State" to becoming a "Nuclear State."

President Joe Biden told reporters on Wednesday that he does not support any retaliatory strikes on nuclear sites in Iran. The president previewed that the US will impose new sanctions on Iran in response to Tuesday's attack against Israel.

Biden added that the US and its G7 partners agree that Israel has the right to respond, but they should respond "proportionally."

Over the last few months, Mousavian has suggested three recommendations to resolving the crisis in the Middle East, including an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and the immediate withdrawal of Gaza by Israel; a ceasefire between Iran and Israel; and the start of comprehensive talks between Iran and the United States.

Hossein Askari, former IMF Executive Board member and special adviser to the Saudi finance minister, told Sputnik the United States is responsible for the unrest destabilizing the Middle East and may receive much blowback over it.

Iran has been put in a corner by Israel's provocations and the United States' unquestioned support for the Jewish state, Askari added.

"It is simply stupid and dangerous for a country [the United States] to give another [Israel] a carte blanche to raise havoc with the promise that it will always come to its rescue - with arms, money, intelligence, political support - and if needed with its own military," Askari said. "This is America's war as much as it is Israel's."

Israel and the United States have warned that there would be serious consequences for Iran if it carried out a retaliatory attack against Israel. Iran also gave a similar warning to Israel should it decide to counter its retaliatory attack.

Iran refrained for several months from conducting a retaliatory attack against Israel over the assassination of Haniyeh in July. Tehran held out in order to give Gaza ceasefire talks a chance which seems to have reached another stalemate as Israel expands its military operation into Lebanon.

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us special counsel jack smith details trump's alleged effort to overturn 2020 election, asks court to determine he must stand trial - filing

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Blinken Calls NATO's Rutte to Discuss Support for Ukraine, Indo-Pacific – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and newly appointed NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte had a phone call on Wednesday to discuss continued support for Ukraine and deepening relationships with allies in the Indo-Pacific among other topics, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

"Secretary Blinken and Secretary General Rutte discussed the United States' and NATO's immediate and enduring support to Ukraine," the statement said. "Advancing a plan for action reached at the Washington Summit, they discussed NATO's deepening relationships with its

partners, including in the Indo-Pacific and NATO's Southern Neighborhood."

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At Least 20,000 Bank of America Customers Shut Out of Account After Outage

NEW YORK, October 2 (Sputnik) - At least 20,000 customers of Bank of America (BoFA) were shut out of their accounts or were seeing wrong balances there after a technical outage on Wednesday, according to the Downtdetector website and media reports.

Downtdetector, an online service that tracks outages, reported that 20,059 (BoFA) customers were unable to access their accounts as 15:25 ET in New York (19.25 GMT).

"When I did log on, it was showing [that] I had a zero balance," one user wrote on the site. A BoFA spokeswoman did not immediately respond to a Sputnik request for comment.

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blincken calls nato's rutte to discuss support for ukraine, including by operationalizing security assistance and training - state dept.

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Walz Clarifies School Shooter Comment, Says Met With People Impacted by Shootings

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - Democratic vice presidential nominee Tim Walz said on Wednesday that he met with representatives of communities impacted by school shootings, after claiming during a debate with Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance that he has "become friends" with school shooters.

On Tuesday, Walz said during the debate that he has befriended school shooters, prompting criticism from former US President and 2024 Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump.

"I was talking about meeting people where there are school shooters, and I need to be more specific on that," Walz said, when asked to clarify his comment.

Walz added that he is personally passionate about the issue as a parent and former teacher.

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Canada, Nordic States Mulling New Arctic Security Coalition Excluding Russia - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - Canada is working with the Nordic countries to create a security alternative to the Arctic Council that would exclude Russia, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly told Bloomberg News.

Canada believes security talks among northern states are needed because they no longer meet privately at the political level in part due to Russia's presence in the Arctic Council, Joly said.

