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Least Developed Countries Group to Press for Fund for Global Warming Compensation at COP27

By - Fantine Gardinier

Ahead of the UN World Climate Conference (COP27) in November, a group of poorer nations has joined together to demand that richer nations, many of which industrialized by colonizing them, form a fund to help them pay for the destruction caused by greenhouse gas emissions. At a summit in Dakar, Senegal, ministers and experts from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group adopted a common position ahead of the COP27 conference scheduled for November at the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh in South Sinai. The [group includes 45 nations](#), mostly from equatorial Africa and Asia, but also Afghanistan and Haiti, and represents some 880 million people, or 12% of humanity.

The final declaration of the meeting expresses "the crucial importance of setting up a financing mechanism to deal with loss and damage."

Their joint statement notes "the crucial importance of setting up a financing mechanism to deal with loss and damage" and calls on "all parties, especially major emitters, to urgently and significantly reduce (their) greenhouse gas emissions" while urging rich countries to honor their promises to take action on climate change.

"Events such as flooding, coastal erosion, unseasonal rainfall ... when these events occur unpredictably and with sometimes extremely high intensities, countries are left to fend for themselves," Senegalese Environment Minister Abdou Karim Sall [told reporters in Dakar](#). "It has become imperative that a fund be set up to cover losses and damage, particularly in the least developed countries."

Last week, [another meeting](#) of two dozen African nations in Cairo arrived at a similar conclusion, urging "developed countries to fulfill their pledges in relation to climate and development finance, and deliver on their commitments to double adaptation finance, in particular to Africa."

It has become increasingly common to link the poverty of the Third World, the affluence of the First World, and the accelerating climate change caused by industrial pollution, and thus to link the efforts to mitigate climate change effects with a greater struggle for justice.

A July study by climate scientists at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire found that through [two centuries of industrialization](#) built upon the burning of fossil fuels like coal, petroleum, and natural gas, the United States is responsible for [roughly \\$1.9 trillion of damages](#) caused by weather that was worsened due to climate change. Last week, Pakistan's climate minister, Sherry Rehman, [pointed the finger directly at](#) global corporations for the catastrophic flooding that has killed more than 1,300 Pakistanis in recent weeks.

According to UN statistics, Africa has produced just 3% of global carbon emissions, yet African nations are among those most exposed to the effects of climate change.

"The world has a fever. It burns hotter and higher with every day that passes," [Moon recently said](#). "Statistics tell us that Africa is where the fever is at its most intense and people at the most vulnerable."

However, there is tension around the issues of economic development and climate change among developing nations, too. At the Dakar conference, US President Joe Biden's climate envoy, [John Kerry, pressed African nations](#) to do their share to combat climate change, even while acknowledging that 20 nations are responsible for 80% of the world's emissions, and none of them are African.

"But others, despite what the science is saying, hold back, saying, pointing the finger elsewhere, 'You guys create it, you guys have to cure it,'" [Kerry said at the conference](#). "Well guess what, folks? Mother Nature does not measure where the emissions come from. They don't have a label of one country or another on them. They are from all of the choices we make about how we move our vehicles, how we heat our homes, how we light our businesses."

In response, Eve Bazaiba, the deputy prime minister and environmental minister for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, called it "inconceivable" that the West, which "has built its industry on fossil fuels," would ask them to give up hydrocarbon exploration. Delegates from host nation Senegal similarly rejected Kerry's overtures.

"We must also fight poverty, we must link the issue of environmental protection to the economy to achieve sustainable development," Bazaiba said.

At a [global climate summit](#) in April 2021, dozens of nations, including industrial powers, [pledged steep cuts](#) to their carbon emissions in the coming decades, with the aim of reaching "carbon neutrality."

Without action to halt climate change, greenhouse gasses will continue to drive the Earth's surface temperature higher, destabilizing the weather systems that make agriculture and aquaculture possible, and even more dangerously, causing [glaciers and the polar ice caps](#) to melt, which will cause the world's seas to rise. By some estimates, [at least 410 million people](#) live in areas threatened by rising ocean levels, living in regions that would be reclaimed by the sea if global sea levels rose by one meter, as they are projected to do by the year 2100.

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'Operation Butt Plug': 'NASA' Makes Hilarious Mistake of Asking Public to Name Uranus Probe
By - Fantine Gardinier

A Twitter account impersonating the US space agency NASA recently asked the public to weigh in on possible names for the exploratory vehicle it hopes to send to the solar system's seventh planet in the coming years. It went about as well as you'd expect - that's right, it's a lot of butt jokes.

NASA aims to launch the Uranus Orbiter and Probe towards the icy, [sideways-spinning planet](#) by 2030. It will be the first probe ever sent to study Uranus up-close, having only previously

been visited by the Voyager 2 probe during a quick 1986 flyby. The new probe will [orbit the planet and study](#) its pale, seemingly featureless atmosphere in depth, and could possibly carry another, smaller probe to plunge down into the Uranian atmosphere.

However, the mission has already hit a snag: a fan account called "Ice Giant Missions", which advocates for such probes to be sent to Uranus, Neptune, and the outer minor planetoids, asked for the public to suggest names for the spacecraft.

Of course, the planet's name is derived from the Greek titan Uranus (Οὐρανός in ancient Greek), the personification of the sky, but to your average Anglophone, it sounds like a reference to someone's bottom.

Here's a [small sample of the names](#) that got submitted:

Advanced New Uranus Space Mission (ANUS)

Better Uranus Telemetry Tracking (BUTT)

Planetary Orbital Observation Probe (POOP)

Bootylicious

Operation Butt Plug

Our Anus

Uranal Probe

Urectum (this one is from [the cartoon Futurama](#))

Shinya-Wolff (the two doctors who [pioneered the colonoscopy](#) procedure)

And of course, [Probie McProbeface](#)

There were also some serious name submissions, including suggestions of various polytheistic deities, astronomers, and references to the William Shakespeare play "The Tempest," from which the names of [many of Uranus' moons](#) have been drawn.

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Global Inflation Driving Millions Back Into Poverty as Commodity Prices Continue to Rise
By - Fantine Gardinier

Production and shipping delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, corporate profiteering, and Western sanctions on Russia have all helped to drive a global increase in the prices of basic commodities, pushing millions of people on the brink back into poverty, hunger, and squalor. The worldwide average cost of living has risen more in the last 18 months than during the previous five years combined, according to [a report last week](#) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It's also rising faster in what the IMF terms "emerging markets," or underdeveloped parts of the world that were formerly European colonies, than it is in the industrial core countries.

[Recent World Bank data](#) shows that the countries facing the highest inflation include Argentina, Venezuela, Suriname, Ghana, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, and Moldova; trailing close behind them are countries like Colombia, Angola, Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Hungary, Ukraine, and Lithuania. Meanwhile, the lowest inflation rates are found in Switzerland, France, Bolivia, China, Vietnam, and Japan.

The IMF noted that increases in food and energy prices - especially transportation costs - are driving the inflation of other goods. As a result, the International Energy Association ([IEA](#)) [has sounded the alarm](#) that by the end of 2022, as many as 30 million Africans will no longer be able to afford the [liquefied petroleum gas](#), such as butane or propane, that they use to cook food. "If a household is already spending more than 50 per cent of their income on food [and prices increase even further], that is not being spent on other goods, and that has a spillover effect on economies," Jacques Nel, head of Africa macro at Oxford Economics Africa, told the [Financial Times](#) on Tuesday.

A recent survey of global prices for Agence France-Presse (AFP) found that energy prices in the Eurozone in August were 38.6% higher than the previous August, due in large part to the European Union's insistence on following a US-led boycott of Russian energy exports, upon which many European nations depend heavily.

In Thailand, the price of instant noodles increased by 17%, while in Mexico, the price of corn flour increased by 13% last month. Brazilians saw the price of pinto beans increase by 23%, while Argentinians have seen a 75% increase in the price of hamburger patties. The aluminum cans used by drink sellers have increased in cost by 70% over the past nine months, driving up the cost of beer and other beverages.

However, the IMF has also stood in the way of some governments' attempts to shield their citizens from the price increases: [on Thursday, Kenya announced](#) it was eliminating some fuel subsidies and reducing others, along with food subsidies, after the IMF compelled Nairobi to slash its budget as part of the terms for receiving an emergency loan in July.

An epidemic of debt has also been part of the fallout of the pandemic. The Washington, DC-based lender has similarly compelled [governments from Tunisia](#) to Sri Lanka and [Zambia to reduce](#) the involvement of their respective governments in their national economies as a condition for receiving loans.

The response by many nations to rising inflation has been for their central banks [to increase interest rates](#), the reflexive fiscal policy answer to currency depreciation because it reduces incentives for banks to create new money through loans. However, the [World Bank also warned](#) on Thursday that doing so carried an increased risk of plunging the global economy into a recession.

While China has one of the world's lowest rates of inflation, another danger is threatening its decades-long anti-poverty work. A prolonged drought has destroyed crops across the country's south and central regions, and many farmers who had previously been brought above the threshold of extreme poverty could slip back underneath it as a result, according to the [South China Morning Post](#). Beijing announced last year it had lifted some 800 million people out of poverty since the early 1980s.

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Tropical Storm Fiona to Become Hurricane After Striking Caribbean, Could Threaten US East Coast

By - Fantine Gardinier

September is the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season, which has been noticeably quieter than normal. Recent years have seen an increase in both the number and intensity of tropical cyclones in the region, a phenomenon linked to the influence of global warming.

Tropical Storm Fiona, churning toward the Leeward Islands on Friday evening with 50 mph winds, will strengthen into a hurricane in the coming days, the US [National Hurricane Center](#) said.

Although the storm is presently bearing down upon Guadeloupe, extreme wind shear has pushed Fiona's powerful thunderstorms onto its eastern side, meaning the island chain has seen almost no rain, even though Fiona's eye is just 20 miles off the coast.

Tropical storm [warnings have been issued](#) for the Leeward Island nations, and tropical storm watches have been issued for Dominica and parts of the Dominican Republic. In addition to its damaging winds, Fiona could bring between 12 and 16 inches of rain, as well as a dangerous storm surge, causing both coastal and inland flooding.

After passing through the islands, Fiona is expected to head westward and then hook to the north, toward the Bahamas, where it will continue to strengthen over the open sea and possibly reach hurricane strength by next week. That milestone is marked by sustained winds of 75 mph. Where it goes from there is a matter of debate, though. Some computer models show it moving toward Florida, while others have it continuing to hook northward and then eastward and out to sea.

"Winds at the low and mid levels are out of the east. High aloft, out of the south. As Fiona grows stronger/thunderstorms get taller, they reach into the southerly winds aloft more/get pushed north," meteorologist Matthew Cappucci tweeted on Friday.

"Picture a sailboat hoisting its sails and suddenly 'feeling' the tug of wind. Same premise here. In this case, if Fiona raises its sails in the form of stronger/taller thunderstorms, it gets pushed north," he explained.

"Notice the deal here. All the green represent weaker scenarios – those are the Gulf/Caribbean seedlings if Fiona keep struggling. If it strengthens, it curves north and then gets stronger."

In the eye wall, where the hurricane's strongest and most intense storms are found, the clouds can reach 50,000 feet high - well into Earth's stratosphere.

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Israeli Airstrikes on Damascus Airport Killed Five Syrian Soldiers, State Media Reports
By - Fantine Gardinier

Air defenses were reportedly activated near Damascus early on Saturday morning, with Syrian state media reporting that the capital was under attack by the Israeli Air Force.

