

**9/21/22 Wednesday**

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African Union President Tells UNGA Continent Won't Be 'Breeding Ground of a New Cold War'  
By - Fantine Gardinier

Since Russia launched its special operation in Ukraine in February, NATO powers have attempted to pressure the rest of the globe to sanction Russia's economy and condemn the operation. It's part of a yearslong effort to push nations to sever relations with Moscow and isolate it.

Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York on Tuesday, Senegalese President Macky Sall, who currently chairs the African Union, [said that Africa](#) "does not want to be the breeding ground of a new Cold War."

"I have come to say that Africa has suffered enough of the burden of history; that it does not want to be the breeding ground of a new Cold War, but rather a pole of stability and opportunity open to all its partners, on a mutually beneficial basis," Sall said.

"We call for a de-escalation and a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine as well as for a negotiated solution to avoid the catastrophic risk of a potentially global conflict," he added.

The United States especially has pressured African nations to pick sides in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which began in earnest in February, although its origins go back to the 2014 coup in Kiev by US-backed forces. Washington has threatened nations if they break its sanctions against Moscow.

African nations collectively [imported \\$12.6 billion](#) worth of Russian goods in 2020, including 30% of its grain imports, as well as fertilizers and petroleum products, all of which [have increased in price](#) thanks to interruptions due to the Ukraine conflict, Western sanctions, and the global [problem of inflation](#).

When US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited South Africa last month in an attempt to woo Pretoria away from its neutral stance, his South African counterpart, [Naledi Pandor, told him](#) in no uncertain terms that "We should be equally concerned at what is happening to the people of Palestine as we are with what is happening to the people of Ukraine."

At the UNGA on Tuesday, Pandor said that the UN should lead "a process of diplomacy" between Moscow and Kiev to bring an end to the conflict.

When South African President Cyril Ramaphosa came to Washington last week, he also [told US lawmakers that](#) "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."

From Mali to the Central African Republic, nations [frustrated with fruitless](#) Western military aid have been rejecting those partnerships and turning to nations such as Russia for help instead. In each case, the switch is greeted in the West with claims of [Russian "malign influence."](#) including social media campaigns and claims that Russian private military contractors have been secretly dispatched there by orders of the Kremlin and are committing war crimes.

The latest nation to see protests against France's military presence and express support for a Russian partnership is [Niger, where France](#) has waged a War on Terror-style military campaign against Islamist militants for nearly a decade, and which labors heavily under an unequal relationship with Paris, its former colonial ruler.

Similar claims have been made about [China's growing relationship](#) with African nations, especially those that become part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an infrastructure megaproject initiated by Beijing. Western institutions have claimed China engages in "debt-trap diplomacy" to compel borrower nations to follow its foreign policy, but [investigations have proven](#) that on the contrary, it is Western financial bodies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund that [engage in such practices](#), which Chinese lenders are comparatively "hands-off" and regularly write off poor nations' debts.

Sall told the UNGA that Africa is "a continent determined to work with all of its partners" to address its needs, which include access to the basic necessities of modern life, such as electricity, medical care, and running water. The continent has also lagged behind the rest of the world on COVID-19 vaccination, with no indigenously-made vaccines and a handful of locations in Africa [making foreign vaccines](#) on contract.

Aside from Ethiopia, the entire continent [fell under the reign](#) of European empires during parts of the 19th and 20th centuries, leading to mass death, the destruction of traditional systems of life, and chronic economic underdevelopment. Since African nations gained independence, most have been forced to [maintain neo-colonial relationships](#) with their former colonizers, whose resource extraction has continued unabated.

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Photos: Africa's Sahel Faces Devastating Floods as Rains Swell Niger & Nile Rivers, Killing Hundreds

By - Fantine Gardinier

Massive storms during the rainy season have caused flooding across Africa's arid Sahel region, killing hundreds of people in Sudan, Niger and Nigeria in recent months. The situation stands in sharp contrast to the disastrous drought plaguing the Horn of Africa.