Canada has long believed that its Arctic regions were protected by geography. However, that reality has begun to shift due to the ongoing geopolitical confrontation with Russia and because the effects of climate change have caught the attention of other states, including China, Joly added.

The foreign minister highlighted that during a meeting over the weekend with her counterparts from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden in Canada Nunavut Territory countries agreed to explore ways of creating an Arctic Security Dialogue and new venues to discuss defense-related matters.

In early-July, Canada's Ministry of National Defense said that Canada would acquire additional conventionally powered submarines to better counter Russian and Chinese activity in the Arctic region in the future.

Russian Ambassador to Ottawa Oleg Stepanov previously told Sputnik that although Russia does not see Canada as an Arctic threat, it will have to take into account a possible change in Canadian policy. The envoy further noted that any confrontational stance versus Moscow in the Arctic would be detrimental to Canada's security.

Russia has consistently expressed concerns about NATO's military buildup in the Arctic, warning that it is increasing the risk of unintended conflict in the region.

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Declaring UN Chief Persona Non Grata Is Yet Another Attack Against UN Staff - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 2 (Sputnik) - Israel's move to declare United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "persona non grata" represents yet another attack against UN personnel, Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Wednesday.

"We saw this announcement this morning, which we see as a political statement by the foreign minister and just one more attack, so to speak, on UN staff that we've seen from the government of Israel," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

Regardless of Israel's announcement, the UN will continue its contacts with Israel at the operational level and other levels, Dujarric said.

Earlier in the day, Israel declared Guterres persona non grata and barred him from entering the country over what it called his failure to "unequivocally condemn" Iran's "serious aggression."

Iran fired a barrage of missiles toward Israel on Tuesday in retaliation for the killings of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan.

Responding to the attack, Guterres condemned "the broadening of the Middle East conflict, with escalation after escalation" and reiterated his call for a ceasefire. The statement did not directly mention Iran.

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Threat Level in US to Remain High in 2025 - Homeland Security Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The threat environment in the United States is expected to remain high in 2025, the US Department of Homeland Security said on Wednesday.

"The Homeland Threat Assessment describes a threat environment that is expected to 'remain high' over the coming year," the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement.

The terrorism threat environment remains high due to a confluence of factors, including international events and responses to domestic sociopolitical developments, the statement said.

Illegal drugs smuggled into the US also continue to pose a lethal threat to communities, the statement said.

The public should report any suspicious activity or threats of violence to local law enforcement, the FBI, or a local Fusion Center, the statement added.

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US Emergency Agency Lacks Funds to Endure Hurricane Season - Homeland Security Chief

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) does not have enough funds to go through the hurricane season, while another massive storm is expected to hit, Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Wednesday.

"We are expecting another hurricane hitting. We do not have the funds," Mayorkas said. "FEMA does not have the funds to make it through the season."

Mayorkas comments come following the deadly Hurricane Helene. Hurricane Helene caused widespread destruction in several US states, including Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina. The hurricane is reportedly the second deadliest in the United States in more than half a century, with a death toll of more than 160 people.

President Joe Biden is set to travel to North Carolina and South Carolina on Wednesday to assess damage, receive briefings and meet with officials and first responders.

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G7 Seeks De-Escalation Between Iran and Israel, Prevent Conflict Expansion – Trudeau

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday that the Group of Seven (G7) collectively seeks to de-escalate and prevent an expansion of the Iran-Israel conflict.

"I spoke with fellow G7 leaders this morning. We condemned Iran's missile attack on Israel –

another reckless, destabilizing attack by the Iranian regime,” Trudeau said via X. “Our collective goal is very clear: we must prevent conflict from expanding, for the safety of civilians across the region. We need de-escalation – immediately.”

Earlier US President Joe Biden said Washington would impose some sanctions on Iran over their missile strikes on Israel. However, the president said he did not support possible Israeli attacks on Iranian nuclear sites.

Biden further noted that G7 member states agreed that Tel-Aviv has a right to respond but in a proportional way.