"Our air defenses intercepted hostile missiles in the airspace of Damascus and its countryside, shooting down a number of them," Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) said on Saturday. It added that five Syrian soldiers were killed in the strikes.

Video posted on social media purported to be of the attack shows flashes in the sky similar to explosions seen when surface-to-air missiles strike their targets, and the roar of jet engines can be heard.

The strikes come amid an increased tempo of attack by Israel against targets in Syria, having bombed a [major science center](#) in Damascus and the international airport in the [northern hub of Aleppo](#) in the last month, alongside other strikes.

Some [reports indicated](#) the Saturday strike targeted Damascus International Airport, located southeast of the metropolitan area. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights claimed the targets were sites used by Iranian forces present in the country to help the Syrian government fight Daesh* and other terrorist groups.

Israel claims its attacks in Syria are aimed at keeping Iran or Syria from being able to prepare attacks against Israel.

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Puerto Rico Braces for Life-Threatening Flooding, Mudslides as Island Comes Under Hurricane Warning

The latest forecasts indicate the storm will become a hurricane on Sunday, and later fizzling out in the Atlantic on Thursday after tearing through Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

As Tropical Storm Fiona inches closer to Puerto Rico, the Isle of Enchantment has come under threat of life-threatening mudslides and flooding over a period of multiple days, a warning issued by the US National Hurricane Center has revealed.

The Saturday advisory released by the agency places the storm at about 145 miles of Ponce, Puerto Rico, having reached maximum sustained wind speeds of 60 miles per hour. Moving in a west-northwest direction at the pace of 8 mph, the storm is expected to reach Puerto Rico by Saturday night.

Although Fiona is currently considered a tropical storm, forecasters anticipate the system will reach hurricane-level status before reaching Puerto Rico's southern coast on Sunday.

At present, the cyclone's tropical-storm-force winds have been recorded as stretching some 140 miles from the storm's eye.

Forecasts for rainfall put anywhere from 12 and 16 inches of rain slamming down on the island, with max isolated totals of up to 20 inches. Looming storm surge may raise water levels up to 3 feet as forecasters have warned that swells generated by Fiona will produce "life-threatening surf and rip current conditions."

"Additional strengthening is expected on Monday and Tuesday while Fiona moves over the southwestern Atlantic," warns the agency's latest bulletin.

To date, the storm has already caused damages on several eastern Caribbean islands. One death was earlier reported in the French territory of Guadeloupe, which recorded wind gusts in excess of 70 mph and rainfall accumulations of about 9 inches.

Authorities have detailed that the death took place after a man's home was swept away by flooding in the territory's Basse-Terre district.

Authorities in Guadeloupe reported that an estimated 13,000 customers were without power, and that at least one bridge had been destroyed among other structural damages.

In Puerto Rico, potential power outages have remained one of the top concerns after Hurricane Maria's landfall in September 2017, at which time the island recorded one of its longest widespread power outages.

Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi earlier remarked during a conference that residents were "already starting to feel [Fiona's] effects." Reports indicate nearly 40,000 customers already encountered outages on Saturday.

An estimated \$550 million in emergency funds have been made available in the storm's aftermath, according to Pierluisi.

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'Catastrophic' Hurricane Fiona Makes Landfall in Puerto Rico After Shuttering Island's Power Grid

Puerto Rico last encountered major hurricane-related power outages in September 2017, when the island of enchantment was bombarded by severe flooding and powerful winds from Hurricane Maria. The storm made landfall on the US territory as a Category 4 cyclone.

Hurricane Fiona made landfall along Puerto Rico's southwestern coast on Sunday, touching down on the island with estimated maximum sustained wind speeds of 85 miles per hour.

An updated bulletin issued by the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) notes the Category 1 storm made its landfall near Punta Tocon at about 3:20 p.m. AST. The storm is presently continuing to move in a northwest direction at a pace of 9 mph.

Once considered a tropical storm, the cyclone was upgraded to a Category 1 storm early Sunday after exceeding maximum wind speeds of 74 miles per hour. An earlier advisory [released](#) by NHC indicates the system will have reached the northern coast of the Dominican Republic by late Sunday.

Current forecasts place the hurricane on track to pass by Turks and Caicos on Tuesday before making a sharp shift eastward toward Bermuda, where it will have turned into a "major" hurricane by early Wednesday.

Alerts issued by the NHC have warned that both Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic are likely to record "catastrophic flooding," as the Caribbean island is expected to dump up to 25 inches of rainfall. Storm surges of up to 3 feet are anticipated.

"These rains will produce life-threatening and catastrophic flash flooding and urban flooding across Puerto Rico and the eastern Dominican Republic, along with mudslides and landslides in areas of higher terrain," reads the hurricane center's advisory.

Fiona's hurricane-force winds are extending some 30 miles from the storm's eye, with tropical-storm-force winds reaching out up to 140 miles.

Shortly before the system made landfall on the island, Gov. Pedro Pierluisi announced that the entirety of the island's power grid had been shuttered by Fiona's growing intensity. Tracking website PowerOutage.us [listed](#) the island as being 100% without power.

The power outage comes five years after the island's power grid was devastated by Hurricane Maria, which left many locals without electricity for months. However, in light of outage concerns preceding Fiona's landfall, authorities on the island stressed that protocols were in place to prevent a repeat of Maria's electricity downfalls.

"This is not Maria, this hurricane will not be Maria," Abner Gomez, who heads the public safety and crisis management at LUMA Energy, stressed earlier. LUMA Energy is the private company in charge of transmission and distribution of electricity in Puerto Rico.

Hurricane Fiona's landfall comes two days before the five-year anniversary of Hurricane Maria. US President Joe Biden has [approved](#) an emergency declaration to free up federal resources for the hurricane-battered island. Pierluisi [previously informed](#) the public that some \$550 million in emergency funds had been earmarked for the storm's aftermath.

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COVID-19, Taiwan & 2024 Election: Key Takeaways on Biden's First '60 Minutes' Interview as President

The president's very first "60 Minutes" interview as commander-in-chief was expected to take place earlier this year but was ultimately postponed after the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. The president was interviewed by CBS correspondent Scott Pelley. US President Joe Biden's first "60 Minutes" interview as commander-in-chief aired Sunday and saw the official weigh in on a series of topics, including the current status of the American economy, the Ukrainian crisis, tensions with China over Taiwan, and the 2024 presidential cycle. The two-part interview was held at both the White House and in Detroit, Michigan, where the pair toured the location of the Detroit Auto Show. Biden used the Detroit show to reaffirm his commitment to electric cars.

Prior to the Sunday broadcast, Biden last appeared on the show days before the 2020 presidential election, according to [Deadline](#).

'The Pandemic is Over'

Over two years after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization, Biden took the opportunity during the broadcast to declare that the "pandemic is over" before admitting that some "problems" still persisted.

"We still have a problem with Covid. We're still doing a lot of work on it ... but the pandemic is over," the American president conceded. "If you notice, no one's wearing masks. Everybody seems to be in pretty good shape. And so I think it's changing."

He later remarked during the interview that he did not take lightly the effect that the pandemic had on Americans.

"The impact on the psyche of the American people as a consequence of the pandemic is profound," he acknowledged. "Think of how that has changed everything. You know, people's attitudes about themselves, their families, about the state of the nation, about the state of their communities. And so there's a lot of uncertainty out there, a great deal of uncertainty. And we lost a million people."

In the hours that followed the broadcast, it was [revealed](#) by Politico that Biden's declaration of the pandemic being "over" caught "several" of the president's health officials by "surprise." To note, the US government still lists COVID-19 as a public health emergency as the nation continues to record cases of the novel coronavirus. In fact, [latest figures](#) provided by the Johns Hopkins University indicate that millions of COVID-19 cases were recorded in the last month. Data provided by the resource center lists 54,504 deaths documented over a 28-day period. Biden himself contracted COVID-19 in July, and tested positive for a second time in a "rebound" case. The president was fully vaccinated, and only encountered mild symptoms when he initially tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus earlier commented that the globe has "never been in a better position to end the pandemic" but that the public wasn't quite there yet. He underscored that the "end is in sight."

US Forces Will Defend Taiwan in Event of 'Unprecedented Attack' by China

Reiterating past remarks, Biden stressed that the United States would defend Taiwan if China carries out an unprecedented attack on the self-governing island that Beijing sees as part of its territory.

Asked whether the US would ever deploy American troops to Taiwan amid tensions with China, Biden responded with: "Yes, if in fact there was an unprecedented attack."

The president said he and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping agree with the 'One-China' policy, adding that Taiwan makes their own judgment about their independence.

"Taiwan makes their own judgments about their independence," the president said. "We're not encouraging their being independent."

Over the last several years, the Chinese government has repeatedly called on the US to steer clear of its domestic matters, previously warning that the Taiwan trip made by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was "provocative" and actively "pushing the envelope on China's red lines."

CBS News, following the interview, asked the White House about Biden's remarks on defending Taiwan, which they replied with a similar response, saying the United States' policy on Taiwan has not changed. The White House has reiterated the same stance after each of Biden's past similar comments on the topic.

Too Early to Discuss 2024 Presidential Bid

With the midterm elections just around the corner and chatter about the 2024 presidential cycle slowly churning, Biden relayed to Pelley that it was simply too early to discuss his potential reelection bid in 2024.

"If I were to say to you, 'I'm running again,' all of a sudden a whole range of things come into play, requirements I have to change... in terms of election law, and it's much too early to make that kind of decision," Biden said.

"I'm a great respecter of fate. And so, what I'm doing is I'm doing my job. I'm gonna do that job. And within the timeframe that makes sense after this next election cycle here, going into next year, make a judgment on what to do."

However, he subsequently stated that although he has discussed his intention to run in the 2024 election, it's not entirely certain he will be tossing his name into the race.

"Look, my intention as I said to begin with is that I would run again," the president said. "But it's just an intention. But is it a firm decision that I run again? That remains to be seen."

As the oldest president to hold office, Biden went on to remark that his mental focus is indeed "focused."

"I no more think of myself as being as old as I am than fly. I mean, it's just not - I haven't observed anything in terms of - there's not things I don't do now that I did before, whether it's physical, or mental, or anything else."

US in Better Shape Now Than Russia in Terms Of Economy

The interview also saw Biden state he was "more optimistic than before" about the US being able to get its inflation issues under control, using the moment to say that the status of the American economy is "in much better shape than anyone else is and relative to Russia, particularly."

Momentarily gearing toward the Ukrainian crisis, Biden reiterated that the American backing of Ukraine was "ironclad," and that it would remain so "as long as it takes."

Asked about the use of nuclear weapons in the ongoing special military operation, Biden urged against such a move, warning it would "change the face of war unlike anything since World War II."

He continued, detailing that a US response to nuclear weapons use would be "consequential." Russia has repeatedly stated that it has "no need" to use nuclear arms in Ukraine. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu previously stated that Moscow's only purpose in tapping nuclear firearms would be to "deter a nuclear attack."

"The media are spreading speculation about the alleged use of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in the course of the special military operation, or about the readiness to use chemical weapons. All these informational attacks are absolute lies," the defense minister said at an August conference.

To date, the US and its allies have dispatched over \$34 billion in military equipment to Ukraine. The White House most recently announced a defense aide of \$600 million, a delivery that include ammunition for HIMARS, radar equipment, anti-drone systems and cold weather gear among other packages.