The Niger River basin drains much of the Sahel region, including Nigeria and Niger, and the river is prone to annual flooding. Since the rainy season started in May, heavier-than-usual rains have caused an increase in destructive floods, wreaking havoc on farmers and those living near the river.

Nigeria

Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency [said on Tuesday](#) that 27 of Nigeria's 36 states have experienced flooding this year, displacing roughly 100,000 people and destroying thousands of hectares of farmland.

Authorities said on Monday that the flooding situation is "beyond our control," noting that more than 300 people have been killed by floods in 2022, including 20 in the last week.

"This is the highest we ever had," Manzo Ezekiel, a spokesperson for the agency, told [the Associated Press](#).

The Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NEMA) has said that "excessive rainfalls and contributions from external flows" are causing more flooding in 2022 than in 2021. A major source of concern is the Lagdo dam across the border in Cameroon, which empties into the Benue River, a major tributary of the lower Niger.

NEMA director Mustapha Ahmed said on Monday that the dam had begun releasing excess water from its reservoir on September 13, which "cascades down to Nigeria through River Benue and its tributaries thereby inundating communities that have already been impacted by heavy precipitation."

"We are aware that the released water cascades down to Nigeria through River Benue and its tributaries thereby inundating communities that have already been impacted by heavy precipitation.

"The released water complicates the situation further downstream as Nigeria's inland reservoirs including Kainji, Jebba, and Shiroro are also expected to overflow between now and October ending," he said, [according to The Nation](#), adding that "Kainji and Jebba dams have already started spilling excess water from their reservoirs. This will have serious consequences on frontline States and communities along the courses of rivers Niger and Benue."

Niger

Upstream in Niger, heavy rains have affected more than 225,000 people since June, killing 159, according to Civil Protection services figures [given to Agence France-Presse](#) on Monday. Just since September 4, at least 103 people have died and 140,000 people have been affected near the cities of Maradi, Zinder, Dosso, and Tahoua. However, the capital city of Niamey has so far been spared.

More than 25,900 homes have been destroyed, along with 71 classrooms, 6 medical centers, 210 grain stores, and 700 head of cattle, the government said.

Niger was already experiencing a food crisis, with one-fifth of the population, or 4.4 million people, in "severe food insecurity," [according to the](#) International Federation of Red Cross And Red Crescent Societies. In addition, a [yearslong war has raged](#) across parts of the country as French forces fight Islamist militants. The constant fighting has [provoked protests](#) against France's military presence in the country, which [provides 40% of the uranium](#) used in France's famous nuclear power plants.

Sudan

In Sudan, flooding killed 20 people last week and is responsible for the deaths of at least 134 people since May, [according to Sudan's](#) National Council for Civil Defense.

According to the latest United Nations report, the flooding has affected more than 286,000 people and destroyed nearly 17,000 homes. It has washed away roads, houses, and vital infrastructure, such as electrical lines.

The country's center, where the capital of Khartoum and the major cities of New Khartoum and Omdurman are located, is dominated by the Nile River, which is fed by two tributary branches flowing south to north from Uganda and Ethiopia. However, much of the flooding damage and deaths have occurred in other areas, [such as Kassala](#), which sits on another Nile tributary, the Mareb River, and [South Darfur](#) and El Gezira, on the opposite side of the country.

Many of the affected areas are also sites of [armed conflict](#) or refugee camps for people fleeing conflict in neighboring regions such as [northern Ethiopia](#).

Horn Faces Catastrophic Drought

The torrent of rain across the Sahel is sharply contrasted by its dearth in the Horn region, which is experiencing its worst drought in 40 years.

The [UN warned last month](#) that roughly 12 million people are at risk of starvation in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya in the coming months. Successive [failed rainy seasons](#) have caused wells to dry up and crops to fail, forcing millions from their homes in search of food and water.

Martin Griffiths, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, [warned earlier this month](#) that as many as 205 million people will face acute food crises in 45 countries later this year, including Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Yemen.

To make matters even worse, [rapidly rising commodity prices](#) around the globe are contributing heavily to food insecurity for impoverished populations and those on the margins. For example, according to the [International Energy Association](#) (IEA), 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.

