

**9/13/22 Tuesday**

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US Considers Refilling Strategic Petroleum Reserve if Oil Prices Drop Below \$80 a Barrel - Report  
BY - Fantine Gardinier

In March, US President Joe Biden announced a massive release of the country's strategic petroleum reserve (SPR) into the market in an effort to curb the steeply rising price of gasoline. Weeks earlier, he implemented a total boycott on Russian energy exports, pressuring the rest of the globe to follow.

According to reports by Bloomberg on Tuesday, the Biden administration will consider beginning to refill the reserve once crude oil prices dip below \$80 a barrel.

On the oil markets on Tuesday, Brent Crude from the North Sea was trading at \$92.71 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the New York Stock Exchange futures benchmark that's pumped in the Great Plains, was netting a lower \$87.76 per barrel.

On Monday, US Department of Energy [data showed](#) that the SPR stock had fallen to 434.1 million barrels of crude oil, its lowest point since 1984. Last week, the department sold 8.3 million barrels of the stock to oil refiners, more than the roughly 1 million barrels per day release that Biden announced in March.

Despite the US' domestic need to bring down gas prices, the OPEC+ petroleum cartel that includes many US allies has a keen interest in keeping crude oil prices [above \\$90 a barrel](#). Last week, OPEC [agreed to collectively cut](#) crude output by 100,000 barrels per day. In July, Biden traveled to Saudi Arabia in a doomed attempt to [convince the monarchy](#) to lower gas prices. Biden [pledged in late March to begin](#) the largest and longest SPR release in history, a pace of 1 million barrels per day for six months, or 182 million barrels of oil. The crude was sold to oil companies, who responded by selling it in markets with higher prices, such as Europe, and raking in record-breaking profits while gasoline prices in the US continued to skyrocket. In June, Biden [slammed oil giant](#) ExxonMobil for making "more money than God," and when ExxonMobil and Chevron released their second-quarter earnings reports in late July, they [revealed a quadrupling of profits](#) over the same period in the previous year.

High oil prices have been blamed for high gasoline prices, and both trends have been blamed in the public eye for driving record inflation in the US and many other countries. However, an [April study by the Economic](#) Policy Institute found that corporate profits accounted for 54% of inflation in the United States in 2021 and 2022, meaning companies increasing their prices because consumers expect price increases have made inflation caused by other issues, such as pandemic-related expenses, to be twice as bad.

Despite the SPR release and large increases to interest rates by the Federal Reserve, inflation has remained high: the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index (CPI), which tracks changes in the prices of staple goods, reported on Tuesday that there had been an 8.3%

increase in commodity prices over the previous year in August 2022 - among the highest seen in the last year.

The news [sent NYSE into a tailspin](#), with the Dow Jones down more than 900 points in afternoon trading.

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US Stocks Collapse After High Inflation Report, Dow Loses 1,276 Points in Worst Day Since June 2020

By - Fantine Gardinier

The New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) suffered one of its worst losses in recent memory after investors reacted to a Tuesday report showing inflation had remained strong last month by selling off stocks.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) lost 1,276.37 points on Tuesday, falling by 3.94% to 31,104.97. The S&P 500 had its worst day of 2022, losing 177.72 points, or 4.32% of its value, to end at 3,932.69. The Nasdaq Composite fared even worse, falling by 632.84 points to end at 11,633.57, or a 5.16% drop.

The last time the Dow suffered such a massive loss was [on June 11, 2020](#), when it lost 1,861 points.

The losses were massive and spanned nearly 500 listed companies, with big firms such as Meta losing 9.4% of their share value and NVidia losing 9.5%.

The collapse came on the heels of a report showing the central bank's response to record-high inflation had done little to impact the depreciation of the dollar.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics released its monthly Consumer Price Index ([CPI](#)) [report on Tuesday](#). The document tracks changes in the prices of key consumer products and showed that in August 2022, prices were 8.3% higher than they were in 2021.

“The CPI report was an unequivocal negative for equity markets. The hotter than expected report means we will get continued pressure from Fed policy via rate hikes,” Matt Peron, director of research at Janus Henderson Investors, [told CNBC](#). “It also pushes back any ‘Fed pivot’ that the markets were hopeful for in the near term.”

On the heels of the report, the US Federal Reserve is [expected to make its biggest](#) increase in interest rates yet when it meets next week: a full percentage point, expressed as 100 base points.

While higher interest rates are intended to limit intra-bank lending and thus the creation of new money, an [April study by the Economic](#) Policy Institute found that corporate profits accounted for 54% of inflation in the United States in the last two years, meaning the problem is price speculation, not overeager lenders.

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## What of States' Rights? Lindsey Graham Introduces Bill for Nationwide 15-Week Abortion Ban By - Fantine Gardinier

The June overturning of federal abortion rights by the Supreme Court was the culmination of years of conservative opposition, which argued the issue of legality should be left to individual states. However, with roughly half of US states continuing to defend abortion access, their effort to ban the practice has now extended to the federal level.

Republicans expanded their offensive against the right of pregnant people to terminate their pregnancy early on Tuesday, as US Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) [introduced a bill](#) in the US Senate to ban abortion after 15 weeks of gestation.

"I think we should have a law at the federal level that would say, after 15 weeks, no abortion on demand except in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother," [Graham told reporters](#). "And that should be where America is at."

The bill's title refers to such abortions as "late-term," which previously referred to abortions during the third trimester, when the viability of the fetus outside the womb becomes much higher. At 15 weeks, however, the fetus is [just 3 inches long](#) and weighs about 70 grams. "15 weeks is not 'late term,' particularly given the significant challenges to access around the country," [tweeted Christina Reynolds](#), vice president of communications at Emily's List, a political action committee that backs pro-abortion female candidates. "And let's be clear: this is their first step to a full ban."

Before the Supreme Court's June decision in *Dobbs vs. Jackson*, abortion access was a nationwide right, thanks to a previous decision by the high court in 1973 that found getting an abortion to be part of the right to privacy. However, the *Dobbs* decision overturned that, claiming the previous ruling had overstepped its bounds constitutionally, and that the right was not one deeply entrenched in the foundations of US society.

US popular opinion tells a different story, though: polls conducted in June showed that strong majorities of Americans both [support abortion being legal](#) and [opposed the Supreme Court's ruling](#).

White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre similarly rejected Graham's assertion, [saying on Tuesday](#) that the proposed 15-week ban is "wildly out of step with what Americans believe."

"President Biden and congressional Democrats are committed to restoring the protections of *Roe v. Wade* in the face of continued radical steps by elected Republicans to put personal health care decisions in the hands of politicians instead of women and their doctors, threatening women's health and lives," she added.

US President Joe Biden, once an opponent of abortion, has endorsed the Democrats' Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA), which would enshrine the right to abortion access in federal law, but the bill has so far failed to get past an unbreakable Republican filibuster in the Senate.

Similarly, Graham's bill stands no chance of getting passed by either chamber of Congress, in which Democrats have majorities. However, Republicans have made clear the bill will be a priority if they win majorities in Congress in the November elections.

In the wake of the *Dobbs* ruling, 26 US states have either banned abortion outright or moved to heavily restrict it, including with "trigger laws" and the reactivation of historic abortion bans left on the books. Abortion proponents have [fought the issue out](#) in local courts across the country,

scoring an important victory in Kansas in early August when a referendum that would have paved the way for banning abortion in the Great Plains state was roundly rejected. On the other hand, 16 states where Democrats hold sway have [moved to further protect abortion](#) access, including accommodating “refugees” from states where it is banned.

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William Ruto Sworn in as Kenyan President After High Court Rejected Rival's Election Fraud Claims

By - Fantine Gardinier

William Ruto took his oath of office on Tuesday, becoming President of Kenya for the next five years. Ruto is Kenya's fifth president since becoming independent from the United Kingdom in 1963, at the end of a brutal anti-colonial war. He was previously vice president under Uhuru Kenyatta and served several ministerial roles.

The inauguration took place in Kasarani Stadium, Kenya's largest sporting venue, located in northern Nairobi. The 60,000-seat arena was packed with attendees, ranging from regional heads of state and other dignitaries to everyday Kenyans. Many wore the bright yellow of Ruto's party, the United Democratic Alliance, and many more waved Kenya's black, red, and green flag with a Massai shield.

Tens of thousands of people joined regional heads of state at a packed 60,000-seat stadium in Nairobi to watch him take the oath of office, with many spectators clad in the bright yellow of Ruto's party, cheering loudly and waving Kenyan flags.

"I will work with all Kenyans irrespective of who they voted for," Ruto pledged. His election victory had to be certified by the Kenyan Supreme Court after his [election rival, Raila Odinga](#), challenged the veracity of the results.

"In this process we have demonstrated the maturity of our democracy, the robustness of our institutions and the resilience of the Kenyan people," he added.

African Union Commission chair Moussa Faki Mahamat, who attended the ceremony, hailed the peaceful transition.

"I was privileged to witness today, alongside other African leaders, another peaceful transfer of power in Kenya, an enduring feature of the country's political maturity, with Unity as its shield and defender," [he said on Twitter](#). "Hongera H.E. President William S. Ruto. Hongera Kenya," he added, using the Swahili word for “congratulations.”

Like many other governments around the globe, from [the United Kingdom](#) to [nearby Tanzania](#), Ruto outlined how his administration will protect Kenyans from rising inflation. The Kenyan Bureau of Statistics [reported on Friday](#) that inflation in the East African state was 8.5% last month - the highest it's been in five years.

He pledged to [address youth unemployment](#), support farmers struggling with [a historic drought](#), and to stabilize the country's finances, including its large amount of debt, most of which is owed to the World Bank, Eurobond holders, and China. Ruto also announced what he called a \$415 million “hustler fund” to support small business owners.

Ruto has played up his own “hustler” past as part of his appeal to the common citizen, emphasizing that he sold chickens on the side of the road while growing up in Kenya’s Rift Valley, near the Ugandan border. As a young man, he entered politics by supporting President Daniel arap Moi in his successful electoral campaign after yielding his dictatorial powers to a democratic process, and he continued to rise by astutely picking the right side to back in subsequent political horse-trading that has become a regular feature of Kenyan democracy. “Today, I want to thank God, because a village boy has become the president of Kenya,” he said at his inauguration. Ruto has also emphasized his Christian faith, and dropped to his knees to pray during the Tuesday inauguration.

Ruto has also pledged to [continue Kenyatta’s policies](#) of promoting regional stability and security, including cooperating with the [United States in fighting](#) Al-Shabaab, an Al-Qaeda\* affiliate terrorizing the countryside in nearby Somalia.

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US Army Suggests Soldiers Sign Up for Food Stamps to Alleviate Inflation Pains  
By - Fantine Gardinier

Amid rising commodity prices, the US Army has taken action to help its troops and their families ensure they can afford the daily necessities: it’s not a raise, it’s a link to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly known as food stamps.

According to [Fox News](#), the Department of the Army issued the new guidance recently as part of its Financial Readiness Program, in which it indicated that “service members and their families may be eligible” for SNAP and provided them with a link to the program’s website and phone number.

“With inflation affecting everything from gas prices to groceries to rent, some soldiers and their families are finding it harder to get by on the budgets they’ve set and used before,” guidance from Sergeant Major Michael Grinston said. “Soldiers of all ranks can seek guidance, assistance, and advice through the Army’s Financial Readiness Program.”

A program run by the US Department of Agriculture, [SNAP is a means-tested program](#) that provides money on a biweekly basis to low-income families in a special account, which they can only spend on certain food items. Non-food items, alcohol, vitamins and medicines, food intended to be consumed where it is prepared, and hot foods such as rotisserie chickens are all excluded from the program, meaning SNAP funds cannot be used to buy them.

Other items mentioned in the Army’s guidance include the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which provides [student loan forgiveness](#) for military members and government employees after a certain number of years in service.

Back in 2013, fast food giant McDonald’s, known for its low wages - and for its workers’ struggles to increase them - released similar guidance, suggesting its employees [sign up for federal assistance](#) to help them survive. The fiasco came months after the corporation released

a financial guide ostensibly [proving it was possible to live](#) on the low wages it paid, which was widely lambasted as “tone deaf” and “insulting.”

Although it's a federal program, SNAP is [administered by the states](#), meaning its availability can vary drastically depending on the political party that holds sway in a given area. During earlier parts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government provided the states with increased SNAP budgets to alleviate the massive unemployment [and avoid starvation](#), but Republican governors in particular rushed to end the emergency programs as part of a culture war against mandates for vaccines and masks aimed at getting “back to normal.”

As a result, when inflation began to spike in late 2021, many states were [bereft of tools to help](#) their poorer residents make ends meet.

Record levels of inflation have been recorded in the US since January 2022, but despite aggressive increases in interest rates by the Federal Reserve, [Tuesday's Consumer Price Index](#) (CPI) report put out by the Bureau of Labor Statistics recorded little impact on the phenomenon. The report found that the price of basic commodities had increased by 8.3% in August 2022 over the same month a year prior.

The news caught investors and financiers by surprise, and the New York Stock Exchange [suffered its worst losses](#) in more than two years.

Inflation has both contributed to and been caused by a rise in gasoline prices, although multiple other factors have as well, including shutdowns and delays related to COVID-19 outbreaks and the Western boycott of Russian energy exports that began in the spring after Moscow launched its special operation in Ukraine. The US has attempted to tackle the problem in several ways, including [massive selloffs of crude oil](#) from its Strategic Petroleum Reserve and passing an [“Inflation Reduction Act.”](#)

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Nancy Pelosi Has to Tell Audience to 'Clap' While Touting Inflation Reduction Bill  
By - Mary Manley

On Tuesday, the Biden administration celebrated the Inflation Reduction Act with a gathering of supporters at the White House. The bill is supposed to lower drug costs for certain high-priced drugs, address climate change and conservation, raise taxes on billion-dollar corporations and reduce the federal deficit.

The White House had an awkward experience during their celebrations on Tuesday when House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had to remind the audience—made up of lawmakers and supporters from across the country—to clap while toting their new bill on the White House lawn. “Mr. President, thank you for unifying and inspiring a vision of a stronger, fairer, safer future for all our children. Your extraordinary leadership has made this glorious day possible,” Pelosi said. Pelosi stumbled over her words in her speech, but catching herself said, “that’s an applause line,” almost more to herself than to the crowd in order to incite applause. “Jill was applauding!” Pelosi joked, gesturing to the crowd.