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Floods in Cantiano, Italy Kill 10 People and Leave Several Missing

By - Mary Manley

Hours of rainfall triggered the flooding in Italy's central region of Marche, which rests on the Adriatic Sea. Sixteen inches of rain poured throughout the region in just two hours, causing floods that have killed at least ten people and left four others missing.

Ten people have been killed and another four have been reported missing after a catastrophic flood broke out in the central Italian region of Marche on Friday. Local authorities reportedly said they did not anticipate the torrential downpours. Around 15.75 inches (400 millimeters) of rain fell onto the city of Cantiano.

Some survivors had to be flown by helicopter to remote towns in the Apennine Mountains, and about 40 people were treated at hospitals for their injuries in the wake of the catastrophe, according to Italian officials.

Dozens of survivors were forced to seek refuge from the powerful floods by holding onto branches or climbing on top of roofs while awaiting rescue. The extreme weather event is one of several Italy has experienced this year. The country has also been hit by summer wildfires, melting Alpine glaciers and rising sea levels that have had an adverse effect on the boot-shaped peninsula, which is surrounded by four different seas.

[Italian](#) Prime Minister Mario Draghi visited the region after the catastrophe and voiced his concern that climate change was turning flood risks into “emergencies,” adding that an infrastructure investment would be needed to help prevent future floods and that “tackling climate change” is also necessary to prevent the natural catastrophes. Draghi announced 5 million euros in aid for the region following the flood.

Friday’s deadly flood stretched across the region of Marche from its inland hills to the Adriatic coast. It hit the town of Sassoferrato, whose mayor called the flood unpredictable.

“[There was] only a yellow alert from the civil protection for wind and rain,” said Maurizio Greci, the mayor of Sassoferrato. “Nothing could foretell such a disaster.”

Massimiliano [Fazzini](#) told Italian state TV that the event was an “extreme” event more than an “exceptional one,” as the amount of rain falling on the region over a four-hour period was the most it has seen in hundreds of years, equivalent to the average level of precipitation over a six-month period. The hillsides were also unnaturally hard and brittle following a drought-like summer of little to no rain, accelerating the flow of runoff.

The floods swept through residents’ garages and basements, burst through doors, crushed cars and destroyed farm fields, and in one instance, a car was pushed onto a second-story balcony by the incredible rain.

“It wasn’t a water bomb, it was a tsunami,” said Riccardo Pasqualini, the mayor of Barbara, who said the flood left his town’s 1,300 residents without drinking water and that a mother and her daughter went missing while trying to survive the flood.

“You could see cars in the middle of the road that drifted away in the flood, debris everywhere, screams. It was chaos,” said Mirco Santarelli, a Cantiano resident, to The Associated Press.

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King Charles III’s Net Worth, How Rich is He?

By - Mary Manley

Following the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, King Charles III inherited \$500 million from his mum, as well as large amounts of land, castles and other regal estates, rare (stolen) jewels, a paddock and other personal property such as fine art. Likely for the King, he inherited this wealth tax-free.

The [King](#) is also responsible for overseeing the Queen's \$42 billion portfolio that is held in a trust for the nation as well as for royal family successors, but which will never actually belong to the King. A majority of the portfolio comprises real estate including the \$17.5 billion Crown Estate, which "owns" the Ascot Racecourse located in Berkshire and London's Regent Street shopping area, which is a main shopping street in London's West End made up of flagship stores.

The Queen's will, on the other hand, will be locked away for 90 years away from the prying eyes of the public, who can only guess what kind of wealth the late monarch amassed. The practice of sealing the wills of royals began in 1910. Currently there are more than 30 wills being kept in a safe in a secret location in London. The King, however, has inherited the Queen's private estates including her castle in Balmoral, Scotland, as well as her Sandringham estate in eastern England.

"Royal wills are sealed, so we can't look to those documents for guidance. I think it's very likely that the Queen has followed in the footsteps of her grandmother Queen Mary and her mother, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and bequeathed all of her jewelry directly to the new monarch, King Charles III. There are both historical and taxation-related benefits to this method of inheritance," said Lauren Kiehna, writer and editor of *The Court Jeweler*.

The King will also inherit her private collection of jewelry, art, rare stamps and any other personal property belonging to the Queen. Her collection of crowns, tiaras, and priceless [jewels](#), however, were stolen from countries that the United Kingdom had colonized. Among the stolen jewels is the Kohinoor diamond, a massive 105-carat diamond worth \$592 million, which has been worn on the crowns of queens for generations since it was first brought to Queen Victoria after what is now known as modern-day Punjab was colonized by the British in 1849.

Queen Victoria first wore it as a brooch, and then demanded that only her female descendants would be allowed to adorn the most expensive diamond in the world. Some Indians took to Twitter following news of the Queen's passing to demand that the diamond be returned to their country. In 2000, Indian parliamentarians also penned a letter to Britain calling for the return of the Kohinoor.

The diamond is held in a trust belonging to the state, however, and will not go to the new King. The King's new inheritance, according to [Forbes](#), is estimated to be about \$500 million altogether. But he won't have to pay any inheritance tax due to a [1993](#) agreement with the British government that makes it so the Sovereign is "not legally liable to pay income tax, capital gains tax or inheritance tax because the relevant enactments do not apply to the Crown." These taxes can, however, be paid voluntarily.

The 73-year-old monarch also has his own wealth which he has received annually through the Duchy of Cornwall, a private estate that originated in 1337 when King Edward III wished for his son to have financial independence. A charter at the time established that the eldest surviving son of the monarch and heir to the throne would be the Duke of Cornwall. Prince William will inherit the \$1.2 billion estate through the Duchy of [Cornwall](#), and this year alone, the King earned \$27 million through that same estate.

The King, as Prince of Wales, was a steadfast environmentalist who used his wealth to launch ventures which produce organic farms. He owned the largest organic food brand in the U.K., as well as a nature retreat and crafts center in Transylvania that will also be passed to the heir apparent.

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Dunkin' DoSantis - Cartoon
By - Ted Rall

Florida's governor Ron DeSantis is the latest Republican to jump on the political bandwagon of sending migrants seeking asylum to Democratic states as a sort of "punishment" for the Biden administration's immigration policy. About 50 migrants were sent to Martha's Vineyard on Wednesday from San Antonio, Texas.

"States like Massachusetts, New York and California will better facilitate the care of these individuals who they have invited into our country by incentivizing illegal immigration," said a spokesperson for DeSantis. It is the latest move by [Republican](#) politicians, including the governors of Texas and Arizona, to try and stretch Democratic states' social safety-nets thin in an effort to antagonize the Biden administration and the Democratic party over immigration policies.

About 50 asylum seekers from Venezuela were packed into a small parish house near St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in [Edgartown](#), where resources to assist them were sparse, including limited housing options. The asylum seekers were also given false information on where they were going. Some believed they were being taken to New York City, while others were told they were being taken to Boston.

"We have the governor of Florida... hatching a secret plot to send immigrant families like cattle on an airplane," said state Representative Dylan Fernandes, who represents Martha's Vineyard. "Ship them women and children to a place they weren't told where they were going and never alerted local officials and people on the ground here that they were coming. It is an incredibly inhumane and depraved thing to do."

The asylum seekers have since been moved to Joint Base Cape Cod, where they will be provided shelter, food and other assistance, according to an announcement made by Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker on [Friday](#).

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Egyptologist Close to Identifying Nefertiti, Who May Have Ruled Egypt 1300 Years Before Cleopatra
By - Ian DeMartino

While ancient Egypt has been studied by modern archaeologists since the 1800s, it is estimated that only about 30% of artifacts present underground have been found. However, climate change, tourism, and the continued construction of modern Egypt are putting those artifacts at risk.

Egyptologist Zahi Hawass believes [he is close](#) to proving that the body of a mummy first discovered in the 1800s is Queen Nefertiti, the wife of Pharaoh Akhenaten and mother of Tutankhamun, better known as King Tut. Nefertiti lived between roughly 1370 and 1330 BC. "I'm sure I'll reveal Nefertiti's mummy in a month or two," Hawass told Spanish newspaper El Independiente (via Newsweek) in an interview published on Tuesday.

Hawass also believes that another mummy found in the same tomb is Ankhesenamun, the wife of Tutankhamun. He says he will be able to confirm his theory in October. Hawass is preparing an exhibition called "Daughters of the Nile" that will focus on the women of ancient Egypt during the pharaonic period.

In addition to being the wife of Akhenaten and mother of Tutankhamun, many Egyptologists believe that Nefertiti ruled Egypt for a short time after the death of Akhenaten, though others disagree. If true, she would have taken the throne roughly 1300 years before Cleopatra. Hawass believes a mummy of a ten-year-old boy found in a different tomb (KV35) could be the brother of Tutankhamun and the son of Akhenaten. If that can be determined, then Hawass believes the mystery of Nefertiti will be solved.

Both female mummies were found in a tomb named KV21. It [was discovered](#) in 1817 by prolific Italian explorer and early Egyptian archaeologist Giovanni Belzoni. It was later mapped by another famous early Egyptologist James Burton in 1825, who noted that it was well preserved and suffered no water damage.

However, by the time the tomb was reinvestigated in 1989 during the Valley of the Kings project by Pacific Lutheran University, it had [suffered significant damage](#). Water damage could be seen on the walls, indicating flooding. Bat guano was also present in the tombs, graffiti adorned the walls, and pieces of the mummies, which had been intact, were damaged and some parts were strewn across the room.

In 1990, the tomb [was secured](#) with a steel gate, the mummies were reassembled as much as possible, and the valuables inside were put into protective coverings. In 1994, water entered the tomb again, but none of the objects inside were damaged.

In the 2010s, Hawass started performing CT scanning and DNA analysis on the mummies, though initially they were not intact enough to determine their identities, only that they were from the 18th dynasty. Both mummies were found with their left arm over the chest, a pose reserved for queens.

Akhenaten and Nefertiti sat on the Egyptian throne during a wealthy period in Egypt's history that also saw a [religious revolution](#) spearheaded by Akhenaten and Nefertiti. Under Akhenaten's rule, Egypt switched from being a polytheistic religion to a monotheistic religion that worshiped only the sun god Aten. He also moved the capital city from Thebes to Amarna, possibly to weaken the power of the old priests. Those reforms were reversed shortly after Akhenaten's death, either during Nefertiti's theorized reign or early on in Tutankhamun's reign as a child king.

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October Is the Most Feared Month for Investing, Should You Worry?
By - Ian DeMartino

October is known as the scariest month and not just because Halloween marks its end, horror movies top the box office, and haunted houses spring up across the nation. It also has a negative connotation for investors because several historic stock market drops have occurred during the month.

The bank panic of 1907, the stock market crash of 1929, and Black Monday of 1987 all occurred during the month of October, giving rise to the term “the October Effect.” Many investors believe that October is an unlucky month for investing, though the statistics do not bear that out.

Historically, September has been the worst month for investing. From [1928 to 2020](#), the average monthly return in September in the S&P 500 was -1%, by far the worst month. May and February are tied for the second worst, with -0.1% monthly returns. October, by contrast, had an average of +0.4% return.

October has also had 54 up years during that time, compared to 38 down years, while September has had 42 up years compared to 49 down years. No other month has had more down years than up years during that period.

That trend also looks set to continue, with the stock market having a [rough past couple of days](#), including the biggest drop since June 2020. It will take a significant rebound in the second half of September to reverse the trend. September 2021 was also a bad month for investors.