On Tuesday, Iran launched some 200 hundred ballistic missiles against targets in Israel in response to the killings of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that his government was not seeking a war with Israel but would confront any threat in a resolute manner.

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ANALYSIS - Probe of Zelenskyy's Pennsylvania Visit Unlikely to Deliver, Might Sway Some to Vote Trump

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The Congressional investigation into whether Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Pennsylvania amounts to partisan interference in the US presidential election is unlikely to yield meaningful results, but might sway some voters to vote for Republican nominee Donald Trump instead, analysts told Sputnik.

On September 22, Zelenskyy visited a munitions factory in Scranton with Pennsylvania's Democratic Governor Josh Shapiro and Democratic Sen. Bob Casey, key Harris allies in the election campaign.

On September 25, House Committee on Oversight and Accountability (HCOA) Chairman James Comer opened an investigation into the Biden administration "using taxpayer funded resources" to fly Zelenskyy to Pennsylvania to "campaign" for Vice President Kamala Harris.

The Biden administration transported Zelenskyy on a US Air Force aircraft to Pennsylvania, the HCOA said in a press release. On September 22, The New Yorker published an interview with Zelenskyy, in which he made multiple critical comments about the Trump-Vance ticket, the HCOA noted.

POLITICIANS LACK COURAGE

"Will the Republican Congress investigation of using Ukrainian President to influence the election lead anywhere? The answer is Zero!" political commentator and historian ret. US Marine Corps Maj. Donald Vandergriff said.

Congressional Republicans have so far been "worthless" in efforts to defend US national interests and stop the administration's alleged abuses of power, according to Vandergriff.

"Most of them have no moral courage to do anything about the corruption and destruction the Democrats have been casting on our nation for the last four years," he said. "I wish they had shut down the government, but they are scared of their own shadow. [House Speaker] Mike Johnson is a big disappointment."

PROBES TOO SLOW

American University in Moscow President Edward Lozansky also doubts that the probe will have any discernible impact on the November 5 presidential election.

"Knowing how slow these investigations go and the expected sabotage in covering this affair in the media, it wouldn't play a significant role on the ballot battlefields," he said.

Nevertheless, the investigation might add some votes to Trump in what looks like a hard-fought national contest, Lozansky remarked.

"Still considering the minimal difference in ratings, every vote counts, and this outrageous spectacle in the Pennsylvania munition factory might persuade a few voters to switch sides in favor of Trump," he said.

Military affairs and law enforcement consultant ret. US Marine Corps Col. GI Wilson believes that Congress is no longer capable of having any significant impact, so nothing is likely to come of the promised investigation of Zelenskyy's potential intervention in the domestic US political process.

"Nothing will come of this, for the Left has subverted all government," he stated.

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State Dept Says Important for Israel to Continue Engagement With UN

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – The United States believes it is important that Israel continues to engage with the United Nations in the wake of Israel's decision to declare UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres persona non grata, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"We think it's important that Israel be able to engage with the UN," Miller said during a press briefing.

Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia called the decision of Israel with respect to Guterres "unheard of."

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Israel Declaring UN Chief 'Persona Non Grata' Not Productive Step - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - Israel's decision to declare UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres persona non grata is counterproductive, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"We don't find that step to be productive in any way," Miller said during a press briefing.

Earlier in the day, Israel declared Guterres "persona non grata," barring him from entering the country, for his alleged failure to "unequivocally condemn" Iran's "serious aggression."

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US Looking at Ways to Impose New Sanctions, Increase Enforcement on Iran - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The United States is exploring ways to impose new sanctions and strengthen enforcement of existing sanctions on Iran, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"We can always look to identify new ways to impose sanctions on Iran or to increase enforcement of our existing sanctions. Those are the measures that we're looking at right now," Miller said during a press briefing.

On Tuesday, Iran launched nearly 200 missiles at Israel, amid escalating hostilities between Israel and Lebanese movement Hezbollah.