"And let us salute Leader Schumer (and) his colleagues in the Senate for their extraordinary leadership and the success in bringing this bill to the floor," Pelosi added. In response, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer interjected, "That's an applause line!"

During the celebration, Schumer scorned Republicans for failing to join them to "make these investments and new jobs possible."

"While MAGA are fixated on their extremist agenda like a national abortion ban, Democrats are focused on creating jobs, lowering costs, and bringing the country together," said Schumer, most likely in reference to a 15-week abortion bill proposed by Senator Lindsey [Graham](#) (R-SC) on Tuesday.

[Biden](#) echoed the sentiment later in his speech, saying he believes Republicans "could've and should've joined us."

The bill is a doctored version of the Build Back Better Act, which comes almost a year after it was first introduced, but stalled after Senator Joe Manchin (D-W. VA) failed to back the bill and negotiations between him and Schumer fell through. The bill is supposed to lower prescription drug costs such as insulin, invest billions of dollars into climate and energy initiatives, cut the national deficit, and raise taxes on big corporations.

The celebration may seem like odd timing for many Americans after a report came through on Tuesday that, despite inflation slowing down, consumer prices are still 8.3% higher for the month of August compared to the same month last year.

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Prince Harry Not Allowed to Wear Military Uniform to Grandmother's Funeral, Says Buckingham Palace

By - Mary Manley

On Monday, Buckingham Palace informed media outlets that only working members of the royal family will be allowed to wear their military uniforms during the four funeral ceremonies of Queen Elizabeth II following her death on Thursday, with the exception of one person.

Prince Andrew, Duke of York, who was often rumored to be the Queen's [favorite](#) child, fell from the good graces of his mother, his country and the entire world after he was accused of sexually abusing a 17-year-old girl who was a victim of the deceased sex offender Jeffrey [Epstein](#), a man who was responsible for attacking at least 36 children, with some as young as 14 years old.

Andrew was stripped of his honorary military ranks, patronages, and the use of his "His Royal Highness" title after he was sued for sexual assault in United States federal court. But despite the cloud of scandal he has brought to the royal family, Buckingham Palace announced that Andrew will be allowed to wear his military uniform to one event, while Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, will have to be dressed in civilian uniform.

Both are non-working members of the royal family, but are still military veterans. Andrew served in the Royal Navy for 22 years and fought in the Falklands War as a helicopter pilot, while Harry served in the British Army for 10 years and served two active-duty tours in Afghanistan before becoming captain.

Andrew will be wearing his military dress for the Queen's final service in Westminster Hall as "a special mark of respect." Oddly enough, his siblings will also appear in military uniform, including Anne, Princess Royal, who has no military training or experience, and Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, who dropped out of the Royal Marines.

"Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex, will wear a mourning suit throughout events honouring his grandmother. His decade of military service is not determined by the uniform he wears, and we respectfully ask that focus remain on the life and legacy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II," a spokesperson for Prince Harry said.

The snub was seen as outrageous amongst those on social media, with one Twitter user bashing the order as "[deplorable](#)."

The snub seems even more offensive given that Prince Harry founded the [Invictus Games](#), which works to bring together and rehabilitate wounded service members and veterans in sporting events. The international sport event first began in 2014 after Prince Harry visited the [Warrior Games](#) in Colorado in 2013.

It may be possible that none of the royal family members end up wearing their military uniform, as was the case for Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh's funeral last April.

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Primary Season Ends With New Hampshire as GOP Intraparty Fighting Breaks Out  
By - Mary Manley

In a recent poll conducted by Saint Anselm College, retired Army Brigadier General Don Bolduc was seen having a strong lead over his GOP rivals with 32% support, followed by state Senate President Chuck Morse with just 16%. Morse has been endorsed by Republican Governor Chris Sununu, who had referred to Bolduc as a "conspiracy theorist."

With some winners championing and others too close to call, the New Hampshire primaries rounded out with Governor Chris Sununu, the current governor of New Hampshire, winning as the GOP gubernatorial candidate for his state. Sununu held a strong win with 67,045 votes (79.3%) with 61% of votes being counted at 11:50 p.m. He was followed by Karen Testerman who had 8,534 votes.

Tom Sherman ran unopposed and won as the Democratic gubernatorial candidate for the state. Incumbent Democratic Senator Maggie Hassan secured a landslide victory with 60,196 votes (94%) going to her, followed by Paul Krautmann with 2,749 votes (4.3%).

At 11:57 p.m. on Tuesday night the race appeared too close for the race between Donald Bolduc and Chuck Morse, both of whom are running to represent the state of New Hampshire in the United States Senate. Bolduc led with 32,659 votes (38.3%) and was followed closely by Chuck Morse who had 29,367 votes (34.4%).

A similar fate for New Hampshire's 1st Congressional District GOP candidates occurred when Karoline Leavitt, who is 25 years old, led with 17,135 votes (33.8%) and was followed by Matt Mowers who had just 12,944 votes (25.5%).

Incumbent Congressman Chris Pappas, who is a Democrat, ran unopposed in the 1st Congressional District race.

For New Hampshire's 2nd Congressional District race, incumbent Congresswoman Ann McLane Kuster, who ran unopposed, won for the Democratic party. The GOP candidates for the 2nd Congressional District race was a toss up, with Robert Burns leading at midnight with 12,603 votes (32.5%) and being followed by George Hansel who had 12,317 votes (31.6%) at the time.

[Bolduc](#) is a 2020 election denier who more moderate Republicans view as too extreme to win in November against incumbent Democratic Senator Maggie Hassan, who is running unopposed in the Democratic primary alongside Democratic Congressman Chris Pappas.

Bolduc first ran for New Hampshire's seat in the U.S. Senate in 2020 but lost to Bryant Messner, who then lost in the general election to Democrat Jeanne Shaheen.

Bolduc has stood by debunked claims that the 2020 election was "stolen" and that former President Donald Trump had actually won. After Trump's [Mar-a-Lago](#) residence in Florida was searched last month by the F.B.I.—who then retrieved boxes of classified documents which Trump was supposed to turn into the National Archives at the end of his presidential term—Buldock proposed [abolishing](#) the F.B.I. He has also endorsed closing the Education Department.

Sununu's endorsement of Morse was expected considering that the two had worked together for five years on legislation. Morse served in the New Hampshire House of Representatives from 1998 through 2002 before serving in the New Hampshire Senate from 2002 through 2006 and was re-elected in 2018 and 2020 to his Senate seat. He acted as governor for his state for about two days following Hassan's resignation in early January of 2017.

Hassan, 64, was born and raised in Massachusetts before attending Brown University where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree. She then went on to receive her law degree from Northeastern University School of Law. She became New Hampshire's second female governor after being endorsed by former United States President Bill Clinton and served from 2013 to 2016.

As governor, Hassan's successes included resolving an internal dispute within the supermarket company, Market Basket, to save 9,000 jobs, and vetoing a bill that proposed to remove licensing requirements for carrying concealed [firearms](#) in New Hampshire.

More recently in April 2022, she called on the Biden administration to keep Title 42, which was created during the former President Donald Trump's administration to limit migration and asylum-seeker movement across the U.S.-Mexican border. Hassan has also blocked efforts to raise the minimum wage, and condemned President Joe Biden's claim that MAGA Republicans are "semi-fascist" as divisive rhetoric.

"Senator Hassan is in lockstep with [Senate Majority Leader] Chuck Schumer for five-and-a-half years, and then in the last couple months, she panics and tries to convince people that she's some kind of moderate," [Sununu](#) said of Hassan's policies.

Hassan is, however, a proponent of protecting abortion rights and has accused GOP members of being "anti-choice extremists."

"When women are faced with difficult life decisions ... the last thing they need is politicians like Chuck Morse in the examining room," Hassan answered when she was asked whether or not she supports a 24-week abortion ban.

Morse has supported the outcome of the 2020 election, but also supported efforts by most House Republicans to challenge electoral votes for Biden in Arizona and Pennsylvania, according to the Washington [Post](#). He has echoed some of Trump's policies such as completing Trump's "wall" on the U.S.-Mexico border.

"In these other states where we were hearing things — this comes down to people going in and looking at it and getting things done," Morse said. "I'm not against the legislature doing that." Morse reportedly met with Trump to discuss a possible endorsement, but after their meeting and Trump's subsequent refusal to endorse any Republican candidate in New Hampshire, Morse said that Trump "certainly has some strong opinions."

Supporters of Morse in combination with the National Republican Senatorial Committee paid \$4.6 million in ads to boost Morse, but Hassan had already raised more than \$30 million for her TV ad which aired earlier than Morse's. National Democrats, meanwhile, had been playing a dangerous game in bolstering extremist Republicans who they think will be easier to defeat in the general elections, and have spent millions to boost Bolduc.

"What a sign of weakness," Sununu said of the Democratic's [interference](#). "I think it's unethical, frankly. I think it should be banned, somehow, in the political system."

Sununu, a popular moderate who Bolduc had accused of being a "communist sympathizer" whose family "supports [terrorism](#)," is seeking a fourth term as governor, and recent polls showed he was most likely to win against rival candidates including U.S. Marine Corps veteran Julian Acciard, Jay Lewis, professional logger Richard McMenamon II, small business owner Thad Riley and Karen Testerman. Sununu's polls showed him with 72% support, and his closest competitor, Riley, with just 7% support.

Sununu is the 82nd governor of New Hampshire and is currently serving his third term, according to his [website](#).

New Hampshire's GOP primaries also determined who would go on to challenge Representative Chris Pappas in the state's 1st congressional district. Pappas is 42 years old and has been serving as the state's representative since 2019. He is also the first openly gay man to represent the Granite State in Congress.

The leading GOP contenders for New Hampshire's 1st congressional district were [two former](#) Trump administration officials who had mirrored their own policies off of the former president's. Matt Mowers, 33, led with 26% support and was backed by Texas Republican Representative Dan Crenshaw. Mowers worked as Senior White House Advisor at the State Department under Trump's administration and lost to Pappas in 2020.

Karoline Leavitt, who worked as Trump's assistant press secretary, was behind Mowers with 24%. She is 25 years old and had received an endorsement from Senator Ted Cruz of Texas. Leavitt is a MAGA-style Republican who campaigned on the notion that she is "anti-establishment" whereas Mowers is a part of the "swamp," while those campaigning for Mowers described Leavitt as a "woke Gen Z-er." Neither Leavitt nor Mowers received endorsements from Trump this year.

Seven Republican candidates ran against each other on Tuesday for New Hampshire's 2nd congressional district. The winner will have to square off against Democratic Representative Annie Kuster in November. Kuster is a 66 year-old lawyer and has been a representative for the state since 2013. She has worked as a lobbyist and comes from a family of politicians.

Those who competed for the right to face Kuster include bar manager and bartender Scott Black, Bob Burns, who acted as a former deputy state director for Newt Gingrich's 2012 presidential campaign, an artist named Michael Callis, George Hansel, who is the current mayor of Keene, Jay Mercer, Dean Poirier, and Lily Tang Williams. The most recent poll for this race showed Burns leading with 32%, followed by Hansel with 18%.

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Biden's Crude Measures - Cartoon

By - Ted Rall

The United States Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) is at its lowest level since 1984, as the U.S. has been steadily depleting it since 2016. The SPR was first created in 1975 in response to the 1973 oil crisis, to ensure the U.S. would never go without oil in case of foreign interruptions again. Biden is now is looking to refill that reserve.

The [Biden](#) administration is hoping to balance a surge in oil prices against a crash in oil prices in an effort to make both consumers and the U.S.-based oil sector happy by strategic releases of the oil reserve. Since the beginning of the year, the Biden administration has dropped the SPR from 600 million barrels down to just 442 million barrels. This was in an effort to protect consumers from inflated prices following Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

In March, the Biden administration released a historic amount of 180 million barrels from the SPR in an effort to reduce oil and gas prices for American consumers. And just last week, the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) dropped to about \$81 a barrel.

Due to the move, gas prices have fallen from \$5 a gallon in June to around \$3.71 a gallon as of this week. If oil drops to around \$80 a barrel, the Biden administration may purchase more than 100 million barrels in order to refill the SPR, as was reported by [Bloomberg](#) on Tuesday. If they do, gas prices may stop falling and finally hit their floor until the SPR is finished being filled.

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Massachusetts Primary Results Are In

By - Ian DeMartino

The primary elections in Massachusetts were on Tuesday, the second to last primary night in the nation. New Hampshire, Delaware, and Rhode Island will end the primary season on September 13.

With most of Massachusetts being a solidly blue state, many of the elections are a foregone conclusion, which makes the [primary elections](#) more significant. And despite Massachusetts'

blue leanings, the state's current governor is a Republican, and 2012 GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney preceded him, so Republicans can win elections in Massachusetts.  
Governor

Maura Healey Officially Secures Nomination (Democrat, Uncontested)

Geoff Diehl Defeats Chris Doughty (Republican)

Speaking of elections for governor, Attorney General Maura Healey secured the Democratic nomination for the top office in the state. She was running unopposed, though Sonia Chang-Diaz was still on the ballot because she dropped out too late to be removed. Despite officially dropping out, Chang-Diaz still received roughly 15% of the vote as of press time, likely from early voting.

If Healey wins the general election, she will become the first elected female governor of Massachusetts. Jane Swift was acting governor from 2001 to 2003, after taking over for Paul Cellucci, but was not elected to the position.

Healey will face off against Geoff Diehl, a former state representative who was endorsed by former President Donald Trump. Chris Doughty would have likely posed a more serious challenge to Healey because he is seen as more moderate than Diehl. Massachusetts has a history of electing moderate Republicans as governor, including the aforementioned Mitt Romney and the current Governor Charlie Baker, who is not seeking reelection.

Diehl beat Doughty with 56.3% of the vote, with 35% reporting at press time.

Lieutenant Governor

Kim Driscoll Defeats Eric Lesser and Tami Gouveia (Democrat)

Leah Allen Defeats Kate Campanale (Republican) Pending

On the Democrat side, we saw a hard-fought competitive campaign between three candidates. The election was called with Kim Driscoll beating out Eric Lesser and Tami Gouveia with 45.2% of the vote with 43% reporting.

Kim Driscoll has been mayor of Salem since 2006. She received a significant boost from a super PAC called Leadership for Massachusetts, which spent \$1.2 million to support her campaign.

Eric Lesser was a former staff member of the Obama administration and is a state senator. He promoted his experience working in both federal and state governments during the campaign.