If you are wondering what is the best performing month, it is April. Though taxes are paid that month, many Americans overpay on their taxes and receive a rebate, pumping money into the economy and inflating stock prices. December and January are also good performing months. Ironically, it may be the “October Effect” that is affecting September. Perception does not always become reality, but investing perception almost always affects reality. It is possible that investors remove their money in late September, fearing another “black day” in October, driving the stock down.

While October has performed relatively well, it is worth looking into how many major drops happened in the month. After all, even if October performs relatively well on average, investors could have a reasonable fear if the month has major crashes regularly, even if the month performs well overall. But that fear looks to be mostly unfounded.

Black Wednesday occurred in September 1992, after George Soros raided the British pound. The crashes in 2001 and 2008 were [both larger than](#) 1987 October’s Black Monday and happened in September. The Dot-com bubble burst in March of 2000, but, it should be noted, the stock market did not bottom out until October of 2002.

As for October 2022, no one knows what will happen, and this is not The Motley Fool, Sputnik is not a stock prediction website. However, there are some indications that October could be a bad month for investors. It is worth noting that [the catalysts for both](#) the 1907 and 1929 crashes occurred in September though the actual crashes happened in October.

Inflation is extremely high at the moment. Supply chain issues remain a problem. The Federal Reserve is increasing interest rates rapidly, a strategy mirrored by central banks around the world. And there is still the looming possibility of a rail workers strike. While union leaders and rail companies have reached a tentative agreement, it still requires approval by the rank-and-file members, something that may [not be easy](#), according to labor experts. The vote is expected to be completed in October, for better or worse.

All that adds up to is an economy that is teetering on the edge, possibly set for a big fall or newly regained footing. The "October Effect" may be a superstitious belief that isn't reflected in the statistics, but investors might be wise to proceed with caution.

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Artemis Accords Signatories Hold First Meeting - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 19 (Sputnik) - The signatories to the Artemis Accords met on Monday for the first time as part of the US-led initiative to promote international cooperation and the imposition of a rules-based order in space, the State Department said.

"On Monday, September 19, 2022, representatives of Artemis Accords signatory nations met at the International Astronautical Congress in Paris for the first in-person meeting since the launch of the Accords," the press release said.

The event was hosted by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Agência Espacial Brasileira (AEB) of Brazil, and the Centre national d'études spatiales (CNES) of France.

The Department of State was represented by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Jennifer Littlejohn.

"PDAS Littlejohn highlighted the diversity of signatories in their space capabilities and interests and encouraged all spacefaring nations to sign the Accords. Noting NASA's objective to land the first female and the first person of color on the Moon, she emphasized that both our space missions and our space diplomacy efforts must fully represent the people of the United States," the release said.

The Artemis Accords were launched in 2020 with a view to returning humans to the moon as early as 2024, a deadline considered impossible by some experts. Other countries may join the project by signing the so-called Artemis Accords, which are a set of rules for the peaceful exploration of space.

So far, at least 21 countries have signed the accords including Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

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FEATURE - How Elizabeth II Showed Respect to Orthodoxy at Christening of Philip's Godson

WASHINGTON, September 19 (Sputnik) - UK Queen Elizabeth II had a "very human" engagement with Orthodox Christianity and showed great respect for its religious service, a longtime assistant for famous Russian Bishop Basil (Rodzianko), Marilyn Swezey, told Sputnik.

Queen Elizabeth II passed away on September 8, at the age of 96, at the Balmoral Castle in Scotland surrounded by her family after over 70 years on the British throne. Her eldest son, Charles, became the new king of the United Kingdom immediately after her death. The public farewell ceremony to Queen Elizabeth II is being held at Westminster Abbey from September 14-19. The late monarch's funeral will take place at 11 a.m. local time (10:00 GMT) on September 19.

The "human" story, which Swezey was referring to, occurred in London approximately in the 1960s. Future Bishop Basil (then-priest Vladimir Rodzianko) — a grandson of Mikhail Rodzianko, the last chair of the Russian Duma under Tsar Nicholas II — served in a local Serbian Orthodox cathedral at the time. He had very good relations with the Serbian diaspora, including the family of last Serbian King Peter II Karageorgevitch.

"Father Vladimir was asked to baptize a newborn Prince of Serbia. It had been already arranged by the Royal family of Serbia for Prince Philip, Queen Elizabeth's husband, to be the godfather," Swezey said.

While it is not well known broadly, Prince Philip was baptized in a Greek Orthodox church, and his mother was a niece of the canonized last Russian Empress Alexandra and Grand Duchess Elizabeth, whom she greatly admired, Swezey added.

The baptism ceremony for the Serbian prince took place at the cathedral where Rodzianko served. Swezey noted that she never heard the name of this prince – the bishop simply called him a little Serbian Prince.

During baptism service, godparents have to hold their godchildren on hands for quite a long time. However, the little prince became very active and even noisy. Prince Philip tried to calm him down, but nothing helped. Then, he turned to his wife, who stood not so far away, and gestured, asking her to help.

"The Queen looked to her husband and smiled, and she raised her hands and just crossed them back and forth, which was, of course, a hand signal for the Prince: 'No, I can not do that. This is up to you,'" Swezey said.

The Queen's response was absolutely correct because she was not Orthodox and attended the Orthodox service only because her husband was invited to be the godfather of a child, she added.

"Father Vladimir Rodzyanko, the future Bishop Basil, who was a baptizing priest, was very amused to see this communication between the Queen and the Prince. The Prince asked: 'Help.' The Queen said: 'No, I can not, it is up to you,'" the bishop's assistant noted.

Despite the noise and excessive activity, the little prince was baptized, and the priest was very surprised that the Queen came to his cathedral.

"Bishop Basil loved to share this story with humor, and understanding, it was a very human experience of the two Royal people who are well known," Swezey said.

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RPT - Russian Envoy to Canada Calls Discovery of Graves in Izyum 'Monstrous Provocation'

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - The reports of mass graves being discovered in Izyum, Ukraine is another monstrous provocation by Kiev in a bid to repeat Bucha in a new way and mobilize the Western public amid the United Nations General Assembly next week, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"The Kiev regime fills information spaces with lies about crimes against humanity allegedly committed by Russian troops in Izyum," Stepanov told Sputnik on Friday. "We are talking about another monstrous provocation, about an attempt to stage 'Bucha' in a new way. All this is being done on the eve of the opening of the High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly in order to try to mobilize a certain part of the Western public on the Ukrainian topic."

That Western media and officials immediately pick up "fabrications of Kiev" about the alleged crimes against humanity in Izyum without double-checking is simply an indicator of how aggressive the information war is against Russia, Stepanov said.

At the same time, Stepanov said he is optimistic that the truth about Izyum will come out as was the case with the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria.

On Friday, Ukrainian authorities alleged that mass burial sites were found in Izyum following the Russian troops' withdrawal from the Kharkiv region in early September with more than 400 bodies found so far.

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Biden Says Russia Should Not Mull Using Chemical, Nuclear Weapons in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, September 17 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden during an interview with 60 Minutes said there will be consequences if Russia decides to use chemical or tactical nuclear weapons against Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin recently said that there could be no winners in a nuclear war and it should never be unleashed, noting that the Russia Federation consistently follows the letter and spirit of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

"Don't. Don't. Don't. It would change the face of war unlike anything since World War II," Biden said when asked what his response would be if Russia is considering using chemical or tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

Biden said the United States' response would depend on the extent of what Russia does, but it would be consequential.

However, Biden declined to disclose details about what the United States' contingency plans are if Russia uses chemical or nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

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Biden Announces Creation of US-South African Investment Task Force - White House

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden after meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the creation of a joint investment task force between their two countries and \$45 million for energy transition, the White House said in a press release.

"Biden announced the creation of a South Africa-US Investment Advisory Task Force and a planned \$45 million investment toward the Just Energy Transition Partnership," the release said on Friday.

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Paul Whelan's Sister Says Not Right Time to Designate Russia as Terrorist State - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - Eliabeth Whelan, the sister of US citizen Paul Whelan who is imprisoned in Russia for espionage, said in an interview for Politico that now is not the right time to designate Russia as a terrorist state after US senators unveiled new legislation that would bypass the State Department and label Russia a state sponsor of terrorism.

Whelan said she is not against the bill proposed by senators Richard Blumenthal and Lindsey Graham but considers their timing to be bad, Politico reported on Friday.

She expressed frustration that neither of the Senators nor any of the five Congressmen who introduced a similar bill in the US House of Representatives, attempted to reach out to the Whelan family to explain that they have taken the detainees' interests into account, the report said.

Whelan has also neither disapproved nor supported former US Ambassador Bill Richardson's trip to Moscow to meet with Russian officials in a bid to persuade them to release her brother Paul and imprisoned basketball player Brittney Griner, the report added.

US President Joe Biden is expected to meet with the Whelans and Griners on Friday afternoon to inform them of his administration's efforts to bring Paul and Brittney home.

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Ukraine Continues to Push for Patriot Air-Defense Missiles, F-16s Behind Scenes - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - Ukraine continues to push the United States to provide it with Patriot air defense systems and F-16 fighter jets behind the scenes despite ending public calls for the weapons, Politico reported, citing sources familiar with discussions. Washington and Kiev are in talks about what weapons the United States could provide to help Ukrainian forces amid Russia's special military operation, including Patriot systems, F-18 jets and Gray Eagle drones, the report said on Friday, citing Ukrainian government, Pentagon officials and defense industry executives.

Advisors to Ukrainian's Volodymyr Zelenskyy have led the campaign to tone down Kiev's calls for the air defense system and fighter jets. The Biden administration encouraged Ukraine to focus more on its immediate needs for their ongoing counteroffensive, the report said. The relative scarcity of the Patriot surface-to-air missile systems make it challenging to provide them to Ukraine, according to the report. The Pentagon is also concerned about the challenge the F-16's complex maintenance needs could pose to Ukraine, the report said. However, US officials continue to discuss whether to deliver Patriots to Ukraine in the longer term, the report said. Complex systems such as the F-16 jets are likely to be delivered once the conflict is over, the report added, citing a congressional staffer with knowledge of talks. The Biden administration has given approximately \$15.8 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since taking office, including High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), ammunition, armored vehicles, drones and other military equipment.

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Ramaphosa Told Biden Russia Sanctions Bill Would Punish Africa for Partnership With Moscow

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - South African President Cyril Ramaphosa told President Joe Biden during a bilateral meeting at the White House earlier in the day that an anti-Russia bill in Congress designed to deter Russia's activities in Africa would punish the entire continent for its partnership with Moscow.

"We've expressed our discomfort and opposition to it... I think it will harm Africa and marginalize the continent," Ramaphosa told reporters on Friday after his bilateral meeting at the White House as quoted in a pool report. "I think it's a misplaced type of legislation... We should not be told by anyone who we can associate with."

Ramaphosa told reporters he will meet with US lawmakers involved in the Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act on Friday night.

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Tesla Wins \$7.7Mln Agreement to Provide Battery Power to US Army, Navy - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - Tesla Industries has received a more than \$7.7 billion Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) contract to supply the US Army and Navy with batteries over the next three years, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Tesla Industries [of] New Castle, Delaware has been awarded a maximum \$7,739,781... contract for battery power supplies," the release stated on Friday.

The agreement is a three-year base contract with two one-year option periods, the Defense Department noted.

The performance completion date is September 15, 2025, the release added. The contract will be overseen by the DLA Land and Maritime offices in Columbus, Ohio, the department added.