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israel declaring un chief persona non grata not productive in any way - state dept

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us looking to impose new sanctions on Iran, increase enforcement of existing restrictions - state dept

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US to Discuss With Israel Potential Response to Iran's Attack – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – The United States will discuss with Israel what a potential response to the latest Iranian attack might look like as Washington believes Israel has a right to respond to it, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"We have made very clear that this [Iranian attack] was an unprecedented escalation by Iran. Israel has a right to respond to it, and we'll discuss that response with them," Miller said during a press briefing.

On Tuesday, Iran fired a massive barrage of missiles at Israel, calling it an act of self-defense. The Israeli military said about 180 ballistic missiles were fired, most of which were intercepted.

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Israel has right to respond to iran attack, us will discuss that response with them - state dept

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US Does Not Support Israeli Response Targeting Iranian Nuclear Sites – Biden

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that he did not support possible Israeli attacks on Iranian nuclear sites in response to its latest missile strikes against Israel.

Earlier, Biden joined a call with the Group of Seven (G7) nations' leaders to coordinate their response to Iran's retaliatory missile strikes on Israel.

"The answer is no," Biden told reporters from Joint Base Andrews when asked if they supported attacks on Iran's nuclear strikes.

The US will be discussing with Israel what their response will be. All G7 leaders agree Tel-Aviv has a right to respond but in a proportional way, Biden added.

On Tuesday, Iran launched some 200 hundred ballistic missiles against targets in Israel in response to the killings of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that his government was not seeking a war with Israel but would confront any threat in a resolute manner.

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US Deputy Secretary of State Says Hopes Talks to End Ukraine War Begin in Near Future

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Wednesday that he hopes negotiations to end the Ukraine conflict will begin at some point in the near future.

"Ultimately, I think there is a recognition that some of this is going to have to be dealt with at the negotiating table," Campbell said during a discussion hosted by the Carnegie Endowment. "The hope will be that at some point in the not too distant future, we will find ourselves in a way some kind of diplomatic engagement."

Campbell added that the United States has been surprised by the resilience of Russia's military. Moreover, the United States and its European allies share concerns about growing military ties between Russia, Iran, China, and North Korea, according to Campbell.

Concerns about Russia's enhanced ties with key allies is a "topic of real anxiety," Campbell noted.

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US to Impose 'Some Sanctions' on Iran Over Retaliatory Missile Strike on Israel - Biden

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The United States will impose "some sanctions" on Iran in response to that country's retaliatory missile strike on Israel, US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday.

"There's gonna be some sanctions imposed on Iran," Biden told reporters at Joint Base Andrews.

On Tuesday, Iran launched some 200 ballistic missiles against targets in Israel in response to the killings of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that his government was not seeking a war with Israel but would confront any threat in a resolute manner.

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Biden Joins G7 Leaders Call to Coordinate Response to Iran Strikes on Israel - White House

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden joined a call with the Group of Seven (G7) nations' leaders to coordinate their response to Iran's retaliatory missile strikes on Israel, the White House said on Wednesday.

"Today, President Biden joined a call with the G7 to discuss Iran's unacceptable attack against Israel and to coordinate on a response to this attack, including new sanctions. President Biden and the G7 unequivocally condemned Iran's attack against Israel," White House said in a readout of the conversation.

The United States stands in "full solidarity" and support for Israel and its people, the readout said.

The Biden administration reaffirmed its ironclad commitment to Israel's security, the readout added.

On Tuesday, Iran launched some 200 hundred ballistic missiles against targets in Israel in response to the killings of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that his government was not seeking a war with Israel but would confront any threat in a resolute manner.

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Israel Only Understands Language of Force, Diplomacy Repeatedly Failed - Iran Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 2 (Sputnik) - Israel only understands the language of force and diplomacy has repeatedly failed in the Middle East conflict, Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations Amir Saeid Iravani said on Tuesday.