Tami Gouveia is a state representative and focused her campaign on better serving marginalized communities in Massachusetts.

On the Republican side, two former state representatives faced off, with Leah Cole Allen looking like she will beat Kate Camanale. Allen had tied her campaign to Diehl's and stated that she was running on "Trump-era policies." Camanale tied her campaign to Doughty and, like him, was running as a moderate Republican.

Despite her close connection to Diehl's campaign, Allen had a much tougher fight on her hands than Diehl did. The race has not been called at press time, though she seems to be inching towards victory with 51.6% of the vote with 70% reporting.

Attorney General (Democrat Only)

Andrea Campbell Defeats Shannon Liss-Riordan

Andrea Campbell faced off against Shannon Liss-Riordan to fill the spot left by Maura Healey for her gubernatorial run. Campbell beat Liss-Riordan, securing 47.9% of the vote, with 24% reporting.

Andrea Campbell will become the first African American woman to serve as attorney general in Massachusetts. Formerly a Boston city councilor, she was endorsed by former assistant Attorney General Quentin Palfrey, who dropped out a week before the election. Despite dropping out, Palfrey took 16% of the vote.

Liss-Riordan is a workers' rights attorney and was endorsed by Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, and former Boston Mayor Kim Janey, as well as the Massachusetts division of the AFL-CIO and more than 50 other unions. Those endorsements did not seem to resonate with voters. She received 50% of the vote at press time with 69% reporting.

Secretary of State (Democrat Only)

William Galvin Defeats Tanisha Sullivan

Secretary of state is a position that has received more attention as of late because of its role in election administration and voter registration. Challenger Tanisha Sullivan, who is the president of the Boston branch of the NAACP, argued during her campaign that long-time incumbent William Galvin, who is 71 years old, is incapable of protecting the elections in the wake of Trump's actions following the 2020 presidential election.

Galvin argued that his experience is a positive and not a negative. He has held the position since 1995. Galvin had 70% of the total vote with 69% reporting.

Auditor (Democrat Only)

Diana DiZoglio Defeats Christopher Dempsey

With incumbent Suzanne Bump opting to not run for reelection, Diana DiZoglio and Christopher Dempsey were left to battle it out to take her place.

DiZoglio is a state senator and a former state representative. She has advocated for restricting the use of non-disclosure agreements in the state government and criticized the state government for not providing more coronavirus relief to small businesses.

Dempsey is best known for leading the effort to prevent the Olympics from coming to Boston in 2024.

DiZoglio beat Dempsey with 54% of the vote with 69% reporting

District Attorney of Suffolk County (Democrat Only)

Kevin Hayden (incumbent) Defeats Ricardo Arroyo

The race for district attorney of Suffolk County, which includes Boston, has garnered increased attention since incumbent Kevin Hayden became [embroiled in controversy](#) over his handling of a police misconduct investigation that remains open. Meanwhile, his challenger, Ricardo Arroyo, has been [accused of sexual assault](#), an accusation that he denies.

Hayden defeated Ricardo Arroyo with 54.7% of the vote with 69% reporting.

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New UK PM Liz Truss Begins Appointment of Cabinet Members

By - Ian DeMartino

Liz Truss became the new prime minister of the United Kingdom on Tuesday after Boris Johnson left office following his July resignation. After giving a speech in which she promised a “bold plan” for the economy, announcements of her cabinet members started trickling out.

Chancellor of the Exchequer - Kwasi Kwarteng

As expected, long-time Truss ally Kwasi Kwarteng was named the new chancellor of the exchequer, arguably the second most significant position in the UK government. Kwarteng replaces Nadhim Zahawi and has been a member of parliament (MP) for Spelthorne in northern Surrey since 2021. He previously served as the secretary of state for business, energy and industrial strategy in 2021 and 2022.

Kwarteng also served as the under-secretary of state at the Department for Exiting the European Union after Suella Braverman resigned in protest of the Ireland backstop proposal.

Home Secretary - Suella Braverman

Speaking of Suella Braverman, she has been appointed the home secretary. Braverman ran against Truss for the leader of the Conservative Party, but was eliminated from the ballot in the second round of voting. She chaired the conservative European Research Group from June 2017 to January 2018. As mentioned, former PM Theresa May appointed her as the under-secretary of state for exiting the European Union before resigning. Later, she was appointed by Johnson as the advocate general for Northern Ireland in 2020. She has been the MP for Fareham in Hampshire since 2015.

Foreign Secretary - James Cleverly

A former reserve Army officer, James Cleverly launched his own bid to become Conservative leader in 2019 after Theresa May stepped down, but dropped out early. He served as the co-chairman of the Conservative Party in 2019 and 2020. After a cabinet shakeup in 2020 that resulted in him leaving the cabinet, he served as the minister of state for the Middle East and North Africa, and later became minister of state for Europe and North America in February 2022. In July, after multiple members of Boris Johnson’s cabinet resigned, he briefly served as the secretary of state for education after Michelle Conelan resigned in response to the multiple scandals that eventually led to Johnson’s resignation.

Cleverly has been the MP for Braintree in Essex since 2015.

Deputy Prime Minister & Health and Social Care Secretary - Thérèse Coffey

Thérèse Coffey, who supported Truss in her bid to become Conservative Party leader, previously worked as the secretary of state for work and pensions. She also served under May as the parliamentary under-secretary of state at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. She has been the MP of Suffolk Coastal since 2010.

Leader of the House of Lords & Lord Privy Seal - Lord True CBE (Nicholas Edward True)

The new leader of the House of Lords is Lord True CBE, given name Nicholas Edward True, a long-time politician who once served as the deputy leader of the Conservative Party in the late 70s and early 80s. He also served as the leader of the opposition from 2006 to 2010 when the Conservative party took control of Parliament and David Cameron became prime minister.

Leader of the House of Commons & Lord President of Council - Penny Mordaunt

Penny Mordaunt was the junior minister under Boris Johnson and was the secretary of state for international development under May. Like Braverman, Mordaunt ran for leader of the

Conservative party against Truss, coming in third. He has served as MP for Portsmouth North since 2010.

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations and Minister for Equalities (formerly Minister for Women Equalities) & Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster - Nadhim Zahawi

Nadhim Zahawi, who is British-Iraqi, was the vaccines minister in 2020 and 2021 under Johnson and the secretary of state for education from 2021 to 2022. He was appointed by Johnson as chancellor of the exchequer after Rishi Sunack resigned during the July governmental crisis. Zahawi withdrew his support for Johnson less than 48 hours after his appointment. This was largely seen as one of the last major blows that forced Johnson to resign. Zahawi has been the MP for Stratford-on-Avon since 2010. It is not known why the word "Women" was removed from his title.

Other appointments include culture secretary (Michelle Donelan), transport secretary (Anne-Marie Trevelyan), environment secretary (Ranil Jayawardena), education secretary (Kit Malthouse), work and pensions secretary (Chloe Smith), international trade secretary (Kemi Badenoch), levelling up secretary (Simon Clarke, who previously said the phrase "levelling up" is over), business secretary (Jacob Rees-Mogg), and party chairman and minister without portfolio (Jake Berry).

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US Considering Sanctions Package Against China, Pressuring EU to Join - Reports  
By - Ian DeMartino

Relations between Taipei and Beijing have been deteriorating since US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi spoke with Taiwanese officials in August.

The United States is considering a sanctions package to discourage China from invading Taiwan, and both Taipei and Washington are pressuring the European Union to follow suit, according to a [report published by Reuters](#) on Tuesday.

Deliberations between Washington and the EU, along with separate lobbying of the EU by Taipei, are said to be in the early stages.

The proposed sanctions are in response to increased tensions in the area, which were partially brought on by the US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taipei, which [Beijing publicly condemned](#) and saw as a provocation.

The US and much of the West already restricts trade of certain computer components and telecom equipment from China over corporate espionage fears. The Biden administration also recently restricted sales of artificial intelligence chips to Chinese companies, unless those companies receive Commerce Department licenses first.

The new sanctions package would be in addition to those sanctions. Reuter's source did not provide them with any additional details.

Last month, China fired missiles over Taiwan and sailed warships near the island in response to Pelosi's trip to Taipei.

Reunifying Taiwan with mainland China has long been a goal of the Chinese government, something that Chinese President Xi Jinping has reiterated his commitment to. The US government has officially supported reunification in its “one-China” policy, though Washington stresses that it should come through peaceful means. Xi has not ruled out the possibility of taking the island by force.

Washington is taking a similar approach as it did with Russia before Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine, hoping that a sanctions package will discourage China from sending troops into Taiwan. That strategy, however, did not have the stated intended effect of discouraging Russia from using military force in Ukraine.

The White House has declined to comment on any potential sanctions package against China, but according to an official of a country Reuters says is “in close coordination with Washington,” the US is quietly attempting to get European and Asian countries on board with a sanctions plan while avoiding provoking Beijing.

Meanwhile, Taiwan’s foreign ministry said it has spoken with the US, Europe, and other partners about China’s wargames in the region, but declined to discuss details.

Taipei has been calling for sanctions against mainland China since early in the year but has doubled down in the wake of China’s wargames in the region. Another concern is a Chinese government white paper that did not include a previous promise to not send in troops or administrators if Beijing took control of Taiwan.

The EU has been hesitant to impose sanctions against China, including for alleged human rights violations, because the region is more entangled economically with China than it was with Russia. Any sanctions coming from the EU would require all 27 member nations to agree to sanction China, which is difficult to obtain.

When sanctions with Russia were being considered, Germany was a major hurdle because of that country’s dependence on Russian gas. Surging gas prices in Germany and the rest of the EU [have taken a toll](#) on the continent’s economy and many regions are facing energy rationing this winter if the situation does not improve.

Germany, which is often called the economic engine of the EU, is said to be wary of imposing sanctions on China, whom it depends on for raw materials, batteries, and semiconductors. However, on Tuesday the country’s economic minister said that the government is working on a [new trade policy](#) with China to reduce that dependence.

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Delaware Democrats Avoid Embarrassing Situation in Primary Race

By - Ian DeMartino

Delaware, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island finished out the primary season on Tuesday. There is only one newsworthy race in the Delaware primary that took place on Tuesday, but it is an interesting one.

Auditor is not a position that gets much attention nationally, but Delaware’s race has managed to do that because the incumbent, Kathy McGuinness, gained the unfortunate distinction of being

the first sitting statewide office holder in Delaware to be charged with a crime in October of last year. Then in July of this year, she followed that up by becoming the first sitting statewide office holder in Delaware to be convicted of a crime.

Despite the convictions and calls from fellow Democrats to resign, she has refused to step down or take a leave of absence, causing lawyer and accountant Lydia York to challenge her for the party's nomination in Tuesday's primary.

McGuinness was convicted of two misdemeanors: official misconduct and conflicts of interest. Lydia won the nomination with 69.9% of the vote, with 60% reporting.

According to [the state indictment](#), McGuinness hired her daughter and her daughter's friend to work in her office while they were high school seniors. She hired them after several employees had to stop working at the office because of a lack of available hours. Despite this, McGuinness' daughter and her friend were allowed to work the maximum number of hours allowed for seasonal employees. McGuinness has stated that her daughter still works in the position.

McGuinness was also found guilty of a third misdemeanor charge of non-compliance with state procurement rules, after allegedly constructing a contract to keep it as a no-bid contract and then awarding it to a campaign consulting firm that her campaign worked with. However, that charge was thrown out by a judge last month.

The auditor's office oversees spending by state agencies and school districts in Delaware. The Democratic party in the state officially endorsed York, a rare move, as the party usually backs incumbents.

McGuinness' sentencing date on the two remaining charges has not been set, and her defense team plans further appeals. She previously called the charges politically motivated.

Had McGuinness won the primary, Delaware Governor John Carney would have been faced with an interesting decision. Carney has indicated that he may move to remove McGuinness from office after her sentencing. Had McGuinness won the primary and then went on to win the general election, she could have been reinstated by voters in January.

After McGuinness' conviction, York called it a sad day in Delaware politics.

"My honest-to-goodness initial reaction when the verdict came down was that this is a sad day, in Delaware politics as well as Delaware state government," York [told WHYY News](#). "That we've got a sitting statewide elected official that's been convicted of misconduct in their office. It's just a bad thing."

Lydia will face Republican Janice Lorrh in the general election in November.

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Twitter Unable to Identify, Expel Foreign Agents With Access to User Data - Whistleblower

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Twitter is unable to independently identify and expel foreign agents in their workforce with access to sensitive user data, former Twitter security chief turned whistleblower Peiter Zatkos said during a US Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Tuesday.

"If you are a foreign agent and you are hired and you are an engineer, you've got access to all of that [user] data we talked about," Zatkan said when asked about foreign agents within Twitter. "I had been told... that there was at least one agent of the MSS, which is one of China's intelligence services, on the payroll inside Twitter. While it was disturbing to hear, I and many others, recognizing the state of the environment at Twitter, were really thinking: if you are not placing foreign agents inside Twitter... as a foreign intelligence company you're most likely not doing your job."

Zatkan said Twitter lacks the ability to internally identify inappropriate access within their own systems and only an outside agency alerting the company to the presence of a foreign agent would enable it to find that person.

The FBI alerted Twitter of the presence of the Chinese agent within their workforce, Zatkan noted.

Zatkan also informed the public about an instance where India purportedly placed a foreign agent within the company to gather information about negotiations between Twitter and the Indian government.

Zatkan's appearance before the Judiciary Committee comes after the publication of his whistleblower report in August that outlined how Twitter lacks adequate cybersecurity and misleads users about the availability and use of their data.

He also alleges that Twitter executives place profits and user growth over combating issues such as spam accounts.

Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal declined to participate in the hearing alongside Zatkan, citing concerns about an appearance's potential impact on ongoing litigation between the company and entrepreneur Elon Musk, who is attempting to cancel his acquisition of the company due to alleged misrepresentation of the number of fake accounts on the platform.

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Boeing Unveils New Defense Factory in Arizona, 1st in Series of New Innovative Facilities

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Boeing has unveiled a new defense factory in Arizona which will produce composite components for combat aircraft and is the first in a series of its new innovative production facilities, the company announced on Tuesday.

"Boeing's (NYSE: BA) Defense, Space & Security (BDS) business unit unveiled on Sept. 12 its new Advanced Composite Fabrication Center, which has been purpose-built to produce advanced composite components for future combat aircraft," the statement said.