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US Signs Seven-Year \$10.1Bln Aid Agreement With Jordan in State Dept. Ceremony

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - The United States signed a seven year agreement approving \$1.45 billion annually for the next seven years to the Kingdom of Jordan at a ceremony with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Jordanian Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Safadi at the Department of State.

"We signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Secretary Blinken," Safadi later told a meeting at the Woodrow Wilson Center on Friday. "It commits to providing Jordan with \$1.45 billion annually for seven years."

The MOU was the fourth such aid agreement between the two countries and it covered a longer period of time and provided more financial support than any of the previous ones, Safadi said.

"This support ... is key to our efforts to mitigate the heavy impact of regional crises - refugees, border security, drug trafficking, pressure on our scarce resources," Safadi said.

The aid was also crucial to Jordan being able to care for the 1.3 million Syrian refugees it continued to host from the long conflict in that neighboring country, Safadi added.

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US-Russia Space Cooperation to Continue Despite Sanctions on Russian Space Entities - NASA

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - The United States and Russia will continue to cooperate on space despite new anti-Russia sanctions rolled out this week that target entities that are part of the Roscosmos state corporation, a NASA spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik.

"US sanctions and export control measures continue to allow US-Russia civil space cooperation on the space station," the NASA spokesperson said on Friday. "The professional relationship between our international partners, astronauts and cosmonauts continues for the safety and mission of all on board the ISS [international space station]."

On Thursday, the US Treasury Department announced another round of new anti-Russia sanctions related to Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. These new sanctions target more than 40 individuals and more than 30 Russian entities.

The United States sanctioned three Russian space entities it claims play vital roles in strengthening Moscow's defense capabilities. These include the Rossiyskiye Kosmicheskiye Sistemy, Academician M.F. Reshetnev Information Satellite Systems and the Research and Production Association S. A. Lavochkin.

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Israel-Palestinian Tensions 'Getting Worse by the Day' - Jordanian Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - The conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians are getting worse by the day as settlement building and other encroachments continue, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said at a think tank event in Washington.

"The situation is alarming," Safadi, who also serves as his country's deputy prime minister, told a meeting at the Wilson Center on Friday. "It is getting worse by the day."

Safadi said the Jordanian government was urging Israel to stop all unilateral measures that undermined the two-state solution in terms of settlements, confiscation of land, or encroachment on the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

"We have to restore faith in the peace process... time is not on our side," Safadi warned.

Israel's continuing unilateral actions on the West Bank and in Gaza continued to undermine prospects for a two state solution that remained the only possible way for a comprehensive, just and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace to finally end the long conflict, Safadi said.

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Russia Providing Stabilizing Influence in Southern Syria - Jordan Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - Russia's continuing military presence in southern Syria has provided a stabilizing presence in the region by preventing Islamist extremist organizations from recovering and reasserting their power there and beyond, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said.

"The truth is that the Russian presence in Syria has been a stabilizing influence in the south [of the country]," Safadi, who also serves as Jordan's deputy prime minister, told a meeting at the Woodrow Wilson Center on Friday.

Safadi said Jordan needed to maintain effective diplomatic relations with Russia because of its role in the region and physical proximity to Jordan, as well as for the stabilizing role it continued to play in Syria.

"We still need to re-engage with Russia," he said.

Last month, a Russian air strike hit and killed Islamist militants in the vicinity of the US-controlled Al Tanf garrison in southeastern Syria, the Russian Defense Ministry said. The ministry accused US special forces of financing and training the terrorist group, which has hideouts in the desert along Syria's borders with Iraq and Jordan.

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US Stocks Tumble 4th Week in Five, Ahead of Another Big Expected Rate Hike
(Changes headline, updates index values to closing, adds comment and details, paragraphs 1-10)

NEW YORK, September 17 (Sputnik) - Fears of a third outsized US rate hike in a row sent stocks on Wall Street skidding, delivering equity bulls their fourth losing week in five.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, Wall Street's broadest equities indicator comprising stocks of 30 large US corporations, closed Friday down 0.5% at 30,822. For the week, the Dow lost 4.1%, contributing to the net loss of nearly 9% over the past five weeks.

The S&P 500 Index, which represents the top 500 US stocks, settled down 0.7% on the day and 4.8% on the week at 3,873. Its net loss over the past five weeks was almost 10%.

The Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises marquee names in technology such as Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Netflix and Google, finished down almost 1% at 11,448. For the week, the Nasdaq 5.5%, contributing to the net loss of nearly 13% over the past five weeks. Stocks plunged ahead of a third straight rate hike of 75 basis points expected from the Federal Reserve when it meets on September 21.

"Wall Street was already nervous that the Fed's inflation fighting mission was going to trigger a recession, but now it seems corporate America is already showing signs that the economy is

slowing," said Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA. "If the Fed signals they are stepping up their fight against inflation, further pain could be ahead."

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, or CPI, grew by an annualized 8.3% for August, above the 8.1% forecast by economists.

In June, the CPI expanded by an annualized 9.1%, growing at its fastest pace in four decades. With the headline inflation figure abating less than 1% over the past two months despite the best efforts of policy-makers, economists said they expect the Fed to resort to another substantial rate hike this month.

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. Money market traders expect a third 75-basis point increase when the central bank meets on September 21 to decide on rates. 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.

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White House Says Concerned by Reports of Iran Police Killing, Will Seek Accountability
WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is concerned by reports of the death of a 22-year old Iranian woman at the hands of law enforcement and will seek accountability for any human rights abuses occurring in Iran, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said.

"We are deeply concerned by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who was reportedly beaten in custody by Iran's morality police. Her death is unforgivable," Sullivan said on Friday. "We will continue to hold Iranian officials accountable for such human right abuses."

The morality police refers to the Guidance Patrol of the Law Enforcement Force of Iran, established in 2005 to arrest women for alleged violations of Islamic dress code.

Amini died after being beaten by the authorities for not properly wearing her hijab, according to US Special Envoy to Iran Robert Malley.

The Special Envoy called on Iran to stop the violence against women exercising their fundamental rights and vowed accountability.

The hospital where Amini died became the scene of public demonstrations, which were met with security forces, regional media reports said.

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Draft US Russia Sanctions Bill Risks Punishing African Continent - South African President

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - A new draft bill in the US Congress that would impose new anti-Russia sanctions related to Moscow's activity in Africa risks punishing the

entire continent, South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa told the US Congressional Black Caucus.

"If the Countering Malign Russia Activities [in Africa] bill were to become a US law, the law could have the unintended consequence of punishing the African continent for efforts to advance development and growth," Ramaphosa said on Friday.

The Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act would punish African governments that support Russia's so-called "malign activities" on the continent. The bill passed the House of Representatives in April and is now in the Senate for consideration.

South Africa's president further said it is disappointing that US lawmakers crafted the anti-Russia legislation at a time when President Joe Biden has sought to engage African countries on the basis of respect for their independence and sovereignty.

The United States and Russia are strategic partners for South Africa, a sovereign country that pursues an independent foreign policy, Ramaphosa said.

Ramaphosa visited Washington on Friday for a bilateral meeting with Biden at the White House. Both leaders were expected to discuss trade investment, infrastructure, climate and energy, health, as well as discuss several pressing regional and global challenges, such as the situation in Ukraine, according to a senior Biden administration official.

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Some January 6 Defendants Arrested Again for Other Crimes - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) - A number of defendants involved in the events at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, have been arrested for other crimes, CBS News reported on its review of such defendants.

The media outlet said on Friday that it reviewed US Justice Department court filings, which showed a "growing number" of defendants being arrested again for subsequent crimes involving guns, drugs and domestic abuse.

The new charges complicate their ability to secure lenient sentences in the cases related to the events at the US Capitol but also potentially jeopardize attempts by other defendants to secure pretrial releases in their cases, the report said.

The review focused on the cases of three men: US Navy reservist Hatchet Speed, Kene Lazo and Elias Costianes, the report said.

Speed pleaded not guilty to four federal charges for his participation in the events at the US Capitol, but was indicted on additional charges for possessing illegal firearms silencers and for buying weapons after January 6. Speed is alleged to have made statements that glorified violence, expressed admiration for convicted domestic terrorists and justified the use of violence to further his anti-government beliefs, the report said.

Lazo, who was arrested in May 2021 for his participation in the January 6 events, was arrested again three months later and convicted on domestic violence charges in Norfolk, Virginia, the report said.

Costaine was arrested again after investigators searched his basement and found that two of the four firearms were not his. Investigators also found in his home a hypodermic needle and four vials filled with testosterone enanthate, which is a controlled substance under US federal law, the report added.

The US authorities have charged some 870 people with crimes in relation to the US Capitol attack. Several dozen of them are being held in pre-trial detention, according to the report.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY
WASHINGTON, September 17 (Sputnik) -

KYRGYZ-TAJIK BORDER CLASHES

* Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Zheenbek Kulubaev on Friday discussed the Bishkek-Dushanbe border clashes with Zbigniew Rau, the chairman-in-office of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe's (OSCE), the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry told Sputnik.

* There are many casualties among Kyrgyz soldiers after the border clashes with Tajik troops but most civilians from the area were evacuated in time, Kyrgyz State Committee on National Security Chairman Kamchybek Tashiev said.

* The Tajik military continues to target Kyrgyz positions and clashes are ongoing in some areas of the state border on Friday, the Kyrgyz Border Service told Sputnik.

UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

* The United States expects to send two National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) to Ukraine in the next "two months or so" amid Russia's special military operation in the country, Defense Department Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said on Friday.

* Moscow has given a moderate response to the attacks of Ukraine on Russian infrastructure so far, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

* Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for cessation of hostilities in Ukraine during his meeting with Putin, the Indian Foreign Ministry said.

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will participate in a UN Security Council ministerial meeting on Ukraine on Thursday during the High-Level week at the United Nations General Assembly debate, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations Michele Sison said on Friday.

* The United States will make a call during the United Nations General Assembly debate next week for countries to forge a consensus on need to reform the UN Security Council, Sison said.

* The UN General Assembly voted on Friday to let Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy address the general debate of the 77th session via a pre-recorded message, denying other world leaders this right.

* The US delegation' discussions at the 77th UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York next week will not be focused on Ukraine, but will not ignore it either, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said.

GLOBAL ENERGY

* The collective West should contact Kiev if they want another route for gas deliveries, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday.

* The energy crisis in Europe did not begin with the start of Russia's special operation in Ukraine, but much earlier with "green" agenda, Putin said.

* Turkey will soon begin to receive Russian gas, paying for 25% of supplies in Russian rubles and Russia stands ready to increase supplies in all directions, Putin said.

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT

* The recent border clash between Armenia and Azerbaijan is not related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday.

* The observance of a ceasefire on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border shows that neither side wanted a large-scale escalation, Azeri President Ilham Aliyev said.

* Everyone is worried over recent escalation at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, Putin told his Azeri counterpart.

US POLICY ON ARCTIC REGION

* The United States wants to do everything it can to keep the Arctic peaceful despite growing concerns about stability in the region due to Russian and Chinese activity, US Principal Director for the Arctic and Global Resilience at the Defense Department Greg Pollock said on Friday.

* The United States is closely monitoring Russian and Chinese activities and intentions in the Arctic, Pollock said.

* The United States sees a need to make adjustments to its Arctic strategy due to changes in the global security environment that include Russia's special military operation in Ukraine and climate change, Pollock said.