"Yet, experience has proven that Israel only understands the language of force. Diplomacy has repeatedly failed as Israel views restraint not as a gesture of goodwill but as a weakness to

exploit," Iravani said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

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biden says there's going to be some sanctions imposed on iran in response to attack on israel

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rpt - biden joins call with g7 leaders to coordinate response to iranian attack on israel, including new sanctions - white house

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Oil Prices Up Again on Israel-Iran Watch But Sharply Off Peaks After US Stock Build

NEW YORK, October 2 (Sputnik) - Oil markets were up again on Wednesday, bracing for Israel's response to Iran's air attacks, though crude prices were sharply off their peaks after government data on Wednesday showed a weekly build in US crude stockpiles.

The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported substantial increases in crude and gasoline balances for the week ended September 27, cooling some of the ardor in crude benchmarks that had rallied as much as 4% for a second day running on tensions related to the Iran-Israel face-off.

UK North Sea Brent crude hit a one-month high of \$76.14 per barrel before consolidating to trade at \$73.71 by noon in New York (17:000 GMT) - up 15 cents, or just 0.2%, on the day.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rose to a two-week peak of \$72.48 before retreating to \$69.99 - up 16 cents, or 0.2%.

Iran fired some 200 ballistic rockets at Israel on Tuesday, with many of the missiles hitting their targets. An Israel Defense Forces spokesman said that Israel did not anticipate further threats from Iran but maintained that the attack was serious and will have consequences.

Earlier on Wednesday, Israeli Military Chief Herzi Halevi said that Israel will respond to Iran's attack and can strike any target in the Middle East.

Crude prices bolted higher again, extending Tuesday's 2% rally, on Halevi's remarks. But the EIA's bearish weekly report crude and fuel balances sapped much of those gains.

Crude inventories rose by 3.889 million barrels during the week ended September 27, after rising 4.471 million the week prior. Industry analysts had expected a deficit of 1.43 million for the latest week.

Gasoline stockpiles built by 1.119 million barrels versus expectations for a rise of just 200,000 barrels. In the prior week, gasoline balances fell by 1.538 million barrels.

Distillates were the only component on the oil complex with a bullish inventory situation for last week. Distillate balances fell by 1.284 million barrels, beating forecasts for a 2.0 million barrel

draw. In the prior week, distillate inventories fell by 2.227 million barrels.

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US Provision of Longer-Range ATACMS for Ukraine Under 'Active Discussion' - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is still actively discussing whether to provide longer-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) to Ukraine, Deputy US Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Wednesday.

"I don't have anything for you on that now. I know you recognize that this is the subject of active discussion," Campbell said in an interview with the Carnegie Endowment, when asked whether the administration has made a decision on providing longer-range ATACMS.

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Zelenskyy's Trip to Pennsylvania Was 'Blatant Interference' in US Election - Analyst

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - Volodymyr Zelensky's recent visit to Pennsylvania alongside Democratic state governor Josh Shapiro showed blatant bias and direct intervention in an attempt to sway the outcome of the US presidential election on November 5, Covert Action Magazine Managing Editor Jeremy Kuzmarov told Sputnik.

"This looks to be blatant election interference by Ukraine and is unheard of in US politics, that a foreign leader is coming to the United States to blackmail the government for more weapons and campaign for one party," Kuzmarov said on Tuesday.

On September 25, House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer opened an investigation into the Biden Administration's use of taxpayer-funded resources to fly Zelenskyy to Pennsylvania to campaign for the Democratic presidential nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris.

The Biden administration transported Zelensky on a US Air Force aircraft to Pennsylvania, where he also met with state governor Shapiro, a key ally of Harris. On September 22, "The New Yorker" magazine published an interview with Zelenskyy, in which he made multiple critical comments about Republican nominee and former President Donald Trump, the committee noted in a press release.

Zelenskyy's activities also exposed the fraudulence of the contrasting repeated false claims that Russia had directly intervened to try and influence the outcome of the 2016 US presidential campaign between Republican candidate Trump and then-Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, Kuzmarov recalled.