The new center is situated in the city of Mesa, Arizona.

"[It] will be a secure production facility operated by Phantom Works, BDS' proprietary research, development and prototyping division. The construction phase of the 155,000 square-foot facility is now complete, and the center is expected to be fully operational this fall," it added.

According to Ted Colbert, president and CEO of Boeing Defense, Space and Security, the company is now transforming its entire production system to build the next generation of advanced combat aircraft.

"The new Advanced Composite Fabrication Center and the factories that will follow it position Boeing to deliver the most digitally advanced, simply and efficiently produced and intelligently supported aircraft to military customers," he added.

In late August, the company said that it secured a \$5 billion contract from the US Missile Defense Agency to test and integrate the country's Ground-Based Midcourse Defense system against ballistic missile threats.

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US Poverty Rate in 2021 Remained Unchanged at 11.6%, Inflation Rose at Record 4.7%-Census

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The poverty rate in the United States in 2021 did not change significantly compared to the year before and remained at 11.6%, or 37.9 million people, while inflation grew at a record pace of 4.7% since 1990, the US Census Bureau announced on Tuesday.

"[The] real median household income in 2021 was not statistically different than 2020. The official poverty rate of 11.6% was also not statistically different between 2020 and 2021," the US Census Bureau said in a press release. "Between 2020 and 2021, inflation rose 4.7%; this is the largest annual increase in the cost-of-living adjustment since 1990."

About 8.3% of Americans, or 27.2million, did not have any health insurance at any point during 2021 compared to 8.6%, or 28.3 million, in 2020, the release said.

Real median household income in 2021 at \$70,784 remained not statistically different from the 2020 estimate of \$71,186, the release added.

Asian households had the highest median income (\$101,418) in 2021, followed by non-Hispanic White (\$77,999) and Hispanic (\$57,981) people, while Black households had the lowest median income (\$48,297), according to the release.

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Armenia Asks UNSC to Convene Emergency Meeting on 'Aggression' of Azerbaijan - Letter

UNITED NATIONS, September 13 (Sputnik) - Armenia has requested a UN Security Council meeting over "large-scale aggression of Azerbaijan," according to a letter sent by the country's UN mission to France, which holds the presidency of the top UN body this month.

"Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the letter from H.E. Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, with a request to convene an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, based on the Article 35 (1) of the IIN Charter, in relation to the large-scale aggression of Azerbaijan against the

Republic of Armenia, launched on 13 September 2022, which poses an imminent threat to the international peace and security," the letter, seen by Sputnik, said.

Armenia accused Azerbaijan of striking its territory with artillery and drones late on Monday. The Armenian defense ministry said there were casualties on its side. In turn, Baku said that the Armenian military fired at the positions of the Azerbaijani troops on the border and clashes ensued. The Azerbaijani defense ministry also reported losses in its ranks. Yerevan and Baku agreed on a ceasefire starting 05:00 GMT on Tuesday.

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Blinken Tells Armenian, Azeri Leaders US to Push for Immediate Halt to Fighting in Region

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – The United States will seek an immediate end to fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in calls with leaders of the two countries amid renewed shelling on the border.

"The Secretary stressed the need for disengagement of military forces and assured Prime Minister Pashinyan that the United States would push for an immediate halt to fighting and a peace settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan," State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a press release on Tuesday.

In his call with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Blinken expressed concerns over shelling in Armenia, Price said in a separate statement.

"Secretary Blinken urged President Aliyev to cease hostilities and stressed that the United States would push for an immediate halt to fighting and a peace settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan," Price added.

Armenia accused Azerbaijan of striking its territory with artillery and drones late on Monday. The Armenian defense ministry said there were casualties on its side. In turn, Baku said that the Armenian military fired at the positions of the Azerbaijani troops on the border and clashes ensued. The Azerbaijani defense ministry also reported losses in its ranks.

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Human Rights Watch Says US States Overwhelmingly Fail to Meet Child Rights Standards

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) – A Human Rights Watch report released Tuesday has uniformly condemned US state laws protecting child rights, with only four states receiving as high as a C, according to a release.

"For people who believe the US is treating its children well, this assessment is a rude awakening," Children's Rights Advocacy Director Jo Becker said in a release. "When it comes to child marriage, hazardous child labor, extreme prison sentences, and violent treatment of children, the vast majority of US states have abysmal laws. State policymakers should act quickly to better protect their children."

Aside from the "C" states of New Jersey, Ohio, Iowa, and Minnesota, 26 states were graded "D" and 20 states received an "F."

The report assessed 12 state laws in each state regarding four issues – child marriage, corporal punishment, child labor, and juvenile justice – against the standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is the primary international treaty on children's rights and was adopted by the UN in 1989.

The US is the only country in the world that has yet to ratify the convention. Many children's rights issues are left to the jurisdiction of state rather than the federal government in the US, leading to wide variation across states.

Child marriage is legal in 43 states. Corporal punishment of children is legal in all states, with 23 states permitting it in schools and 16 states allowing it in child penal institutions. The US is the only country that sentences children under 18 to life in prison without parole, and does not prohibit prosecuting children in adult courts, trying an estimated 53,000 children in them each year.

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UN Pursuing All Efforts to Get Russian Fertilizers to International Markets - UNCTAD Chief

UNITED NATIONS, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is doing its best to get Russian fertilizers to international markets, Secretary-General of UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Rebeca Grynspan said on Tuesday.

"And what I can say is that the UN is pursuing all efforts to allow for a positive outcome on Russian ammonia export to international markets, and that's what we are doing," Grynspan told reporters.

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US Consumer Prices Up 8.3% in Year to August, Continue Dip From 40-Year Highs - Labor Dept

(Adds details, context and economists' reaction in paragraphs 3-12)

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - US consumer prices grew by 8.3% in the year to August, slowing for a second month in a row, Labor Department data showed on Wednesday, but economists said the retreat was unlikely to be enough to stop the Federal Reserve from approving another substantial rate in September to fight inflation.

"The all items index increased 8.3 percent for the 12 months ending August, a smaller figure than the 8.5-percent increase for the period ending July," the department said in a news release referring to the all-items reading in the Consumer Price Index, or CPI.

In June, the CPI hit a 40-year high by growing at an annualized 9.1%.

It slowed to a growth of 8.5% in July after tumble in fuel prices, which went from a record high of just over \$5 for a gallon of gasoline at US pumps in mid-June to below \$4 by last month. For August, economists had expected an 8.1% growth for the year and a negative 0.1% for the month.

The higher-than-expected final figures, that included a 0.1% increase — not decrease — for August, surprised forecasters, who concurred that the Fed was crawling rather than rolling in its fight against inflation.

Economists also said they expected the Fed to approve a third straight interest rate hike of 75 basis points when the central bank meets on September 21.

“A high CPI print raised the odds of a higher-for-longer [rates] scenario at the Federal Reserve,” economist Adam Button said in a comment posted on the Forex Live forum.

The Fed has raised rates by 225 basis points in four increases since March, with two back-to-back 75 basis point hikes in June and July, to curb runaway inflation.

The Fed’s target for inflation is a mere 2% a year and it has vowed to raise interest rates as much as necessary to achieve that.

Economists have cautioned that the Fed could end up pushing the United States into a deep recession with its sharpest rate hikes in four decades, saying the high-flying housing sector and one-time ebullient stock market could end up as the Fed’s victims.

Preliminary estimates show the US gross domestic product, or GDP, likely contracted by 0.6% in the second quarter after a 1.6% slowdown in the first quarter. Two straight quarters of GDP growth typically places an economy in a recession.

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RPT - Ex-Reagan Aide Massie to Put Presidential Correspondence Up for Auction - Representative

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - US writer and scholar on Russia, Suzanne Massie, who was an adviser to President Ronald Reagan, will put up for auction her unique historical archive, Massie’s representative in Russia and a manager of the International Diplomatic Club Balthasar Schaldenbrand told Sputnik.

"In addition to 14 personal letters from the former President Ronald Reagan, the collection includes Massie's correspondence with former President Bill Clinton, ex-Vice President Al Gore and other leading figures of the 20th century in politics, ballet, art, non-profit organizations and literature, including such international luminaries as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and George Balanchine," Schaldenbrand revealed.

Along with extensive correspondence and photographs, the materials in Massie's archive also include the research and original manuscripts for her five published books, including "Trust But Verify: Reagan, Russia and Me" (2013), her report on years when she advised President Reagan, and three extremely successful books about the history and culture of Russia: "Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia" (1982), "Pavlovsk: The Life of a Russian Palace" (1999) and "Living Mirror: Five young poets from Leningrad" (1972).

"I have always believed that America needs Russia, and Russia needs America, and that we could do a lot if found a way to get along together," Massie said ahead of the auction, organized by the International Diplomatic Club. "It has always been purpose of my work and career. To continue to strengthen the understanding to which I dedicated my life, this unique and historically important archival collection must be available to researchers in Russia, the United States and around the world."

The closed auction will take place at the International Diplomatic Club in Moscow.

"The condition of the sale is the permanent placement of the collection in Presidential Library in St. Petersburg, Russia," Schaldenbrand said.

Massie advised Reagan on Russia from 1984-1988 and played a significant role in the final years of the Cold War. She taught the president a Russian proverb, "trust, but verify," which he famously used during nuclear disarmament talks with the Soviet Union.

Massie is fluent in Russian and has written numerous books on Russian history and culture.

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US Consumer Prices Up 8.3% in Year to August, Continue Dip From 40-Year Highs - Labor Dept

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - US consumer prices grew by 8.3% in the year to August, extending their retreat from four-decade highs in July, according to Labor Department data on Tuesday that signaled the Federal Reserve's nominal but steady progress in fighting inflation.

"The all items index increased 8.3 percent for the 12 months ending August, a smaller figure than the 8.5-percent increase for the period ending July," the department said in a news release referring to the all-items reading in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

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First US Death Due to Monkeypox Confirmed in Los Angeles County

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The Los Angeles Department of Public Health has confirmed the first death from monkeypox in the country.

Health authorities in Texas reported in late August the first death of a person diagnosed with monkeypox in the US.

"The Los Angeles Department of Public Health, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has confirmed the first death due to monkeypox in a Los Angeles County resident. Public Health sends heartfelt condolences and wishes of healing to the family and friends mourning the loss of their loved one," the department said on Monday in a statement. The patient was "severely immunocompromised and had been hospitalized," according to the department.

"Persons severely immunocompromised who suspect they have monkeypox are encouraged to seek medical care and treatment early and remain under the care of a provider during their illness," it added.

The United States is the epicenter of the monkeypox outbreak with over 20,700 cases of the more than 54,900 confirmed cases worldwide as of September 6, according to US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data. Spain is the second highest on the list with 6,749, followed by Brazil with 5,409, according to data compiled from WHO, European CDC, and Ministries of Health worldwide.

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US Dollar May Lose Reserve Currency Status, Likely to Compete With BRICS System - Investor

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The US dollar is currently on the path of moving away from being a single reserve currency, and it will likely be competing with the BRICS currency system, Gary Korolev, CEO of the financial services firm Sovereign Wealth Management, told Sputnik.

"The trend is for the dollar to transition to a reserve currency instead of the reserve currency," Korolev said. "The biggest nail in slowly closing coffin of US dollar currency reserve status is the sanctions on Russia and the confiscation and or freezing of Russian reserves. The counter argument is that the West has frozen Venezuelan as well as Iranian and Afghani reserves in the past, however those countries can always be thought of as marginal players and quite extreme, while Russia being one of the biggest economies and exporters in the world is more of a mainstream player."

Korolev stressed that for a currency to be a reliable reserve, other sovereign nations have to feel safe that even if they disagree with the United States, their ability to transact and keep their savings in dollar denominated assets will not be threatened.

"After what has happened this year such a guarantee cannot be provided no matter what the US government says," Korolev stated.

Korolev also said, although it may take years for the BRICS countries to produce a competing monetary system, technology has provided an opportunity to move faster.

"The Russian/Chinese proposal to back a new international reserve currency with a basket of currencies of its members is the most likely candidate to challenge the dollar," Korolev said.

"The end result is likely an equilibrium between the competing Western dollar system and BRICS currency system."

When asked about the perspectives of trade in national currencies, for example ruble, Korolev said, "This is quite an inconvenient circumstance however necessity changes the equation where convenience takes second place to sovereign strategic interests."

"When countries are forced into using this option it only facilitates and further enables technology and forms new habits of trading in currencies besides the dollar," he added. "New businesses and experts are created, sub-industries emerge to facilitate such transactions. From

this new petri dish of innovation will come the facilitation of new BRICS competitor to the US dollar."

In July, American investment guru Jim Rogers told Sputnik that Recent actions by the United States, including confiscating other countries' dollars, will accelerate the move away from the dollar.

Rogers believes the US dollar is "coming to an end as the top currency," but it's not going to happen right away.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chair of Russia's Security Council, in July called for switching to new payment methods, including the use of national currencies, and did not rule out the establishment of a new reserve currency of the BRICS states.

This year's rally in the dollar - which is up 9% against a basket of six major currencies - has strengthened its standing as the world's reserve currency, helping the Federal Reserve somewhat in its aim to fight the worst US inflation in 40 years. But central banks elsewhere are also trying to raise the value of their currencies to tame relentless inflation in their own backyards.

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US Inflation Likely to Come Down, But Days of Price Rises Below 2% Are Behind - Investor

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Inflation in the United States will likely decrease in the short term but is unlikely to fall below the US Federal Reserve's target rate of 2%, CEO of the financial services firm Sovereign Wealth Management Gary Korolev told Sputnik.

"The US is heading towards slower growth and a likely recession. That is continuing to signal that they will keep fighting inflation, and as long as employment continues to be relatively strong it only gives the Fed cover to continue with hawkish monetary policy," Korolev said. "Inflation will likely come down even drastically over the short term, however, the days of consistent below 2% inflation are likely behind us."

Korolev believes that recession is the likely outcome of the Fed's ongoing monetary policy moves.

"The most lagging indicator of a recession is unemployment. Given that it takes quite a while for companies to react and unwillingly let employees go," he explained. "The peak in unemployment often shows up well after the economy has already started improving. As you can see, the unemployment rate often peaks right at the end or even well after the recession is already over."

The Fed has raised rates by 225 basis points in four increases since March, with two back-to-back 75 basis point hikes in June and July, to curb runaway inflation.