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Indian Tycoon Gautani Beats Amazon's Bezos to Become 2nd Richest Man - Bloomberg Index

NEW YORK, September 16 (Sputnik) - Indian tycoon Gautam Adani has surpassed Amazon founder Jeff Bezos as the world's second richest man, making him his country's first person to reach such an elevated level in global wealth, the Bloomberg Billionaires Index showed Friday. Adani, who began the year on the 14th spot of the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, has a current estimated fortune of \$146.9 billion that trails only the \$260 billion controlled by Elon Musk, the founder of electric carmaker Tesla and the present richest person in the world, the index showed.

News service Bloomberg, which published the billionaires' index, reported that Adani's worth climbed after shares of his flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd. surged to a record high this week. Some of Adani's group companies have also climbed more than 1,000% in value since 2020, the report added.

Bezos's net worth, meanwhile, dropped to \$145.8 billion at last count as a renewed selloff in the shares of Big Tech companies on Wall Street hammered the fortunes of the richest Americans in the sector. Shares of Amazon, on their own, are down more than 25% this year.

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Biden Appoints Veteran Diplomat as Next US Envoy to United Arab Emirates - White House WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has nominated veteran diplomat Martina Anna Tkadlec Strong as the next US ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, the White House said on Friday.

"Today, President Joe Biden announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to serve as key leaders in his administration: Martina Anna Tkadlec Strong, Nominee for Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the United Arab Emirates," the White House said in a press release.

Strong is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with a rank of minister-counselor and currently serves as chargé d'affaires at the US Embassy in Saudi Arabia, the release said.

"Previously, she was the Deputy Chief of Mission and also chargé d'affaires ... at the US Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria, and before that, the Minister Counselor for Political and Political-Military Affairs at the US Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq," the White House said.

Strong has also served as political adviser to 34th ID and 1 ID, Multinational Division - South in Iraq and speaks Arabic, Czech, Polish, French, German, Russian and Bosnian, the release added.

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Changes in Pentagon's Taiwan Policy May Send Wrong Signal to China - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department's decision to make changes in its Taiwan policy may send the wrong signal to China, Politico reported on Friday, citing lawmakers and former officials.

The changes include moving the Defense Department's Taiwan portfolio under authority of its office responsible for China, the report said. However, the experts noted in the report that the move raises questions amid potential tensions in the region.

Pulling Taiwan back into a portfolio dominated by China sends the wrong signal to Beijing - that they can dictate the United States' relationship with the island democracy, or worse, that it will

facilitate consultation with Beijing on the US approach to Taiwan's security needs, the report cited US Senator Dan Sullivan as saying.

Sullivan insisted that diluting the United States' focus on supporting Taiwan is a "really bad idea," the report said.

The Defense Department explained that the change is of a bureaucratic character and was designed to increase internal efficiency, the report said.

Historically, both China and Taiwan were under the purview of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia. However, in 2019 the Trump administration created a special office focused only on China.

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia in the Trump administration, Heino Klinck, has warned that Beijing will not look at this as a coincidence, the report said.

Klinck has said he thinks the United States is unintentionally signaling that its relationship with Taiwan is a subset of its relationship with mainland China, the report said.

Randy Schriver, who led the Defense Department's Asia policy under the Trump administration, has warned that such a move will show that Taiwan becomes a "subset" due to its size relative to China.

Traditionally, Taiwan has been viewed as a problem to manage in the China context and this is a return to that, the report quoted Schriver as saying.

The changes will have not only policy but practical implications as well because remaining under the Defense Department's East Asia office would show Taiwan that it is still among other US partners in the region, including Japan and Australia, the report said.

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Blinken to Join Meeting on Ukraine, Call for UNSC Reform Next Week at UNGA - State Dept. (Modifies lede, headline; adds details in paras 2, 4-15)

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will participate in a UN Security Council ministerial meeting on Ukraine on Thursday during the high-level week at the United Nations General Assembly debate, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations Michele Sison said on Friday.

Blinken will arrive in New York City on Sunday and intends to remain until Friday evening September 23, Sison said.

"On September 22, the Secretary will participate in the UN Security Council ministerial on the maintenance of peace and security in Ukraine," Sison said during a conference call with reporters.

The United States will also make a call during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) debate next week for countries to forge a consensus on need to reform the UN Security Council, Sison said.

"We will advance efforts to reform the UN Security Council ... We do not believe that the United States should defend an outdated status quo," Sison said during a conference call. "While we're clear-eyed about the obstacles to Security Council reform, we will make a serious call for

countries to forge consensus around credible, realistic proposals for the way forward to remain credible into the 21st century."

Sison said the United States during the high-level week will claim that Russia's special military operation in Ukraine is threatening the credibility of the UN Security Council.

The senior State Department official noted that President Joe Biden's plans to attend the late Queen Elizabeth's funeral on Monday has required some adjustments in next week's plans at the United Nations, which are still being finalized.

The United States will focus on three key priorities at this year's high-level week: combating the global food insecurity crisis, advancing global health security, and boosting the credibility of the United Nations in light of Russia's military operation Ukraine, Sison said.

On Monday, Blinken will spend most of the day in bilateral meetings, which are still in development, Sison said without revealing who the secretary plans to meet. She added that Blinken's schedule for bilateral meetings remains dynamic and will likely change on a daily basis.

On Tuesday, Blinken will co-chair with the African Union, the European Union, and Spain, a global food security summit, Sison said. This summit will be an opportunity for world leaders to highlight innovative concrete solutions that respond to urgent food assistance needs, invest in food system resiliency, and build on previous work to address the global issue.

On Wednesday evening, Blinken will participate in a dinner with Group of Seven (G7) partners that will focus on Ukraine, Sison said, adding that the event will be hosted by Germany.

On Thursday, Sison said, Blinken will have a breakfast meeting with C5+1 countries Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, after which the group will issue a joint statement.

On Friday, Blinken will join a breakfast meeting with the Gulf Cooperation Council plus three, Sison said. The breakfast will advance the issues Biden discussed with his GCC plus three counterparts this past summer, and ensure continued high-level conversations on high-priority issues including Iran, Russia, Ukraine, food security and global health, she added.

Also on Friday, Blinken will meet with his counterparts in the Indo-Pacific Quad alliance to coordinate views on the strategic rules-based environment and key deliverables, including the signing of quad humanitarian assistance and disaster relief guidelines, Sison said.

Blinken is also scheduled on Friday to co-host with the foreign ministers of Bangladesh, Botswana and Spain, a ministerial to build on the global action plan to enhance international coordination and to strength readiness for future pandemic threats.

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US Not Ruling Out Modifying Existing Sanctions on Russia to Increase Impact – White House

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – The United States does not rule out imposing new sanctions against Russia or modifying existing ones to make them more effective amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Friday.

"We are constantly revisiting the sanctions regime to make sure that it is having the desired effect on [Russian President] Mr. [Vladimir] Putin and his economy and we have never taken off the table additional sanctions and we haven't taken off the possibility of changing the sanctions regime to, again, impact him in a much more costly way," Kirby told CNN in an interview. Commenting on those US officials who are reportedly frustrated that sanctions have had a less severe impact on the Russian economy than expected, Kirby noted that the Biden administration has said from the beginning that some sanctions could take time to have any effect.

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China Perfecting Mass Surveillance at Home, Exporting Technology Abroad - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - China is perfecting mass surveillance technology domestically and then exporting the systems abroad, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said on Friday.

"We've seen the lengths to which the People's Republic of China is willing to go in this sphere, perfecting mass surveillance in their own country and exporting that technology around the world," Sherman said during remarks at an emerging technology summit.

China also forces western companies to transfer technological knowledge to Beijing if they want to operate in the country's market, Sherman added.

Technology must be an enduring part of diplomats' work in order to ensure they benefit the US and the so-called "rules-based international order" it seeks to establish, Sherman said.

Countries like China are actively using technology to undercut the US-led international order, according to Sherman.

The US, as well as its allies and partners, should bolster investments in science and emerging technology in order to shape the standards that govern new developments, Sherman also said.

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Michelle Obama Urges Black Voters to Verify Registration Amid Suppression Efforts

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - Former First Lady Michelle Obama in a video message on Friday called on Black voters to verify their registration status to ensure their ballots are actually counted during November's midterm elections.

More than 15 states either passed or enacted restrictive voting rights laws following President Joe Biden's 2020 White House win, according to The Hill. And TargetSmart's data analysis found that from November 2020 until July 2021, more than 8.6 million voters were purged from official registration lists nationwide.

"It's great news that more Black Americans were eligible to vote in the last presidential election than ever before. But, at the same time, eligibility doesn't mean those ballots will actually be cast, especially when in some places it's getting harder and harder to vote," Obama said. "I want you to head over to [WhenWeAllVote.org](https://www.whenweallvote.org) to check your voter registration status, and ask three friends to do the same."

The video was released on National Black Voter Day, an observance started in 2020 by Black Entertainment Television and the National Urban League.

US voters go to the polls on November 8 to cast ballots in the midterm elections, with the Democratic Party's narrow control of Congress hanging in the balance. 34 of the 100 seats in the US Senate - and all 435 House seats - are up for election this year, in addition to statewide and local positions.

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Pentagon Says Aware of Massachusetts Migrant Situation, Probing Use of Texas Air Assets

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department is aware of the activation of Massachusetts state National Guard forces to assist migrants flown there from an air base in Texas, the use of which is being probed, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Friday.

Florida this week flew approximately 50 migrants who illegally crossed the US-Mexico border to Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, purportedly from Kelly Field at Joint Base San Antonio in Texas.

"I'm aware of the migrants that have been brought to Massachusetts," Ryder said during a press briefing. "We'll look into what exactly the situation was at Kelly [Field] ... Just because aircraft are taking off from a location does not necessarily mean that there's Defense Department involvement, but again, we'll look into that."

The migrants who arrived at Martha's Vineyard will be offered shelter and other services on a military base in Cape Cod by order of Governor Charlie Baker, US media reported on Friday. Up to 125 members of the Massachusetts National Guard could be called up to assist in the effort. Both missions are conducted in state active-duty status under their respective governors, meaning the Pentagon is not financially responsible for the activations, according to Ryder. States including Florida and Texas have been protesting the Biden administration's border and immigration policy by transporting migrants to so-called "sanctuary jurisdictions" including those in Washington and Massachusetts.

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US, South Korea Holding Defense Group Meeting to Discuss Regional Security - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States and South Korea are holding a bilateral defense strategy meeting in Washington to discuss security on the Korean Peninsula and broader Indo-Pacific region, Defense Department Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Friday.

"Today, the US and Republic of Korea are conducting the Bilateral Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group meeting at the State Department," Ryder said during a press briefing. "The consultation group provides an opportunity for our two governments to discuss peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in the Indo-Pacific."

The meeting is the first held by the Bilateral Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group since 2018, Ryder said.

The Defense Department delegation to the meeting is led by Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl, Ryder added.

On Thursday, senior US defense officials met with South Korean Vice Minister of National Defense Shin Beom-chul to discuss the security posture on the Korean Peninsula as well as bilateral scientific cooperation, according to the Defense Department.

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Russia Has Not Responded to US Offer on Prisoner Swap, Negotiations Ongoing - White House

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States continues to negotiate with Russia the potential release of Americans Brittney Griner and Paul Whelan, but Moscow has not responded to a so-called substantial offer from Washington on an alleged prisoner swap deal, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Friday.

"The Russians have not responded to that offer, but that doesn't mean that we're not still in negotiations or we're not still trying," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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US Will Make Call During UNGA for States to Forge Consensus on UNSC Reform - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States will make a call during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) debate next week for countries to forge a consensus on need to reform the UN Security Council (UNSC), Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations Michele Sison said on Friday.