"It shows the allegations of election meddling by Russia to be ridiculous, as it is just the opposite," he said.

In its policy positions and campaign rhetoric, the Democrats have shown their determination to support Zelenskyy at all costs and even appear intent on provoking a direct conflict with Russia, Kuzmarov warned.

"The Democratic Party clearly is the most hawkish on Ukraine and seems intent on provoking a larger scale war with Russia. Zelenskyy obviously wants them to win," he said.

Incumbent President Joe Biden received Zelenskyy at the White House last week and repeated his determination to ensure Ukraine defeated Russia in their ongoing conflict.

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US Deputy Secretary of State Says US Mulling Response to Iran's Attack Against Israel

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The United States is reviewing options to respond to Iran's latest attack against Israel, US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Wednesday.

"What you're talking about with respect to the Iranian attack on Israel, It is not just Israel that is thinking about its response options. It is also the United States," Campbell said during a discussion hosted by the Carnegie Endowment.

Campbell added that there must be a "return message," and deliberations are ongoing, but the Biden administration has real concerns about an even broader escalation that could imperil not just Israel, but US strategic interests in the Middle East.

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Israel Declaring UN Chief Persona Non-Grata 'Unheard Of,' UN Must React - Russian Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, October 2 (Sputnik) - Israel's decision to declare UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres persona non grata is "unheard of" and Russia calls on the United Nations to react to this outrageous act, Russian Ambassador to the world body Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"Today's news that the Secretary-General is a persona non grata in Israel is unheard of and is a slap not only on the United Nations but on all of us. We call on the members of the UN Security Council and the United Nations to react to this outrageous act," Nebenzia said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

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us deputy secretary of state kurt campbell says not only is israel thinking about response to iran attack, united states is too

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Russia Believes US Conducting Middle East Ceasefire Negotiations With Itself - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, October 2 (Sputnik) - Washington's negotiations in the Middle East seem more like self-negotiations, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"To be perfectly honest with you, we are left with the impression by all of this, that these mediated negotiations are something that Washington is conducting with itself," Nebenzia said in the UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East.

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Biden Directs 1,000 US Troops to Assist in Hurricane Helene Recovery Efforts - White House

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden directed 1,000 active-duty troops to help with Hurricane Helene recovery efforts, the White House said on Wednesday.

"Today, President Biden is announcing 1,000 active-duty troops will be immediately deployed to assist with response and recovery efforts," the White House said in a statement.

Hurricane Helene caused widespread destruction in several US states, including Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina. The hurricane is reportedly the second deadliest in the United States in more than half a century, with a death toll of more than 160 people.

Biden is set to travel to North Carolina and South Carolina on Wednesday to assess damage, receive briefings and meet with officials and first responders.

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Lebanese Prime Minister Mikati Says Israel Looking for War, Not Interested in Ceasefire

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Wednesday that instead of accepting the 21-day ceasefire deal that is on the table, Israel is looking for a war in Lebanon.

"Why is Israel not accepting a ceasefire today? They are looking for a war. We are looking to have a diplomatic solution that will be a win-win [for all parties]," Mikati said during a virtual discussion hosted by The American Task Force on Lebanon.

The prime minister also said the war option would be a "lose-lose" for both Israel and Lebanon. Mikati pointed out that a potential diplomatic solution should involve full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 from 2006, which ended the 2006 Lebanon War.

"We have to implement 1701 fully immediately," Mikati said. "[The resolution] should be implemented and respected by all parties immediately, and, as Lebanese, we agree to do so."

Israel and the Lebanon-based Shia movement Hezbollah have been exchanging rocket and air strikes. Israel sent troops across the border with Lebanon and clashes on the ground started

earlier on Wednesday.