US prices have been growing at around four-decade highs since late last year, although the closely watched Consumer Price Index, or CPI, slowed to an annualized rate of 8.5% in July from a peak of 9.1% in June. The next CPI reading, for August, is due on Sept. 13.

The Fed's target for inflation is a mere 2% a year and it has vowed to raise interest rates as much as necessary to achieve that.

Economists have cautioned that the Fed could end up pushing the United States into a deep economy with its sharpest rate hikes in four decades, saying the high-flying housing sector and one-time ebullient stock market could be major victims.

Preliminary estimates show the GDP likely contracted by 0.6% in the second quarter after a 1.6% slowdown in the first quarter. Two straight quarters of GDP growth typically places an economy in a recession.

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European Market Trends Toward Hard Times Until It Figures Out Energy Deficit - US Investor

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The European market is trending toward harder times and the prospects for investment in the near term will remain "bombed out" until the region figures out the energy deficit and cost issue, the financial services firm Sovereign Wealth Management CEO Gary Korolev told Sputnik.

"The only positive near-term prospect for investing in Europe right now is that sentiment is so bombed out, the market usually looks for an opportunity for a countertrend rally at a time like this," Korolev said. "Otherwise, the trend is still toward harder times for Europe until they figure out the energy deficit/cost issue."

Korolev underscored that Europe will not be able to live without Russian energy but the region's economic engine, Germany, still plans to shut down its nuclear reactors despite massive energy problems.

"Nuclear is the only way to at least partially alleviate Europe's energy problems without the use of Russian gas," he said. "There is nowhere near enough compressed natural gas to go around and whatever can be delivered to Europe is at a much higher price than the pre-February 24 price at which the gas was flowing to Europe through the Russian pipelines."

Korolev went on to say that energy is the lifeblood of the economy and higher energy prices means that Europe, which already has comparatively high labor costs, will be even less competitive versus the emerging markets.

"This spells trouble for the famous European trade surplus," he said. "It is quite likely that political turmoil due to European electorates being very dissatisfied with high energy bills and high unemployment will filter through to change of heart in most, if not all of western European administrations. This may take a couple of years, enough for the politicians to save face, but our base case is it has to happen eventually."

Since 2021, energy and food prices in Europe have been surging as part of a global trend in large part due to the COVID-19 restrictive measures. After the beginning of Moscow's special military operation in Ukraine on February 24 and the imposition of comprehensive sanctions against Russia by the collective West, fuel and food prices have increased, pushing many European governments to resort to contingency measures.

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New ROCOR Primate Should Be Bicultural to Embrace Both Russians, Converts - Metropolitan

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The soon-to-be elected First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR) should be bilingual and bicultural in order to keep the church's dual mission and embrace both Russians and converts, the abbot of St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki monastery near Washington, DC, Metropolitan Jonah (Paffhausen), told Sputnik. The ROCOR hierarchs will choose the church's new leader on September 13 on the first day of the Bishops Council in New York. The position has become vacant after the previous primate, Metropolitan Hilarion (Kapral), died in May.

"Speaking of the new First Hierarch, we need somebody who is effectively bilingual and bicultural," Jonah said.

ROCOR carries a dual mission in the United States by serving Russians and those who converted to Orthodox Christianity from other denominations, he added.

"Now the old émigré community is all gone, but there is the new émigré community, which is full of the young people and young families who have bicultural and even bi-continental lives going back and forth. That is part of the reality of ROCOR," Jonah said.

At the same time, many parishes are mostly American and English-speaking, where people have no direct link to Russia, but share the vision of the faith and values of the Russian Orthodox Church, Jonah said.

"They value the leadership of the Patriarch and the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church," he said. "We feel the bishops are on the right track, and we feel they are strongest leaders of the Christian world in advocating traditional values."

The Metropolitan expressed confidence that the soon-to-be-elected First Hierarch should be able to understand the culture of the Russian emigres, those who came to the West after the fall of the Soviet Union, and those from different religions who converted to Orthodox Christianity.

"I believe ROCOR has a very important mission in the United States and in the Orthodox community because ROCOR does not compromise the faith, it does not compromise the practice, we are not trying to 'Americanize,' which usually means compromising the faith," Jonah said.

With respect to the challenges that ROCOR faces, Jonah noted they include temptations toward fundamentalism and traditionalism, as well as lack of attention to the English-speaking community. In this regard, establishing more churches and doing missionary work is the step in the right direction to address the challenges.

"We are Orthodox Christians and it does not matter what your ethnicity is and should not matter what your language is. We need to establish Spanish-language, French-language missions, we need to establish outreach in various places," he said.

Jonah also suggested avoiding focusing on ethnicity since second-generation Americans, or children of immigrants to the US, tend to leave so-called ethnic churches.

"Our calling is to have uncompromising adherence to the faith and values that have been passed on from the beginning, and not to allow random change, especially that is in contradiction to that," he said.

Asked about the ROCOR's challenges with respect to the current geopolitical situation, the Metropolitan said some people may not like the church's unity with the Moscow Patriarchate, but there is no ground for separation now.

"We are who we are and the reconciliation that happened in 2007 was really a recognition that ROCOR is an authentic part of the Russian Orthodox Church. There was a severing of the relationship for a while but the reasons for that severing were revealed and so, there is no reason for it," he said.

Jonah noted that the only thing that matters is the integrity of the Christian Orthodox faith and that is the very core of ROCOR that helped it overcome division and other challenges.

"Let's say, the only thing that overcomes all these very human divisions because it is not a human thing. It is Divine," he said.

On May 17, 2007, then-Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia Alexy II and ROCOR First-Hierarch Metropolitan Laurus signed the Act of Canonical Communion of ROCOR with the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. The accord allowed the two parts of the church, which had been separated for several decades, to unite.

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Investors Effuse About Russian Market But Need Clarity on Ukraine Outcome - US Investor

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Western investors are excited about the opportunities in the Russian market, which has been artificially affected by sanctions, but they need more clarity on the possible outcomes of the special military operation in Ukraine, financial services firm Sovereign Wealth Management CEO Gary Korolev told Sputnik.

"Western investors with long-time horizons are salivating over potential gains that can be made in a market which has been artificially suppressed due to the current sanctions. Any dislocation created artificially is a great opportunity for a patient investor," Korolev said. "The current price of the Russian stock market is at a 40% discount to its pre-February 24 value, the market has traded sideways since that date. This is because the market is waiting for more clarity on the outcome."

Korolev explained that the Shiller CAPE Ratio, the classic method of comparing the value versus the price of a market, was already among the best in the world even prior to February 24 when Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine.

"Now every ruble of earnings can be bought for a 40% discount to even that incredible number. Currency volatility should not be a huge concern since Russia has shown it wants to keep the Ruble pegged around 60 rubles per dollar and has proven the ability to keep its currency stable under extreme conditions."

Korolev said that potential investments depend great deal on the outcome of the conflict in Ukraine since if the collective West succeeds in supporting Kiev to a victory, it would be much

harder for the current Russian administration to continue with its long-term economic and geopolitical strategy.

"A defeat of Russia in Ukraine would likely mean the return of the 90s to Russia," Korolev said.

"If Russia is able to be perceived as a winner and to suppress the anti-Russian threat emanating out of Ukraine, any investor able to hold on their Russian equities prior to this outcome as being perceived as probably by the markets, will be rewarded handsomely."

In April, Russia sent a note to NATO member states condemning their military assistance to Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned that any arms shipments on the Ukrainian territory would be "legitimate targets" for Russian forces.

The Western sanctions against Russia have resulted in disruptions of supply chains and a spike in energy and food prices worldwide. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that the policy of containing and weakening Moscow is part of collective West's long-term strategy and its sanctions have affected the entire global economy and worsened the lives of millions of people.

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Ex-Reagan Aide Massie to Put Presidential Correspondence Up for Auction - Representative

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - US writer and scholar on Russia, Suzanne Massie, who was an adviser to President Ronald Reagan, will put up for auction her unique historical archive, Massie's representative in Russia Balthasar Schaldenbrand told Sputnik.

"In addition to 14 personal letters from the former President Ronald Reagan, the collection includes Massie's correspondence with former President Bill Clinton, ex-Vice President Al Gore and other leading figures of the 20th century in politics, ballet, art, non-profit organizations and literature, including such international luminaries as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and George Balanchine," Schaldenbrand revealed.

Along with extensive correspondence and photographs, the materials in Massie's archive also include the research and original manuscripts for her five published books, including "Trust But Verify: Reagan, Russia and Me" (2013), her report on years when she advised President Reagan, and three extremely successful books about the history and culture of Russia: "Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia" (1982), "Pavlovsk: The Life of a Russian Palace" (1999) and "Living Mirror: Five young poets from Leningrad" (1972).

"I have always believed that America needs Russia, and Russia needs America, and that we could do a lot if found a way to get along together," Massie said ahead of the auction, organized by the International Diplomatic Club. "It has always been purpose of my work and career. To continue to strengthen the understanding to which I dedicated my life, this unique and historically important archival collection must be available researchers in Russia, the United States and around the world."

The closed auction will take place this month at the International Diplomatic Club in Moscow.

"The condition of the sale is the permanent placement of the collection in Presidential Library in St. Petersburg, Russia," Schaldenbrand said.

Massie advised Reagan on Russia from 1984-1988 and played a significant role in the final years of the Cold War. She taught the president a Russian proverb, "trust, but verify," which he famously used during nuclear disarmament talks with the Soviet Union.

Massie is fluent in Russian and has written numerous books on Russian history and culture.

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RPT: PREVIEW - UN Kicks Off 77th Session of General Assembly

UNITED NATIONS, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United Nations 77th session of the General Assembly, a discussion forum many world leaders attend, is set to start on Tuesday.

UNGA 77, which will run from September 13-27 with high-level debate set to begin on September 20, marks the first in-person gathering of the body since the pandemic began.

Many experts and political leaders from all over the world fly to New York to attend the event. Experts help shed light with their detailed knowledge on specific issues, while presidents and ministers express their national positions and have meetings with other high officials. The representatives participate not only in multilateral meetings, where other states are attending and usually are focused on a particular topic, but also in bilateral meetings with others.

The concentration of everyone makes it more efficient to exchange opinions and get closer to specific agreements. Often it also happens that less friendly nations can schedule an unofficial meeting, which will have less impact in the media than if that would be an inter-state official visit to another state.

In that regard, all over the premises of the United Nations, there are booths for bilateral and multilateral meetings. The ad-hoc walls are from opaque materials so that the parties do not get disturbed and no one can see who is meeting with whom and what kind of gestures they have. The main events of the debate are: the summit on Transforming Education on September 19, the General Debate starting on September 20 to 26, Commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities on September 2, and the High-level plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26.

**UKRAINE CONFLICT, US-RUSSIA TENSIONS LIKELY TO DOMINATE AGENDA**

Even though the General Assembly kicks off on September 13, the most attention comes with the second week and, in particular, on September 20, when the General Debate starts. This is when all the governmental leaders who decided to attend will deliver their speeches.

The debate is organized according to diplomatic protocol, in which the heads of states go first, followed by prime ministers, foreign ministers, and other officials, and then permanent representatives.

Some states do not receive delegations from the capitals, such as North Korea, whose speech is presented yearly by its ambassador.

Every year, those who attend are under great scrutiny, and many analysts are implying what their attendance means for the world and the United Nations. Sometimes, the leaders need to give an accent or show their attitude towards something, and hence, they decide to attend.

For example, this year, the President of the United States, Joseph Biden, is expected to participate in person. He has one of the highest security levels. It is, however, unclear who will represent Russia as it is uncertain if Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will receive his visa. The US and Russia have long-standing problems with the United States not issuing permits to some of the vital Russian representatives, an issue which has already been multiple times raised with the United States' local authorities and the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

Throughout the debate, the biggest topic is expected to be Ukraine. Many officials are anticipated to speak about their views on the conflict, gather on the sidelines aiming to find solutions. In that regard, the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy might attend the debate, although it is not confirmed.

On a personal level, many delegates who are stationed in New York, complain about lack of sleep and long working hours already prior to the debate. Already now, individual missions are working hard to accommodate the visitors from their capitals, who often expected to be cared about - flights, hotels, restaurants and free time activities if time allows.

A UN diplomat told to Sputnik that 100 people are coming from his capital to New York, while his team has to work on the details for each of them.

The streets of New York, especially around the Headquarters are filled with mantinels and police men watching the crows, while easing the road for the multiple-car convoys to drive through to where they need.

Last but not least, there will be the funeral of the Queen Elizabeth II on September 19 in Windsor Castle, and it may slightly disrupt the attendance of some leaders and many have to show presence.

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PREVIEW - Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to Choose 7th First Hierarch in Church History  
WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) will convene in New York on Tuesday to kick off the Bishops Council and elect a new First Hierarch, the seventh primate in the church's 100-year history.

The seat of the ROCOR First Hierarch became vacant after the sixth church's Primate Metropolitan Hilarion (Kapral) passed away on May 16.

"According to our tradition that we have been following since 1964 when the first vote took place on America's soil for the First Hierarch, all active bishops, not those who have been retired, can vote for any candidate they like," chairman of the pre-Council commission Archbishop Gabriel (Chemodakov) of Montreal and Canada told Sputnik.

The voting will take place in a private manner behind the closed doors at the ROCOR Synod in New York City. Bishops will start with the special prayer service in the presence of the major Orthodox relic of the Russian diaspora - the Kursk Root icon of the Mother of God.

The winner should receive at least two thirds, or nine votes of 13 bishops. If no one is elected, two or three hierarchs, who received the most votes, will proceed to the second round. In case

of tie, the lots will be drawn, as was done the only time in ROCOR history, when Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov) became the primate in 1986.

The whole process may take just a few minutes or more than one hour, particularly in case of lots.

"The results will be announced as soon as the decision is made. There will be no reason not to let everybody know that a new First Hierarch has been chosen," Gabriel said.

While the church documents do not prohibit hierarchs to vote for themselves, the bishops now decided that such a vote would be improper. They also concluded that the new primate must live in the ROCOR Synod in New York and should vacate his previous diocese immediately or as soon as the hierarch is chosen to fill that position.

"That has to be understood, because unfortunately that did happen twice before, when the Metropolitan remained the archbishop of his previous diocese," Gabriel said.

He also did not rule out that the new Primate will be the first one in the Church's history who has no direct links to Russia.

"It is possible. Yes, anyone can be voted for," he added.