"We will advance efforts to reform the UN Security Council... We do not believe that United States should defend an outdated status quo," Sison said during a conference call. "While we're clear-eyed about the obstacles to Security Council reform, we will make a serious call for countries to forge consensus around credible, realistic proposals for the way forward to remain credible into the 21st century."

Sison said the United States during High-Level week will claim that Russia's special military operation in Ukraine is threatening the credibility of the UN Security Council.

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Xi Reportedly Tells China's Military to Get Ready to Take Over Taiwan by 2027 - Reports WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - China's President Xi Jinping reportedly told his military that he wants China to have the capability to take control of Taiwan by force by 2027, Correspondent Ana Cabrera reported on Friday citing CIA Deputy Dir David Cohen. The US intelligence community, however, does not currently believe China has made a decision about whether to proceed to take over Taiwan, the report said. Relations between China, Taiwan and the US worsened over the past months as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan despite protests from Beijing, saying the trip violated the One-China principle.

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Blinken to Participate in UNSC Meeting on Ukraine Thursday on Margins of UNGA - State Dept

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will participate in a UN Security Council ministerial meeting on Ukraine on Thursday during the High-Level week at the United Nations General Assembly debate, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations Michele Sison said on Friday. "On September 22, the Secretary will participate in the UN Security Council ministerial on the maintenance of peace and security in Ukraine," Sison said during a conference call with reporters.

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Two NASAMS Systems Expected to Be Delivered to Ukraine in 'Two Months or So' - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States expects to send two National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) to Ukraine in the next "two months or so" amid Russia's special military operation in the country, Defense Department Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said on Friday. "Two NASAMS are expected to be delivered [to Ukraine] within the next two months or so. These defensive systems will further contribute to protecting Ukrainians from enemy air threats to include aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and missiles," Ryder said during a press briefing.

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UN Delivers Aid to More Than 13,000 People in Kharkiv Region - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United Nations has delivered humanitarian aid to more than 13,000 people in the Kharkiv region (Kharkivs'ka oblast), UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"The humanitarian coordinator there, Denise Brown, told us today that the first of a series of humanitarian convoys with relief supplies arrived in areas of Kharkivs'ka oblast, which until recently were out of reach of aid organizations," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The aid was delivered in groups of convoys of ten trucks and included food, water, hygiene kits, shelter materials and critical household items, Dujarric said.

In late August, Ukrainian troops began a counteroffensive in the Kherson and Kharkiv regions and captured significant swaths of territories.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it moved its troops near Kharkiv to other positions and regrouped to more effectively continue the special military operation in the Donbas. The Ukrainian counteroffensive attempts have been repulsed while their troops are suffering heavy losses in manpower and equipment, it added.

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US Wants to Transfer Afghans Stranded in Kosovo to Suriname - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is in talks with Suriname to send Afghans held at a US base in Kosovo to the small South American nation, The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, citing sources.

The US wants Suriname to take in the Afghans who failed to meet entry requirements for admission to the US.

Suriname's Ambassador to the United States, Marten Schalkwijk, confirmed that the discussions are ongoing, noting that they are at an early stage.

"We are considering it ... In general, Suriname is a country where people can adapt quickly," he said, as quoted in the report.

The State Department declined to comment on any talks with Suriname, the report said.

"The State Department is in regular discussion with allies and partners about finding durable, safe, voluntary resettlement solutions for Afghans who do not have a path to the US. I won't get into the specifics of conversations with any one country," a department spokesperson said.

In total, the US evacuated more than 100,000 people from Afghanistan on the eve of the Taliban's (under UN sanctions for terrorism) return to power.

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Number of English, Welsh Companies Declared Insolvent Rises 43% Since Last Year - UK Data

MOSCOW, September 16 (Sputnik) - The number of companies in England and Wales declared insolvent rose by 43% in August compared to the previous year, the UK Insolvency Service said on Friday.

A total of 1,933 companies were declared insolvent in August 2022, compared to 1,348 in the same month last year, the report said, according to the Insolvency Service data.

On Wednesday, Fitch Ratings said in its Global Economic Outlook that the United Kingdom and the eurozone are likely to enter a mild recession in 2023.

Businesses in the United Kingdom are being hit with increasing energy price pressures and other cost rises. The rising costs are linked to the gas crisis in Europe sparked by the Western sanctions on Russia over its special military operation in Ukraine.

Fitch's EU outlook assumes a "full or near complete shut-off" of Russian pipeline gas to Europe.

A national bank holiday on September 19 in honor of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral may lead to an earlier start of economic recession in the United Kingdom, local media reported on Tuesday.

On August 4, the Bank of England raised interest rates by 50 basis points to 1.75% per year - the single largest increase since 1995.

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Arctic Council Looks Forward to Cooperating With Russia When It Changes Behavior - Jones

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The Arctic Council continues working after it members effectively suspended Russia's participation in it due to the situation in Ukraine, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Doug Jones said on Friday.

"Work continues in the Arctic Council. We think it still remains the future and we will look to the day when Russia can change its behavior before we can [let it] back to the full work on the Council," Jones said in a virtual event at the Center for a New American Security.

Jones said business as usual with Russia is off the table at present, but emphasized that the United States will keep its commitments to the Arctic Council.

In addition, Jones said the United States considers the Atlantic Council as the governing body for the region.

On March 3, the work of the Arctic Council was suspended in light of the events in Ukraine.

Later, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the United States announced their intent to resume work in the Arctic Council on a limited basis and within the framework of projects that do not involve Russia.

Jones said that these countries restarted cooperation on the projects that do not include Russia.

Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said in June that Russia is concerned about plans for resumption of work of the Arctic Council without its participation and warned that decisions made in this format will be illegitimate.

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Yellen, New UK Finance Minister Discuss Boosting Pressure on Russia - Release

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen and newly appointed UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng have discussed how to more effectively implement price caps on Russian oil exports and stabilize global energy prices in a phone conversation, the Department of the Treasury announced on Friday.

"Today, Secretary Yellen spoke with Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng of the United Kingdom," the press release said. "She discussed shared efforts to hold Russia accountable for its unprovoked and unjustifiable war against Ukraine, including finalizing and implementing a price cap on Russian oil to stabilize global energy prices while denying Russia revenue to fund its brutal war."

Yellen also raised the importance of addressing Ukraine's near-term economic assistance needs and said the United States and the United Kingdom should work together to support an inclusive international effort to address Ukraine's future recovery and reconstruction, the Treasury Department said.

Yellen also offered her deepest condolences on the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the release added.

She also highlighted the importance of the longstanding US-UK bilateral relationship and congratulated Kwarteng on his recent appointment in the new government of UK Prime Minister Liz Truss, the department said.

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UN General Assembly Allows Zelenskyy to Address General Debate Via Pre-Recorded Message

UNITED NATIONS, September 16 (Sputnik) - The UN General Assembly voted on Friday to let Volodymyr Zelenskyy address the general debate of the 77th session via a pre-recorded message, denying other world leaders this right.

The mission of Belarus introduced a counter-draft to allow all member states to submit recorded statements. However, the draft was rejected.

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Massachusetts Offers to Relocate Migrants on Martha's Vineyard to Military Base - Reports

September 16 (Sputnik) - Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker has announced that some 50 migrants who recently arrived on Martha's Vineyard will be offered shelter and other services on a military base in Cape Cod, the Washington Post reported on Friday.

The migrants would have dormitory-style rooms at the Joint Base Cape Cod in Bourne and access to food, clothing, health care and other services.

Baker said he plans to call up to 125 Massachusetts National Guard members to assist in the effort.

On Wednesday, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis sent two planes of migrants, who recently crossed illegally into the United States from Mexico, to Martha's Vineyard.

The southern US states, including Florida, Texas, and Arizona, have been protesting what they call is the Biden administration's lax border protection and immigration policy by relocating migrants to so-called "sanctuary jurisdictions."

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US Supreme Court Decision to Reverse Roe v. Wade May Endanger Cancer Patients - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court's decision to overturn its earlier ruling in the Roe v. Wade case and allow US states to decide whether and how to perform abortions has left some cancer doctors struggling to interpret its effect on patients, ABC News reported on Friday.

The ruling will impact different aspects of women's health and health care, but could be a "death sentence" for some cancer patients, the report cited Dr. Shikha Jain, an oncologist at the University of Illinois Cancer Center, as saying.

The report pointed out that some women opt to have an abortion if they urgently need to start chemotherapy, but added the doctors are concerned that the patients are either not going to be able to make that decision for themselves or the decision will be put in the hands of courts.

Many of the new abortion restrictions have exceptions for a medical emergency or life-threatening physical condition, but some oncologists say the legal terms are unclear and may leave them legally and criminally liable, CBS News reported.

In addition, cancer patients may not qualify for those exceptions because of the way the new laws have been written or patients may have to go to court to get permission for an abortion that could delay critical treatments, the report said.

If a medical emergency necessitates abortion under the exemption in the state of Georgia, overzealous prosecutors may question the decision by a doctor to proceed and facilitate the procedure, the report added.

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State Dept. Says Next Decade 'Decisive' in US-China Competition

(Adds details in paras 3-4)

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – The US State Department said on Friday that it will cooperate with China when it's in America's interest, but sees the next decade as "decisive" in terms of US-China competition.

"We will cooperate with the PRC when it's in our interest like issues like climate change and global health, but there is definitely going to be a very decisive decade here," Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said at a Washington Post online talk.

Sherman added that "We want to compete with China on America's future and the future of the world but we want to do that under the rules-based international order, not the set of rules that China is trying to create for itself, even though it has risen in part of that rules-based international order."

Regarding Americans detained in China, Sherman said the State Department had set up working groups following meetings with their Chinese counterparts that dealt with various issues, including exit bans and unjust detainment of Americans, and had "made some progress." She added that President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan had raised cases by name during meetings with their Chinese counterparts.

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Biden Team Now Planning 2024 Re-Election Campaign on Bill Clinton Model - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden's most trusted White House advisers are already putting together an organizational and political strategy to run his reelection campaign for a second term in 2024, NBC reported on Friday.

The White House officials have been working on selecting managers to run the campaign, how it would be structured and testing what political themes will prove most effective to run on, the report said.

The Biden team is using President Bill Clinton's successful re-election campaign in 1996 as its model to direct the 2024 effort and therefore plans to run most of the effort through the party organization of the Democratic National Committee, just as Clinton did, the report said.

Biden officials want to test potential themes in this November's midterm congressional elections to see how well they resonate with US voters, the report also said. The highlighted issues will include Biden's efforts to combat special interests and rebuild national infrastructure, it added.

Clinton and Barack Obama, the two previous Democratic presidents, both were successfully re-elected to second four year terms. No Democratic president has been denied a second term in office for more than 40 years since President Jimmy Carter in 1980.

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US Watching Russian, Chinese Activities in Arctic Very Closely - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is closely monitoring Russian and Chinese activities and intentions in the Arctic, US Principal Director for the Arctic and Global Resilience at the Defense Department Greg Pollock said on Friday.

"We're watching both Russian and Chinese activities and intentions in the Arctic very closely," Pollock said during a virtual panel discussion with the Center for a New American Security. The United States will work very closely with all of the Arctic seven nations to ensure they develop the right capabilities and interoperability in the region, including through large scale exercises, Pollock said.