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Biden directs pentagon to deploy up to 1,000 active-duty soldiers to assist communities impacted by hurricane helene - white house

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US Sanctions 1 Person, 3 Companies for Facilitating Houthi Weapons Procurement - Treasury

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The United States is sanctioning one person and three companies for allegedly facilitating weapons procurement for Yemen's Ansar Allah movement, also known as the Houthis, the US Treasury Department said on Wednesday.

"This action targets key procurement operatives and suppliers located in Iran and the People's Republic of China (PRC) that have enabled the Houthis to acquire dual-use materials and components needed to manufacture, maintain, and deploy an arsenal of advanced missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) against US and allied interests," the Treasury Department said in a statement.

The sanctions target alleged Iran-based smuggling operative Hasan Ahmad Hasan Muhammad al-Kuhlani, China-based international shipping firm Shenzhen Boyu Imports and Exports, and China-based technology companies Shenzhen Jinghon Electronics and Shenzhen Rion Technology, the statement said.

The United States is also sanctioning one entity and two vessels allegedly linked to illicit commercial shipments by the Houthis and Iran, the statement said.

The sanctions target the Gabon-flagged vessel Izumo, the Cook Islands-flagged vessel Frunze and the Marshall Islands-registered company that owns and operates the vessels - Gemini Marine Limited, the statement added.

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Lebanon's Mikati Says About 1.2Mln People Displaced Amid Israeli Attacks

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – About 1.2 million people have been displaced as a result of ongoing Israeli attacks in southern Lebanon, caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Wednesday.

"Today, overnight, we had over 1.2 million Lebanese displaced," Mikati said during a discussion hosted by The American Task Force on Lebanon. "We're expecting Lebanese to be displaced from the south and overnight, in few hours, from the south, from suburbs of Beirut and [the] Bekaa [Valley]."

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lebanon's caretaker prime minister mikati says about 1.2 million people displaced amid Israeli attacks

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US Bans Exports From 2 Chinese Companies Over Alleged Use of Forced Uyghur Labor - DHS

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on Wednesday banned exports from two Chinese companies for alleged links to forced Uyghur labor, according to a release.

"Today, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the addition of two entities based in the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) Entity List, bringing the total entities listed to 75," the release said.

As of Thursday, goods produced by Baowu Group Xinjiang Bayi Iron and Steel Co., Ltd. and Changzhou Guanghui Food Ingredients Co., Ltd. will be prohibited from entering the United States, marking the first time steel and aspartame companies have been added to the UFLPA Entity List.

Baowu Group Xinjiang Bayi Iron and Steel Co. is a company based in the Urumqi Prefecture of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region that is engaged in iron ore mining and steel manufacturing.

The US government said it has a reasonable cause to believe that the company works with the Xinjiang government to recruit, transport, transfer, harbor, or receive Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz or members of other persecuted groups from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Changzhou Guanghui Food Ingredients Co. is a company headquartered in Jiangsu, China that produces and sells aspartame. The US believes it sources L-Phenylalanine and aspartame from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

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UN Chief Says Situation in Middle East Got Much Worse, Condemns Iran for Attack

UNITED NATIONS, October 2 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday that the situation in the Middle East has worsened and also condemned Iran for its missile attack on Israel.

"Exactly one week ago, I briefed the Security Council about the alarming situation in Lebanon. Since then, things have gone from bad to much, much worse," Guterres told the UN Security

Council during a meeting on the Middle East. "UNIFIL peacekeepers remain in position, and the UN flag continues to fly despite Israel's request to relocate."

Earlier in the day, Israel declared Guterres persona non grata for his alleged failure to "unequivocally condemn" Iran's "serious aggression."

After Iran fired a barrage of missiles toward Israel on Tuesday in retaliation for the killings of the leaders of Hezbollah and Hamas, Guterres condemned "the broadening of the Middle East conflict, with escalation after escalation" and called for a ceasefire. The statement did not directly mention Iran.

"As I did in relation to the Iranian attack in April -- and as should have been obvious yesterday in the context of the condemnation I expressed -- I again strongly condemn yesterday's massive missile attack by Iran on Israel," Guterres said during the Security Council meeting.