While the election of the new First Hierarch will be the major part of the ROCOR Bishops Council, its participants will consider other topics related to church life as well. That includes possible elections of new bishops and other matters.

"Also we will discuss the situation in Ukraine, and we will be coming out with the epistle from the Council to the faithful," Gabriel noted.

The Archbishop said that ROCOR does not have plans to consider limiting or severing ties with the Moscow Patriarchate due to the current geopolitical conditions.

"Absolutely, it is not on the table. I do not think that we will be discussing that particular aspect," he said.

Gabriel expressed his personal opinion that nothing will or should change with regards to ROCOR's relationship to the Patriarch and the Moscow Patriarchate.

"That will remain as it was, and hopefully it will remain good and for the benefit of both churches," he said.

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Russia Oil Price Cap Deal Likely to Officially Stand But De Facto Toothless - US Investor

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The price cap mechanism set to be imposed on Russian oil will likely officially stand but will not be effective due to the absence of enforcement required by the realities in the market, Gary Korolev, CEO of the financial services firm Sovereign Wealth Management, told Sputnik.

"The deal, like all others is likely destined to slowly fade into irrelevance," Korolev said.

Korolev pointed out that geopolitics is often more about posturing and showing strength even if the actual strategy has failed, and the collective West is already buying Russian oil on the black/gray market and paying a huge premium for it.

"This new deal will likely officially stand, however de facto will be toothless due to the many exceptions, loopholes, and lack of official enforcement necessitated by the market realities and the needs of western countries to keep their economies from grinding to a standstill," he said. On September 2, the Group of Seven (G7) countries' finance ministers confirmed their intention to impose a price cap on Russian oil as part of the expanded sanctions campaign against Moscow due to its special operation in Ukraine.

"The deal will likely fail given that large economies like India and China have already shown their unwillingness to fall in line behind the US-led sanctions strategy," he said. "The Indian Economy in particular has benefited from the European sanctions because now India has become a major exporter of refined Russian crude to Europe. India and China are already buying Russian oil at a discount and are making gigantic profits refining this oil due to the frictions created in the market by the West's artificially imposed sanctions."

Korolev said India and China as a matter of strategy have no interest in perpetuating the US-led hegemonic world order that puts their sovereignty in question.

"This is a world order they have experienced since the end of the Cold War. The plan presented by Russia/BRICS allows for a much more balanced international order with more respect for the sovereignty of individual countries and absence of judgment of non-aligned countries in terms of their internal affairs," he said. "India and China only stand to profit from the status quo, so they have no incentive to alienate Russia, lose the profits as well as the competitive advantage versus the West from the current environment."

Korolev explained that going along with the Western-imposed price cap would mean China and India would lose their sizable oil discounts, fat refining margins, oil shipments from Russia and would lose a powerful ally in their fight for sovereignty and the only country who is militarily a peer competitor to the United States.

Commenting on the current short-term price predictions, Korolev said much depends on market psychology rather than fundamentals.

"Having said that, on average, I would expect prices for oil and gas to be higher as the weather gets cooler," he said.

The Western price cap will take effect on December 5 for crude oil and on February 5, 2023, for refined products coming from Russia. Moscow has vowed to stop exporting oil to the states that would apply the price caps.

Russia has put on hold supplying gas via the Nord Stream 1 - the main pipeline supplying Europe with Russian natural gas - due to technical malfunctions.

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RPT: ANALYSIS - King Charles III's 'Activism' Amid Economic Crisis Could Lead UK Throne to Ruin

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - King Charles III, who has ascended the United Kingdom (UK) throne following the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II, could lead his

country to disaster through a combination of his mystical and activist tendencies and the terrible state of the national economy, experts told Sputnik.

Queen Elizabeth II passed away on September 8, at the age of 96, after over 70 years on the British throne. Her eldest son, Charles III, became the new king immediately after her death, but the official ceremony took place on Saturday at the St. James's Palace in London.

He made his first address to the UK parliament on Monday after he was officially proclaimed the country's new sovereign.

"Elizabeth gained the throne during the great postwar boom, so all she had to do was sit there in order to look good: Charles is gaining it during a deepening economic and political crisis and so will likely wind up looking bad no matter how hard he tries to behave," US constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare told Sputnik. "Britain is a kingdom, so if it goes down, the king goes down with it. Something tells me that Charles's reign is not going to be a happy one."

Lazare also said Charles is much more likely to get into trouble because he is more emotional and less adept at keeping his thoughts to himself.

"He's in favor of both traditional architecture and medicine, he has a streak of New Age mysticism, and tends to the authoritarian as well," Lazare said. "The question is whether he'd ever emulate his two namesakes - Charles I and II - and act on the basis of such tendencies. Fascism runs in his family, so it's impossible to say he won't."

If Charles stumbles into controversial policies, both the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth could disintegrate, Lazare warned.

"If so, no one knows what the Canadian or Aussie reaction would be, although Charles could certainly send them fleeing if he overplays his hand. The same goes double for Scotland and Northern Ireland. The pressures on both are enormous thanks to Brexit, the economic crisis, and the growing threat of war," Lazare said. "My guess is that the North [of Ireland] will end up joining the Irish Republic even though the process could be turbulent. Scotland is the great unknown, but Charles could well end up pushing the Scots over the edge."

Political commentator and former hedge fund manager Charles Ortel said much depends on whether the UK crafts an inspired restructuring of its productive economic base and reduces the size and costs of its many bureaucracies.

"Should living standards and opportunities for Britons improve, then perhaps the population will abide an opulent monarchy," Ortel told Sputnik.

However, if new Prime Minister Liz Truss fails to implement a swift economic turnaround, the country could fall into a dangerous depression, Ortel added.

"In this second scenario, I imagine the monarchy will likely find itself on its last and perhaps final legs," he said.

Canadian historian and Rising Tide Foundation Vice President Matthew Ehret predicted that Charles III's well documented desire to play a more activist role, combined with his lack of political judgment, boded ill for his future prospects.

"Charles is a weak shadow of anything approximating a leader, which wouldn't be so terrible if he genuinely wished to fulfill the stated purpose of the Crown and do nothing. Sadly, he is also a self-proclaimed activist royal with an obsessive drive to impose his beliefs of the way the world should be re-sculpted onto his kingdom," he said.

Charles had already throughout his life identified himself with controversial globalization policies that were bringing unprecedented hardship on billions of people around the world, Ehret warned.

"Charles also sees himself as founder of the World Economic Forum's Great Reset and leader of the global decarbonization agenda which are the two most disastrous schemes ever made by mankind which will result in billions of deaths if not aborted," he said.

Charles III's continued commitment to these policies could only end in catastrophe both for the United Kingdom and its monarchy, Ehret concluded."

"So in the final analysis, Charles' rule looks to be one of unmitigated disaster and will likely end in rebellion and possibly the same fate as befell his name sake [King Charles I, who was beheaded] in 1649," he said.

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US, Mexican Officials to Continue Talks on Border Security in October - Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - US and Mexican government officials will meet in October in Washington for a meeting on border security and irregular migration issues of mutual concern, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a press conference in Mexico City.

"The high level security dialogue that we will be picking up again in October is helping us tackle shared challenges like narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, as well as violence and insecurity," Blinken said on Monday alongside his Mexican counterpart Marcelo Ebrard.

Ebrard during the press conference confirmed a Mexican delegation will travel to Washington, DC, next month to discuss migration security issues.

On Monday, Blinken and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo led a US delegation in Mexico City for the High-Level Economic Dialogue between the US and Mexican governments, which covered topics of trade, security, and irregular migration.

During the meeting, Blinken said, both sides shared efforts to address irregular migration in the Americas, including through humane border management policies and through expanding legal pathways and protections. They also addressed the root causes of migration, something that Mexico and the United States are collaborating on, he added.

Well over 2 million migrants have entered the United States illegally via the US southern border since October, breaking last year's record set under the Biden administration's watch. The influx has severely strained local, state and federal resources trying to handle the situation.

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In that regard, all over the premises of the United Nations, there are booths for bilateral and multilateral meetings. The ad-hoc walls are from opaque materials so that the parties do not get disturbed and no one can see who is meeting with whom and what kind of gestures they have. The main events of the debate are: the summit on Transforming Education on September 19, the General Debate starting on September 20 to 26, Commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities on September 2, and the High-level plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26.

#### UKRAINE CONFLICT, US-RUSSIA TENSIONS LIKELY TO DOMINATE AGENDA

Even though the General Assembly kicks off on September 13, the most attention comes with the second week and, in particular, on September 20, when the General Debate starts. This is when all the governmental leaders who decided to attend will deliver their speeches.

The debate is organized according to diplomatic protocol, in which the heads of states go first, followed by prime ministers, foreign ministers, and other officials, and then permanent representatives.

Some states do not receive delegations from the capitals, such as North Korea, whose speech is presented yearly by its ambassador.

Every year, those who attend are under great scrutiny, and many analysts are implying what their attendance means for the world and the United Nations. Sometimes, the leaders need to give an accent or show their attitude towards something, and hence, they decide to attend.

For example, this year, the President of the United States, Joseph Biden, is expected to participate in person. He has one of the highest security levels. It is, however, unclear who will represent Russia as it is uncertain if Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will receive his visa.

The US and Russia have long-standing problems with the United States not issuing permits to some of the vital Russian representatives, an issue which has already been multiple times raised with the United States' local authorities and the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

Throughout the debate, the biggest topic is expected to be Ukraine. Many officials are anticipated to speak about their views on the conflict, gather on the sidelines aiming to find solutions. In that regard, the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy might attend the debate, although it is not confirmed.

On a personal level, many delegates who are stationed in New York, complain about lack of sleep and long working hours already prior to the debate. Already now, individual missions are working hard to accommodate the visitors from their capitals, who often expected to be cared about - flights, hotels, restaurants and free time activities if time allows.

A UN diplomat told to Sputnik that 100 people are coming from his capital to New York, while his team has to work on the details for each of them.

The streets of New York, especially around the Headquarters are filled with mantinels and police men watching the crows, while easing the road for the multiple-car convoys to drive through to where they need.

Last but not least, there will be the funeral of the Queen Elizabeth II on September 19 in Windsor Castle, and it may slightly disrupt the attendance of some leaders and many have to show presence.

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Mexico, US to Cooperate on Developing Semiconductor Supply Chains in N. America - Ebrard

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Mexico accepted the United States' invitation to partner together to develop semiconductor supply chains in North America, Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard said.

"Mexico is taking the US up on its offerings," Ebrard said during a press conference on Monday alongside US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "This is really something which we have received the invitation of participating as partners, as allies. We are in different initiatives implemented by President Biden's administration, they have to do with semiconductors. They have approved a very important package on this."

Ebrard said Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador during a meeting with Blinken earlier on Monday pledged to work with the United States on the semiconductor initiative. US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said during the press conference that the Biden administration has been engaging with stakeholders in the United States on this matter and expects the first US investment in Mexico for semiconductor supply chain efforts in the first half of 2023.

Blinken and Raimondo led a US delegation in Mexico City for the High-Level Economic Dialogue between the US and Mexican governments, which covered topics of trade, security, and irregular migration.

Last month, US President Joe Biden signed an executive order to implement the \$280 billion CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, which includes more than \$52 billion in subsidies for US semiconductor manufacturers in an effort to counter China's growing technological clout.

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## US Assesses Russia Maintains Significant Military Forces in Ukraine - Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - The United States assesses that Russia maintains significant armed forces in Ukraine despite counteroffensive, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a press conference in Mexico City.

"The Russians maintain very significant forces in Ukraine, as well as equipment and arms and munitions," Blinken said on Monday.

Blinken added that it is too early to predict the outcome of Ukraine's counteroffensive.

Over the weekend, Ukrainian forces carried out a counteroffensive against Russian-held positions in the Kherson and Kharkiv regions, which was launched with the assistance of the US and UK intelligence services, according to US Senator Mark Warner.

Russian troops near Kharkiv were relocated and regrouped to more effectively continue the special military operation in the Donbas, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

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## Blinken Says Prospects for Agreement on Iran Nuclear Deal Revival in Near Term Unlikely

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - Iran's response to the European Union's proposal to revive the Iran nuclear deal set back ongoing negotiations and made the prospects for an agreement in the near future unlikely, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a press conference in Mexico City.

"What we've seen over the last week or so in Iran's response to the proposal put forward by the European Union is clearly a step backward and makes the prospects for an agreement in the near term, I would say, unlikely," Blinken said on Monday.

Blinken added that Iran seems either unwilling or unable to do what is necessary to reach an agreement.

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## ANALYSIS - King Charles III's 'Activism' Amid Economic Crisis Could Lead UK Throne to Ruin

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - King Charles III, who has ascended the United Kingdom (UK) throne following the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II, could lead his country to disaster through a combination of his mystical and activist tendencies and the terrible state of the national economy, experts told Sputnik.

Queen Elizabeth II passed away on September 8, at the age of 96, after over 70 years on the British throne. Her eldest son, Charles III, became the new king immediately after her death, but the official ceremony took place on Saturday at the St. James's Palace in London.

He made his first address to the UK parliament on Monday after he was officially proclaimed the country's new sovereign.

"Elizabeth gained the throne during the great postwar boom, so all she had to do was sit there in order to look good: Charles is gaining it during a deepening economic and political crisis and so will likely wind up looking bad no matter how hard he tries to behave," US constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare told Sputnik. "Britain is a kingdom, so if it goes down, the king goes down with it. Something tells me that Charles's reign is not going to be a happy one."

Lazare also said Charles is much more likely to get into trouble because he is more emotional and less adept at keeping his thoughts to himself.

"He's in favor of both traditional architecture and medicine, he has a streak of New Age mysticism, and tends to the authoritarian as well," Lazare said. "The question is whether he'd ever emulate his two namesakes - Charles I and II - and act on the basis of such tendencies. Fascism runs in his family, so it's impossible to say he won't."

If Charles stumbles into controversial policies, both the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth could disintegrate, Lazare warned.

"If so, no one knows what the Canadian or Aussie reaction would be, although Charles could certainly send them fleeing if he overplays his hand. The same goes double for Scotland and Northern Ireland. The pressures on both are enormous thanks to Brexit, the economic crisis, and the growing threat of war," Lazare said. "My guess is that the North [of Ireland] will end up joining the Irish Republic even though the process could be turbulent. Scotland is the great unknown, but Charles could well end up pushing the Scots over the edge."