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US Has No Plans to Meet With Russian Delegation on UNGA's Sidelines - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 16 (Sputnik) - The US delegation has no plans to meet with Russian representatives on the sidelines of the 77th UN General Assembly session, but will have meetings with Ukrainians, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Friday.

"We will be having meetings with the Ukrainians, there are no plans at this time to have meetings with the Russians, they have not indicated that they have interest in diplomacy," she told reporters.

The 77th UNGA session, which is running from September 13-27, marks the first in-person gathering of the body since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The high-level debate is set to begin on September 20,

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US Discussions at UNGA Will Not Focus on Ukraine But Will Not Ignore It Either - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 16 (Sputnik) - The US delegation' discussions at the 77th UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York next week will not be focused on Ukraine, but will not ignore it either, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Friday. "We are gonna be focused on climate change, health, building and supporting the commitment on the UN Charter," Thomas-Greenfield said.

The discussions will not be focused solely on Ukraine, but "we won't ignore Ukraine," she added.

The 77th UN General Assembly, which is running from September 13-27, marks the first in-person gathering of that body since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

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US May Modify Arctic Strategy Due to Changes in Security Environment - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States sees a need to make adjustments to its Arctic strategy due to changes in the global security environment that include Russia's special military operation in Ukraine and climate change, US Principal Director for the Arctic and Global Resilience at the Defense Department Greg Pollock said on Friday.

"We need to account for changes in the security environment, whether it's the increased urgency of the climate challenge or the implications of the conflict in Ukraine, for stability and security in the Arctic," Pollock said during a virtual panel discussion with the Center for a New American Security.

Pollock added that the United States is aware that the Arctic plays a very important role in both Russia's and China's medium- and long-term strategic plans, so NATO and the Arctic seven must be prepared for a range of outcomes.

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US Envisions Arctic as Territory of 'Low Tension,' Economic Development - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States considers the Arctic as a territory of "low tension," where different states act responsibly while engaging in environmentally responsible economic development, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Doug Jones said on Friday.

"We do have a vision for the Arctic as a place of low tension, where states act responsibly, where we can have economic development and investment in sustainable and transparent way that respects the environment," Jones said in a virtual event at the Center for a New American Security.

The United States continues to maintain its National Strategy for the Arctic, which was adopted in 2013, but recognizes that many things have changed since, Jones said.

Some of the more significant changes include issues related to climate change and the rising geopolitical competition with Russia and China, Jones said.

"We are working on updating the National Strategy for the Arctic, and hopefully that will be released soon," Jones added.

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US Congress, State Dept. Working on Russia Sanctions Akin to Terror Sponsor Designation

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The US Congress and State Department are collaborating to develop Russian sanctions that achieve the same impact as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST) designation without possible unintended consequences, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday.

"There are problems in using this particular vehicle, the state sponsorship of terrorism designation, that may have unintended consequences that are not only not helpful, but they may even be harmful," Blinken said during a press availability. "What we are doing is working with Congress right now to see if there is another way forward that achieves what could be achieved through the use of the SST designation without any of the unintended consequences that would make it more counterproductive than productive."

Last week, the White House said US President Joe Biden's decision not to label Russia a state sponsor of terrorism is final, as such a designation would jeopardize food exports.

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US Wants to Ensure Arctic Remains Peaceful Amid Growing Stability Concerns - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States wants to do everything it can to keep the Arctic peaceful despite growing concerns about stability in the region due to Russian and Chinese activity, US Principal Director for the Arctic and Global Resilience at the Defense Department Greg Pollock said on Friday.

"The Arctic remains peaceful and we want to do everything we can to keep it that way," Pollock said during a virtual panel discussion with the Center for a New American Security. "I think there's, there's obviously growing concern about security and stability in the Arctic."

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US, Jordan Sign Memorandum Providing Amman With Over \$1Bln Annually for 7 Years

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing Amman with more than \$1 billion annually for a period of seven years. "With the agreement we signed today, which intends to provide well over a billion dollars in assistance each year for seven years, our Jordanian partners can count on the United States to support them and to help make these goals real," Blinken said during the signing ceremony. From September 3-4, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf traveled to Jordan to meet with Safadi and discuss the bilateral strategic partnership as well as the new seven year commitment that was announced earlier by US President Joe Biden.

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State Dept. Says Next Decade 'Decisive' in US-China Competition

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – The US State Department said on Friday that it will cooperate with China when it's in America's interest, but sees the next decade as "decisive" in terms of US-China competition.

"We will cooperate with the PRC when it's in our interest like issues like climate change and global health, but there is definitely going to be a very decisive decade here," Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said at a Washington Post online talk.

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Biden Believes Iran Nuclear Deal Still in US Interest Despite Stalemate – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - The United States has reached a "stalemate" with Iran in nuclear deal negotiations, but President Joe Biden still believes it's in America's interest to pursue the JCPOA, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said Friday.

"We're at a stalemate in the sense that Iran, in the latest round of negotiations, has given us back a pretty tough response, one that is unacceptable to us," Sherman said during a Washington Post online talk.

She added that Biden "still believes it is in our interest to pursue the deal."

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Alaska Braces for Flooding, High Winds as Typhoon Storm Approaches - US Weather Service

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) - Coastal communities in the US state of Alaska are bracing for major flooding and high winds as the remnants of a typhoon approach, bringing wind gusts up to 90 miles per hour and potentially the worst flooding in nearly 50 years, the National Weather Service (NWS) Fairbanks said in a notice.

"The strongest storm in over a decade is moving into the Bering Sea. Impacts may exceed the 2011 Bering Sea Superstorm, and some locations may experience their worst coastal flooding in nearly 50 years," NWS Fairbanks said late Thursday.

Water levels along the Bering Strait coast are expected to rise between 3-8 feet above normal high tide levels, and rise between 12-18 feet from the towns of Elim to Koyuk, according to the notice. Peak water levels will persist for 10-14 hours before water recedes, the notice also said. Persistent winds between 40-60 miles per hour are expected, with gusts as high as 90 miles per hour in some places, NWS Fairbanks said in a separate notice. Winds will peak Saturday, but begin Friday, the notice said.

Loose objects may be blown away, structures damaged and power lines knocked down, the notice added.

NWS Fairbanks on Friday posted buoy station footage from off the Aleutian Islands showing 41 foot waves. Adak Island at the chain's southwest end has recorded multiple gusts of 75 miles per hour so far, NWS Fairbanks also said.

The typhoon remnant could possibly undergo a process called explosive cyclogenesis as it moves across the Bering Sea and hits the Alaskan coast. The storm could strengthen as pressure drops rapidly.

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Biden Says Rail Strike Could Lead to 'Real Economic Crisis,' Paralyze Supply Chains

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – The United States would face a "real economic crisis" and bring supply chains to a halt unless an agreement with railroad unions was reached to avert a nationwide strike, President Joe Biden said on Friday.

"If in fact, they [freight railroads] have gone on strike, the supply chains in this country would have come to a screeching halt. We would have seen a real economic crisis," Biden told CBS in an interview.

On Thursday, Biden announced that a tentative deal had been reached between several unions and freight railroad companies that would allow the industry to operate effectively as a vital part of the US economy.

The deal provides for a 24% increase of rail workers' wages over the next five years, an improvement in their working conditions, and a cap on the cost that rail workers pay for healthcare.

The tentative agreement with the unions, which collectively represent approximately 60,000 rail workers, averts a potential nationwide strike, which was scheduled for Friday.

The US Chamber of Commerce warned earlier that a potential rail strike would lead to an "economic disaster" and called on Congress to be prepared to intervene.

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Downing Street Says Truss to Meet With Biden, Other World Leaders Ahead of Queen's Funeral

MOSCOW, September 16 (Sputnik) - UK Prime Minister Liz Truss will meet with counterparts including US President Joe Biden and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ahead of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral next week, Downing Street said on Friday.

Truss will meet with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Saturday at Chevening, according to the prime minister's schedule. Truss will then meet with Biden, Trudeau, Irish Taoiseach Micheal Martin and Polish President Andrzej Duda on Sunday at Downing Street, the schedule said.

The funeral for Queen Elizabeth II will be held on Monday, and is expected to be attended by nearly 500 officials from countries around the world.

Queen Elizabeth II passed away on September 8 at the age of 96. Her eldest son, Charles III, became the new king following her death.

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US Stocks' Dow Index Heads for Worst Week Since October 2020, Ahead of Rate Hike

NEW YORK, September 16 (Sputnik) - Fears of a third outsized rate hike in a row sent US stocks tumbling on Friday, with the broad-based Dow index headed for its worst week in almost two years.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which comprises stocks of 30 large US corporations, was down 4.81% on the week some 40 minutes after the market's open. That was the largest weekly slide on the Dow since the week to October 30, 2020, when it fell 6.47%.

The S&P 500 Index, which represents the top 500 US stocks, was 4.1% lower on the week. The Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises marquee names in technology such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, was down 6.3% on the week. Stocks plunged this week ahead of a third rate hike of 75 basis points expected from the Federal Reserve when it meets on September 21.

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US Officials Frustrated at Pace of Sanctions Pain in Russia – Reports

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – US officials are frustrated that sanctions have dealt a less severe blow to the Russian economy than expected, CNN reported on Friday, citing sources.

The officials said the hope had been that the restrictions would quickly limit Russia's ability to continue its military operation in Ukraine, according to the report. However, the Russian economy has shown far more resilience than many top Biden administration officials expected, the report said.

"We were expecting that things like SWIFT and all the blocking sanctions on Russia's banks would totally crater the Russian economy and that basically, by now going into September, we'd be dealing with an economically much more weakened Russia than the one that we are dealing with," a senior US official said.

The Russian economy did shrink by about 4% year-on-year between April and June, versus the US projection of 15%, the report noted.

The Biden administration, however, has always seen it as a "long-term game," another official noted.

This official acknowledged that Russia has so far managed to offset initial shocks, largely thanks to its big energy revenues. However, western intelligence officials expect that the Russian economy will still suffer seriously in the long term, the report said.

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Whelan's Brother Says Meeting With Biden 'Positive Move,' Other Moves Rest With Russia

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – Brother of Paul Whelan, a former US marine who is serving a 16-year prison sentence in Russia for espionage, told Sputnik on Friday that his family's meeting with President Joe Biden is a "positive step" and any additional steps rest with Russia.

Paul's sister, Elizabeth, is scheduled to meet with Biden on Friday.

"A meeting with a President is a positive move. It shows that the government is making Paul's freedom a priority. Of course, President Biden is a kind man and is doing our family a kindness by taking this time to reassure us. But any additional moves rest with whatever Russian authorities are reviewing the US concession to secure Paul's release," David Whelan said.

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Texas Denies George Floyd Posthumous Pardon for 2004 Drug Conviction – Board of Pardons

WASHINGTON, September 16 (Sputnik) – The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles has unanimously denied George Floyd a posthumous pardon for a minor drug conviction from 2004.

"After a full and careful review of the application and other information filed with the application, a majority of the Board decided not to recommend a Full Pardon and/or Pardon for Innocence on 09/14/2022," the board said in a letter to Floyd's lawyer Allison Mathis on Wednesday. It added that her client is eligible to re-apply for a full pardon two years later. The board had unanimously recommended 11 months ago that Floyd be pardoned, but rescinded its recommendation in December, citing a procedural error. Mathis told The Texas Tribune that she had not provided additional facts or evidence to the board after its initial recommendation and it was unclear why they had reversed their decision. Floyd's murder by police officers in Minneapolis in 2020 sparked a nationwide reckoning on anti-black racism.