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US Will Invest \$100Mln in AI Tech to Help Develop Semiconductor Materials - Commerce Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - The United States will invest up to \$100 million to accelerate research and development and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that will assist in the development of sustainable semiconductor materials, the US Department of Commerce said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Today, the US Department of Commerce issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to announce an open competition demonstrating how AI can assist in developing new sustainable semiconductor materials and processes that meet industry needs and can be designed and adopted within five years," the statement said.

The funds would be used to award recipients that develop university-led, industry-informed collaborations about artificial intelligence-powered autonomous experimentation (AI/AE) relevant to sustainable semiconductor manufacturing, the statement said.

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo emphasized the importance of quickly building up the US semiconductor manufacturing base.

"We need to leverage AI to help develop sustainable material processes quickly," Raimondo said in the statement.

The new initiative will support the sustainability of the US semiconductor industry while recognizing the ongoing demand for improving microelectronics power, performance, area, and cost metrics, the statement said.

The competition will also aim to expand the participation of universities and their graduates in the semiconductor research and development ecosystem, the statement added.

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Israel Declares Guterres Persona Non Grata Due to Disappointment With His Approach - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, October 2 (Sputnik) - Israel is disappointed with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' approach to the Middle East conflict and his reaction to Iran's latest missile attack on the Jewish state, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon said on Wednesday, after his country labeled the UN chief persona non grata.

Earlier in the day, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said that Israel has declared Guterres persona non grata.

"First of all, there is always a place for diplomacy, and we believe in diplomacy. But to your question, we are very disappointed [by] the Secretary General's approach," Danon said prior to a UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East, when asked why Guterres was designated persona non grata. "And yesterday, when we are being attacked by a member state of the UN with 180 ballistic missiles, 10 million people are running to shelters, the statement he put out is basically calling for the escalation, not mentioning Iran, not mentioning the aggressor."

After Iran fired a barrage of missiles toward Israel on Tuesday in retaliation for the killings of the leaders of Hezbollah and Hamas, UN Secretary-General Guterres condemned "the broadening of the Middle East conflict, with escalation after escalation" and called for a ceasefire.

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US Bomb From World War II Explodes at Japanese Airport – Reports

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) - A US World War II bomb that remained buried underground exploded at Japan's Miyazaki Airport on Wednesday, leaving a large crater in the taxiway, The Independent reported.

When the warhead exploded, no one was hurt because, by a lucky chance, there were no planes nearby, but more than 80 flights had to be canceled, the report said.

Preliminary investigation results show that it was a 500-pound US bomb dating back to World War II that detonated for an unknown reason, according to the report.

The report added that the explosion created a crater approximately 27 feet in diameter and 3 feet deep.

Miyazaki Airport is located on Kyushu Island in southwestern Japan and has operated since 1943. Starting in 1945, the airfield was used by "kamikaze" pilots of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

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Americans Split on Who Won, But Describe Vance-Walz Debate as 'Positive' - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 2 (Sputnik) – Americans are divided over who won the debate between vice presidential candidates Tim Walz and JD Vance, but assess the tone of the discussion as "generally positive," according to a CBS News/YouGov survey published on Wednesday.

Forty-two percent of respondents proclaimed Republican Vance the winner, while 41% said Democrat Walz emerged victorious. Seventeen percent of debate watchers believe it was a tie,

according to the poll.

When asked about the tone of the debate, 88% said it was "generally positive," and most of the watchers said that both candidates sounded reasonable.

Most people said that both Walz (60%) and Vance (55%) are ready to be president if needed, the poll added.

A majority think that Walz did a better job talking about abortion (62%) and healthcare (59%). Vance got an advantage on the economy (51%) and immigration (52%). Both candidates were tied (50%) when it came to the Middle East, according to the poll.

The poll was based on 1,630 interviews of likely voters who reported watching the vice-presidential debate on Tuesday, October 1.