Political commentator and former hedge fund manager Charles Ortel said much depends on whether the UK crafts an inspired restructuring of its productive economic base and reduces the size and costs of its many bureaucracies.

"Should living standards and opportunities for Britons improve, then perhaps the population will abide an opulent monarchy," Ortel told Sputnik.

However, if new Prime Minister Liz Truss fails to implement a swift economic turnaround, the country could fall into a dangerous depression, Ortel added.

"In this second scenario, I imagine the monarchy will likely find itself on its last and perhaps final legs," he said.

Canadian historian and Rising Tide Foundation Vice President Matthew Ehret predicted that Charles III's well documented desire to play a more activist role, combined with his lack of political judgment, boded ill for his future prospects.

"Charles is a weak shadow of anything approximating a leader, which wouldn't be so terrible if he genuinely wished to fulfill the stated purpose of the Crown and do nothing. Sadly, he is also a self-proclaimed activist royal with an obsessive drive to impose his beliefs of the way the world should be re-sculpted onto his kingdom," he said.

Charles had already throughout his life identified himself with controversial globalization policies that were bringing unprecedented hardship on billions of people around the world, Ehret warned.

"Charles also sees himself as founder of the World Economic Forum's Great Reset and leader of the global decarbonization agenda which are the two most disastrous schemes ever made by mankind which will result in billions of deaths if not aborted," he said.

Charles III's continued commitment to these policies could only end in catastrophe both for the United Kingdom and its monarchy, Ehret concluded."

"So in the final analysis, Charles' rule looks to be one of unmitigated disaster and will likely end in rebellion and possibly the same fate as befell his name sake [King Charles I, who was beheaded] in 1649," he said.

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Alabama Couple Pleads Guilty for Providing Material Support to IS - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) - An Alabama couple with ties to the Islamic State (banned in Russia) pleaded guilty for attempting to provide material support to the terror group, the US Justice Department said in a press release.

"Today in the Southern District, Arwa Muthana, 30, of Hoover Alabama, pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, aka ISIS, a designated foreign terrorist organization," the release said on Monday. "On Friday, her husband James Bradley, aka Abdullah, 21, of the Bronx, entered a guilty plea to the same charge." The Justice Department said Bradley and Muthana attempted to travel to the Middle East to join and fight for Islamic State, the release said.

In May 2020, Bradley told an undercover law enforcement officer he believed the Islamic State may be good organization because it was seeking to establish a caliphate and spoke of his wish to launch a terrorist attack in the United States if he could not leave the country, the release said.

In June of that year, Bradley told the undercover agent that he wanted to attack a military base as a contribution to the cause of Islamic jihad. He then married Muthana in an Islamic ceremony in January 2021 and then discussed, planned and ultimately attempted to travel to the Middle East together to join and fight with Islamic State, the release said.

Muthana and her husband were arrested as they were boarding a cargo ship, the release also said.

Bradley and Muthana each pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization and could end up serving 20 years in prison, according to the release.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 13 (Sputnik) -

ZAPORIZHZHIA NUCLEAR PLANT

\* A safe zone around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP) should be created as a result of an agreement between Russia and Ukraine, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Rafael Grossi said on Monday.

\* Russia is not considering withdrawing its troops from the ZNPP and the main thing now is to force Ukraine to stop shelling the plant as it is fraught with catastrophic consequences, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

\* IAEA is leading the discussions on the conditions at the ZNPP and concerns about a major mishap there remain, United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

#### RUSSIA-CHINA RELATIONS

\* China's top foreign policy official Yang Jiechi said Monday that Beijing was ready to work together with Moscow to promote shared interests and their common vision of a fairer world order.

\* White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre on Monday refused to comment on the upcoming meeting between the presidents of Russia and China in Moscow later this week, but reiterated the United States' concerns about the alliance between the two countries.

#### GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

\* Gas futures in Europe fell below \$2,000 per thousand cubic meters for the first time since August 9, losing more than 8%, according to the London-based ICE exchange.

\* Gazprom is in contact with Siemens about the state of repair of a turbine after an oil leak was discovered on the engine equipment for the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

\* Peskov denied media reports alleging that Russia proposed India to supply oil at a lower price if New Dehli does not join the collective West in imposing a price cap on Russian energy products.

#### UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

\* Any actions in the course of the special military operation in Ukraine are reported to Supreme Commander-in-Chief Vladimir Putin, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday, commenting on the regrouping of Russian troops in the area of Balakliya and Izyum.

\* Russian President Vladimir Putin is in constant touch with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and other military leaders regarding the operation in Ukraine, Peskov said.

\* There are currently no prerequisites for holding a meeting between Putin and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Peskov said.

\* The new president of the UN General Assembly Csaba Korosi of Hungary called for a ceasefire in Ukraine.

#### KNIG CHARLES III ADDRESSES UK PARLIAMENT

\* UK King Charles III made his first address to the parliament after he was officially proclaimed the country's new sovereign, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

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IMF Chief Georgieva Says Meeting With Argentina Economy Minister 'Very Positive'

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Monday that she her meeting with Argentine Minister of Economy Sergio Massa in Washington was "very positive."

"I had a very positive meeting with Minister Massa after a week of highly professional and productive discussions between our technical teams. We exchanged views on the fragile economic and social situation in Argentina, which is also affected by the complex global economic context," Georgieva said in a statement.

The two officials discussed the situation in Ukraine and its impact on the global economy, including on commodity prices. They also discussed the fiscal and balance of payments implications for the developing economies, the statement said.

Georgieva commended the government of Argentina for the "strong steps" it is taking to stabilize the markets, the statement said.

"The Minister expressed his clear intention to mobilize external support, intensify efforts to stabilize the economy, and secure sustainable and inclusive growth, under the principles of fiscal order and improved reserve coverage," the statement said.

Georgieva welcomed Argentina's "strong commitment" to achieve major goals of the economic program and conclusive progress in such areas as macroeconomic and monetary policy frameworks, along with reserve accumulation, the statement said.

"Our teams will continue the meetings virtually this week with the aim of concluding staff level agreement in the coming days," the statement added.

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US Closely Engaged with Ukrainian Forces, Provided Info for Counteroffensive - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United States remained closely engaged with Ukrainian forces and provided them with intelligence in the buildup to their counteroffensive operation in the Kharkiv and Kherson regions, a senior US defense official said on Monday. "We're in close contact with and conversation with the Ukrainian military. They had multiple options. We certainly provide them with information on conditions, but in the end, this is a Ukrainian choice," the senior defense official said when asked to what extent the US was involved in planning the counteroffensive.

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## US to Continue Training Ukrainian Forces on New Weapons Being Supplied – Defense Official

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) – The United States will "certainly" continue training Ukrainian forces on newer, modern weapons systems being supplied to the country amid Russia's special military operation, a senior defense official said on Monday.

"The United States is already has been for a couple of months now been training Ukrainian forces on how to operate some of the newer, more modern capabilities that we have been supplying to Ukraine over the past few months, as well as maintenance, repair, and sustainment of those capabilities. So, we would certainly continue that area of training," the official said during a press briefing.

Some countries have begun to invest in and work on basic training for incoming Ukrainian soldiers and the leaders of the Contact Group member states discussed the next logical step in that progression during their meeting at Ramstein last week, the official added.

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Kennedy Vision Still Inspires Space Cooperation on ISS Today - Senior NASA Official  
WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The vision of the late US President John F. Kennedy about space exploration as an inspiring crusade to unite the peoples of the world and prevent war is still being fulfilled on the International Space Station (ISS) today, NASA Deputy Administrator Pamela Melrose told a ceremony commemorated to Kennedy's Moon Mission speech on Monday.

"Space is a beacon for international collaboration and we are seeing that on the International Space Station," Melroy, one of only two women ever to have commanded a space shuttle mission, said in her remarks at Rice University in Texas.

Melroy's speech was part of a commemorative event to honor the 60th anniversary of President Kennedy's speech there on September 12, 1962 when he pledged to land a US astronaut on the Moon by the end of that decade.

"Space remains a place where we can continue to always have conversations with each other and work together towards a common goal even when things are really tense here on earth," Melroy said.

In his 1962 speech at Rice, Kennedy presented a vision of human global cooperation in space to foster peace on earth, Melroy added.

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## US Moves Forward to Procure NASAMS Air Defense Systems for Ukraine - Official

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) – The United States has moved forward to procure for Ukraine air defense systems, including the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS), a senior defense official said on Monday.

"The United States has now moved forward to procure for Ukraine through USAI [Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative] air defense systems such as NASAMS," the official said during a press briefing.

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About 15,000 Minnesota Nurses Strike Seeking More Money, Staff, Better Patient Care

WASHINGTON September 12 (Sputnik) – About 15,000 nurses represented by the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) went on three-day strike beginning Monday in what is described as the largest strike of private-sector nurses in American history.

"Today's announcement follows a vote last month by the 15,000 nurse members to authorize a strike. That vote passed with overwhelming support, well beyond the two-thirds majority required," union leaders said in a press release. "Since that strike vote, nurses have met for additional negotiations with hospital executives who have continued to refuse solutions to short-staffing, retention and better patient care. Following the vote by Twin Cities and Twin Port nurses, nurses at Moose Lake also voted to authorize a strike and will join other nurses in striking on September 12."

Union leaders said corporate healthcare policies at the hospitals they work have resulted in understaffed and overworked nurses, with patients getting hefty bills while hospital services have been pared down and local hospitals are closed. Meanwhile, hospital executives take home "million-dollar paychecks," the union said.

The nurses are outraged that hospital CEOs, with multi-million-dollar salaries, have refused to negotiate with them over solutions to the crises, the association noted.

MNA said the strike follows months of fruitless negotiations with nurses trying to secure higher staffing levels and 30% wage increases over the next three years. Hospital execs offered 10-12% increases over three years and made clear that they didn't have the money to offer more.

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Oil Output in US Most Prolific Shale Basin Permian to Hit Record Highs in October - EIA

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - Crude oil production in the Permian, the most prolific US shale basin, is expected to hit all-time highs in October, the monthly drilling productivity report from the Energy Information Administration (EIA) showed Monday.

Some 66,000 barrels per day are expected to be added to Permian production as a whole, the report indicated. In its last forecast, the EIA said the top US shale basin was expected to produce 5.408 million barrels for September.

Shale oil is a type of unconventional oil found in shale formations that must be hydraulically fractured to extract the oil.

Shale output in the Bakken, the second major producing oil field, is expected to reach its highest output since November 2020, adding an estimated 21,000 barrels per day in October.

Eagle Ford, another key shale basin, is anticipated to reach its highest level since April 2020, adding 26,000 barrels per day.

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Trump Objects to Justice Department's Nominees for Special Master - Court Filing

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump objects to the Justice Department's nominees for special master – a neutral reviewer of case evidence – in the probe that led to an FBI raid on Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence last month, according to court documents filed Monday.

The FBI raided Mar-a-Lago as part of an investigation into potential mishandling of classified materials. Trump has denied any wrongdoing and characterized the probe as a weaponization of the US justice system against him.

Trump's legal team requested a neutral special master to review documents and other evidence seized during the FBI's raid, and objected to the government's attempts to withhold some materials from review.

"Plaintiff [Trump] objects to the proposed nominees of the Department of Justice. Plaintiff believes there are specific reasons why those nominees are not preferred for service as Special Master in this case," the filing said.

However, Trump's legal team did not provide the basis for opposition to the candidates out of respect for them, but is prepared to provide details should the court ask, according to the filing. Trump's lawyers are similarly willing to provide rationale in support of their list of nominees if the court desires, the filing added.

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UN General Assembly New President Says Hopes Grain Deal Will Be Prolonged After 3 Months

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - The new president of the UN General Assembly, Csaba Korosi, said on Monday that he hopes the United Nations-brokered agreement between Russia and Ukraine enabling safe exports of grain and fertilizer via the Black Sea will be prolonged after its tenure of 120 days.

"This should be continued and I hope very much that the deal of continuation of the exports will be prolonged after 120 days," Korosi said.

The new president of the UN General Assembly noted that the food crises have touched upon all nations.

Korosi, who replaced Abdullah Shahid of the Maldives, will preside with the UN General Assembly for one year. The position is viewed as highly symbolic given that the president does not have so-called determining powers.

Korosi, who comes from Hungary, has said his motto is to be objective and deal with all issues on the basis of science.

The agreement between Russia and Ukraine was reached on July 22 and will expire in November after 120 days.

Russia said it has seen "no results" from the agreement and also noted that much of the grain is going to developed countries as opposed to poor and developing countries that are more severely affected by the food crisis.

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New President of UN General Assembly Calls for Ceasefire in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - The new president of the UN General Assembly, Hungary's Csaba Korosi, called for a ceasefire in Ukraine on Monday.

"To ensure the elevation of all this suffering which has been caused by this war, fire should be ceased as soon as possible," Korosi told journalists at the United Nations in New York.

Korosi also called for an immediate ceasefire and unhindered access for humanitarian aid.

Korosi will serve as the UNGA president for one year, replacing Abdulla Shahid of Maldives.

The post has mostly symbolic powers.

The 77th session of the UN General Assembly starts on September 13, the day after Korosi's formal inauguration.

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Ukraine Foreshadows Major US Weapons Request for Offensive Against Russia - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The Ukrainian government previewed for US lawmakers a weapons package request that Kiev wants in order to press with an offensive campaign against Russia into the next year, the Wall Street Journal reported on Monday.

Ukraine provided a list of requested weapons to Congress it believes would allow its forces to launch a successful offensive against Russia, including long-range missiles that the United States has so far been reluctant to provide, the report said.

Kiev is requesting Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) whose range is 190 miles and the Defense Department worries Ukrainian forces might use to strike Russian territory and escalate the conflict, the report said.

The long-range cruise missiles could help Ukraine more effectively fight the Russian forces during an offensive, Ukrainian officials said in documents sent to lawmakers.

The only way to radically change the strategic situation is for the Ukrainian forces to launch several consecutive and ideally simultaneous counterattacks during the 2023 campaign, the report cited the document as saying.

The list of arms requested for the offensive operation also includes tanks, drones, artillery systems, anti-ship missiles and ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS).

The Biden administration has provide more than \$15 billion in security assistance to Ukraine so far, including HIMARS, drones, ammunition and armored vehicles.

The request comes amid a counteroffensive by Ukrainian forces against Russian-held positions in the Kherson and Kharkiv regions, launched with the assistance of the US and UK intelligence services, according to US Senator Mark Warner.

Russian troops near Kharkiv were relocated and regrouped to more effectively continue the special military operation in the Donbas, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

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IAEA Leads Discussions on ZNPP, Concerns Over 'Major Mishap' Remain - UN Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is leading the discussions on the conditions at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP) and concerns about a "major mishap" there remain, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"Right now, the IAEA is leading on the discussions of the conditions surrounding the power plant, where concerns about the risk of a major mishap ... continue," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

Dujarric said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has been trying to speak by telephone with the requisite people regarding the ZNPP after returning from a trip to Pakistan.

On Monday, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said Russia and Ukraine have shown interest in the proposal to set up a safety zone around the ZNPP.

The Zaporizhzhia regional authorities said on Sunday that the last operating ZNPP power unit was shut down amid continuing shelling by Ukrainian troops.

The Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions are now under control of the Russian military after Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine on February 24.

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## UN Convoy to Reach Kharkiv Region to Deliver Aid This Week - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - A United Nations convoy is planned to reach the Kharkiv region (Kharkivska Oblast) this week to provide aid in an area that is back under Ukraine's control, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"We along with our partners are working with local authorities in Kharkivska Oblast to provide aid to conflict affected people," Dujarric said during a press briefing. "Humanitarian convoy is planned this week to the area of Kharkivska Oblast that is now back under the government of Ukraine's control."

Dujarric pointed out that more than 585 United Nations partners have sent humanitarian aid reaching 12.8 million.

In late August, Ukrainian troops began counteroffensive operations in the Kherson and Kharkiv regions and captured swaths of territories. The Russian Defense Ministry said it moved elsewhere its troops near Kharkiv and regrouped to more effectively continue the special military operation in the Donbas. It said that the counteroffensive attempts have been repulsed while the Ukrainian troops are suffering heavy losses in manpower and equipment.

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## White House Says No Comment on Putin-Xi Meeting But Concerned About Russia-China Alliance

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre on Monday refused to comment on the upcoming meeting between the presidents of Russia and China in Moscow later this week, but reiterated the United States' concerns about the alliance between the two countries.

"We're going to let President Xi [Jinping] and President [Vladimir] Putin speak to their meeting. We've made clear our concerns about the depth of China's alignment and ties with Russia, even as Russia prosecutes a war of aggression in Ukraine, but again, I'm not going to speak to their meeting. They can speak to that themselves," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

Xi is scheduled to meet with Putin this week during his first trip outside China since the COVID-19 pandemic started and ahead of the 22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) set to take place in Uzbekistan September 15-16.

The United States has repeatedly issued warnings to China about the inadmissibility of its support for Russia amid Moscow's special military operation in Ukraine. China has repeatedly stated its intention to continue to develop mutually beneficial relations with Russia despite the protests by its Western partners.

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#### Biden Complains About Deteriorating Conditions at US Airports

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United States has fallen behind other countries with respect to aviation infrastructure maintenance and no US airport is among the world's top 25 airports at present, President Joe Biden said on Monday.

"America invented modern aviation, but we've allowed our airports to lag behind our competitors'. Today, not a single solitary American airport, not one, ranks in the top 25 in the world," Biden said during a speech in Boston. "What in the Hell's the matter with us?"

Biden spoke at Boston's Logan International Airport about federal investments in US infrastructure, including in airports.

The president said a recent \$62 million investment in the Logan International Airport by the Biden administration is one of the largest airport improvement investments in history.

Congress passed a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill last year to fund infrastructure projects, including building and upgrading bridges, roads, electric vehicles, airports and energy grids among other infrastructure items.

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#### US Consumers' Inflation Expectations at Near 2-Year Low as Fuel Prices Fall - NY Fed

NEW YORK, September 12 (Sputnik) - US consumers' inflation expectations are at their lowest in almost two years after fuel prices fell more than 30% from June's record highs, but a robust job market also makes it hard for the Federal Reserve to ease off on interest rate hikes, the New York division of the central bank said.

"Inflation expectations continued to decline across all horizons," the New York Fed said in its August consumer expectations survey. "Expectations about year-ahead price increases for gas also continued to decline, with households now expecting gas prices to be roughly unchanged a year from now."

US consumers' 3-year inflation forecasts declined to 2.8% in August from 3.2% in July, the lowest level in almost two years, notes from the survey showed. It came as pump prices for gasoline, America's main automobile fuel, fell from a peak of \$5.01 per gallon in mid-June to average at \$3.71.

The New York Fed said in its report on the survey that home price growth expectations fell sharply. "Consumers were more optimistic about their future household income and financial situations."

But it also said expectations of future credit access deteriorated as fears of rising interest rates grew.

"The mean perceived probability that the average interest rate on saving[s] accounts will be higher in 12 months was unchanged in August," the New York Fed said. Higher payouts on

deposits can only be made if interest rates rise across the board, and that's an anathema for businesses.

The Fed has raised rates by 225 basis points in four increases since March, with two back-to-back 75 basis point hikes in June and July, to curb runaway inflation.

US prices have been growing at around four-decade highs since late last year, although the closely watched Consumer Price Index, or CPI, slowed to an annualized rate of 8.5% in July from a peak of 9.1% in June. The next CPI reading, for August, is due on Sept. 13.

The Fed's target for inflation is a mere 2% a year and it has vowed to raise interest rates as much as necessary to achieve that.

Economists have cautioned that the Fed could end up pushing the United States into a deep recession with its sharpest rate hikes in four decades, saying the high-flying housing sector and one-time ebullient stock market could be major victims.

Preliminary estimates show the US gross domestic product, or GDP, likely contracted by 0.6% in the second quarter after a 1.6% slowdown in the first quarter. Two straight quarters of GDP growth typically places an economy in a recession.

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Canada to Play 'Prominent' Role in Queen Elizabeth II's Funeral Ceremony – Official

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) – Canadian officials will play a "prominent" role during Queen Elizabeth II's lying-in-state and funeral ceremony next week, with the prime minister and governor general due to attend, High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Ralph Goodale said. "Canada, being one of the most senior countries in the Commonwealth, will be prominent at the beginning of the laying in state and then later on when there will be official visits by the Governor General and by the Prime Minister," Goodale told The Canadian Press on Sunday. Members of the Canadian delegation have already started to arrive in the United Kingdom to manage logistics while Royal Canadian Mounted Police personnel will be coming to the country in the next two days, the news agency said.

On September 8, UK Queen Elizabeth II, who reigned over the kingdom and 14 Commonwealth realms for more than 70 years, died at the age of 96. Her eldest son, Charles III, was officially proclaimed the new UK king on Saturday.

The Queen's coffin will lie at rest at Westminster Abby from September 14 to 19. The monarch's funeral will take place at 11 a.m. local time (10:00 GMT) on September 19.

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US Detects, Tracks 2 Russian Aircraft in International Airspace Near Alaska - NORAD

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United States detected, tracked and identified two Russian aircraft in international airspace near the US state of Alaska, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) said in a press release on Monday.

"On September 11, 2022, the North American Aerospace Defense Command detected, tracked and positively identified two Russian maritime patrol aircraft entering and operating within the Alaskan and Canadian Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ)," the release said. "The Russian aircraft remained in international airspace and did not enter American nor Canadian sovereign airspace."

The presence of the Russian aircraft in the North American ADIZ is not considered by the United States as a threat nor as a provocative activity as NORAD routinely tracks and identifies all foreign military aircraft entering the zone, the release said.

To track and identify foreign aircraft, NORAD employs a layered defense network of satellites, ground-based radars, airborne radar, and fighter aircraft and remains ready to employ a number of response options, the release added.

The news comes amid escalated tensions between Russia and NATO countries, including the United States and Canada, due to its special military operation in Ukraine.

Canada announced in June a \$30 billion investment in NORAD modernization over the next two decades.

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US Set to Broaden Restrictions on Semiconductor Exports to China Next Month - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is set to broaden restrictions on the export of semiconductor technology from the United States to China as part of an effort to impede Beijing's technological progress, Reuters reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

The US Commerce Department plans to release regulations next month restricting the export of chipmaking equipment to Chinese factories that produce semiconductors, the report said on Sunday.

The regulations would also restrict shipments of some artificial intelligence computing chips to China, the report added.

The Commerce Department is taking a comprehensive approach to protect US national security and foreign policy interests, a spokesperson reportedly said when asked about the impending regulations.

The restrictions come as part of the Biden administration's efforts to slow China's technological advances by targeting areas where the US maintains an edge, according to the report.

US officials have contacted allies to urge them to implement similar restrictions on selling technology to China, two of the sources also said.

Tensions between Washington and Beijing have risen in recent weeks following a contentious visit to Taiwan by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

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Nearly Half of Ukraine Grain Exported to Developed Countries - Joint Coordination Center

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - Some 44% of Ukrainian grain exported via the Black Sea under the United Nations- and Turkey-brokered agreement has been sent to developed countries and only 28% to developing countries, the Joint Coordination Center spokesperson Ismini Palla said in a statement on Monday.

"Destinations: 28% to low and lower-middle income countries: Egypt (10%), Iran and India (5%), Sudan and Kenya (2%), and Djibouti, Lebanon, Somalia, and Yemen (1%); 27% to upper-middle income countries: Turkiye (19%), China (8%), and Bulgaria (<1%); and 44% to high-income countries: Spain (13%), The Netherlands (8%), Italy (7%), Republic of Korea (5%), Romania (4%), Germany (2%), and France, Greece, Ireland and Israel (1%)," the statement said.

Fifty-three percent of the cargoes' content consisted of corn, 23% of wheat, 12% of sunflower products, 6% of barley, 5% of grape-seed and 1% of soya beans, the statement said.

The agreement, formally known as the Black Sea Initiative, is meant to enable a safe export of grain out of Ukraine as well as fertilizer and grain out of Russia onto the world markets. The agreement was reached on July 22 with the help of the United Nations and Turkey.

Russian officials have criticized how the agreement has been implemented, saying countries in great need such as Sudan and Kenya, have received only 2% of the grain.

Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said at the beginning of September that Russia has seen "zero results" from the implementation of the grain agreement.

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Blue Origin Aborts Uncrewed Launch After Mid-Flight Anomaly, Capsule Escapes

(Updates with more details in paras 4, 5)

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The aerospace company Blue Origin successfully detached the capsule of its New Shepard suborbital spacecraft and aborted the launch after the vehicle experienced a mid-flight anomaly on Monday, according to a live broadcast.

"We have seen an abort of New Shepard," an announcer said, while another called it an unplanned "anomaly." The capsule used to haul cargo or crew successfully detached after aborting the launch, the announcer added.

Blue Origin is led by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, with the New Shepard program designed to facilitate private space tourism. Over 30 people have been flown into space on the New Shepard.

The launch anomaly was caused by a booster failure, Blue Origin said via social media.

A video of the incident shows the vehicle ascending steadily into space before a large burst of flames emerges from the rocket, prompting the capsule to eject shortly afterwards. The video then shows the capsule returning to the ground by utilizing parachutes.

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UN Calls on 'De Facto' Authorities in Afghanistan to Stop Harassing Afghan UN Female Staff

UNITED NATIONS, September 12 (Sputnik) - The United Nations on Monday called on the "de facto" authorities in Afghanistan to immediately stop harassing Afghan women who are working at the UN mission in the country consistent with its obligations under international law.

"The United Nations calls for an immediate end to all such acts of intimidation and harassment targeting its Afghan female staff, calling on the de facto authorities to reiterate and enforce explicit guarantees for the safety and security of all UN personnel operating in Afghanistan in a manner consistent with Afghanistan's obligations under international law," the world body said in a press release.

The United Nations is aware of an emerging pattern of harassment of Afghan female staff at the UN mission by the authorities, the release said.

One example of the harassment occurred earlier on Monday when three Afghan women working for the United Nations were temporarily detained for questioning by armed security agents of the authorities, the release said.

The Taliban (under UN sanctions for terrorism) took power in Afghanistan in August of 2021, triggering the collapse of the US-backed government and accelerating the United States' troop pullout.

On August 31, 2021, US forces completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan, ending the 20-year-long military presence in the country.

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US Chamber of Commerce Says National Rail Strike Would Be 'Economic Disaster'

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) – The US Chamber of Commerce warned on Monday that a potential rail strike would lead to "economic disaster," calling on Congress to be prepared to intervene.

"A national rail strike would be an economic disaster – freezing the flow of goods, emptying shelves, shuttering workplaces, and raising prices for families and businesses alike, but that is exactly what is likely to happen in less than four days," the chamber stated in a release.

It added that avoiding a strike would require one of three scenarios: "the remaining unions who have not agreed to a deal need to join the ones who have; an agreement to extend the current 'cooling off' period must be reached; or Congress intervenes, as it has in prior situations."

The chamber said it had sent a letter to Congress urging it to impose the recommendations of the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) if all 12 unions did not reach a voluntary agreement with the six freight railroads by the end of the "cooling off" period on Friday.

The PEB is a group of independent experts appointed by US President Biden to develop recommendations to help both sides reach a voluntary agreement. The chamber argued that the PEB's recommendations constituted "a viable framework for compromise" and absent a voluntary agreement, "the next best outcome" was congressional intervention.

The chamber noted there was historical precedent for such intervention, as Congress had mandated the parties to accept the recommendations of previous PEBs in 1982 and 1986.

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DART Spacecraft Set to Hit Asteroid in Planetary Protection Test in 2 Weeks - NASA

WASHINGTON, September 12 (Sputnik) - The US Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART), the world's first mission to test technology for defending Earth against potential asteroid or comet hazards, will impact its target asteroid Dimorphos on September 26, NASA and Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) mission planners told a press conference on Monday.

"While DART's target asteroid is not a threat to our planet, this test will see if asteroid deflection using a kinetic impactor spacecraft is a viable way to respond to a future asteroid on a collision course with earth should one ever be discovered," NASA Science Mission Directorate Associate Administrator Thomas Zurbuchen said.

Dart is a first of its kind spacecraft that will automatically navigate to a target asteroid and intentionally collide with it to change the asteroid's motion in a way that can be measured using ground-based telescopes, Zurbuchen said.

"For the first time we will measurably change the orbit of a celestial body in the universe. Doing so has clear benefits in ensuring humanity's ability to deflect any potential threatening asteroid in the future," APL Director Bobby Brown told reporters.

DART will provide important data to help better prepare for an asteroid that might pose an impact hazard to Earth, should one ever be discovered, NASA said in a statement.