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China's Russian LNG Import Value Tripled in 2022 as Beijing Acts as Middleman to Sanctioning Nations

By - Fantine Gardinier

Since the start of 2022, China has signed major deals with Russia, Saudi Arabia, and others to dramatically increase its importing and processing of petroleum products, including crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), as well as coal.

According to newly released customs data, China increased its LNG imports from only two countries so far in 2022 - Qatar and Russia, the latter of which nearly tripled from 2021 numbers. At the same time, China's LNG exports have increased, in part to offset the economic effects of Omicron-driven lockdowns.

According to the South China Morning Post ([SCMP](#)), [which viewed](#) the data, the value of LNG coming to China from Russia via pipelines in the first eight months of 2022 was nearly triple that seen in the previous year, amounting to \$2.39 billion. In terms of volume, China's overall LNG imports from Russia increased by 28.5% year-on-year; for imports from Qatar, they increased by 66.7%, or two-thirds.

Those trends are in keeping with [the close partnership](#) between Moscow and Beijing that has blossomed in recent years, and China's refusal to abide by Western demands that it join their attempts to isolate Russia politically and economically following the launch of its special operation in Ukraine. Instead, Beijing has [asserted its neutrality](#) on the subject, calling for a

[peaceful settlement](#) of the issues between Kiev and Moscow while [acknowledging NATO's role](#) in provoking the conflict.

Western sanctions combined with shipping disruptions caused by the conflict dramatically increased the price of petroleum products, including crude oil and LNG, in the weeks following the Ukraine operation's launch in late February. After Russia, the world's largest exporter of such products, began offering discounts to major buyers like China and India, their purchases increased drastically, more than offsetting the temporary damage done by Russia losing its European customers.

China has faced its own economic troubles in 2022 as it struggles to keep a lid on COVID-19 outbreaks as part of its "[Dynamic Zero Covid](#)" policy, which has spared it the mass death seen in most other nations. The lockdowns have interrupted trade, hurting businesses, so Beijing was forced to scale back plans to divest from cheap fossil fuels in order to keep its economy afloat. European nations and the US have made similar adjustments.

With LNG market prices still so high, Beijing has [seized the opportunity](#) to buy up cheaper Russian gas and sell it abroad, helping to offset some of the lockdown-induced economic damage. Ironically, many of its buyers have been European nations that imposed sanctions on Russia in the first place.

According to [Nikkei Asia](#), China's JOVO Group, Sinopec Group, Dongguan Jovo, and other LNG sellers had sold European buyers roughly 4 million tons of LNG between January 1 and July 1, or roughly 7% of Europe's LNG imports in that time. According to the Tokyo-based outlet, their collective profits could exceed \$100 million.

Earlier this month, [Russia's Gazprom said](#) it had reached a deal with National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) for gas pipeline sales to be settled in rubles and renminbi, helping to fuel [talk of a "petro-Yuan"](#) to rival the "petrodollar" that has dominated international markets since the mid-20th century.

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Recurrent Nightmares? You May Be at Higher Risk for Dementia, Study Finds  
By - Allison Dubois

There are few ways to predict who will develop dementia as they age, but researchers were recently shocked to find that experiencing frequent bad dreams during middle age could point to future cognitive decline and the development of dementia. If confirmed, the findings may lead to new ways of screening for dementia and slowing cognitive decline.

Though most people experience bad dreams every once in a while, a new study has found that individuals between the ages of 35 and 64 who experience bad dreams on a frequent basis are four times more likely to experience cognitive decline, while those older than 64 were twice as likely to be diagnosed with dementia.

The study, which builds on prior research on people with Parkinson's disease, followed 605 middle-aged Americans and 2,600 adults aged 79 or older over a period of 10 years.

“There are very few risk indicators for dementia that can be identified as early as middle age. We believe bad dreams could be a useful way to identify individuals at high risk of developing dementia, and put in place strategies to slow down the onset of the disease,” explained Dr. Abidemi Otaiku, a researcher at the University of Birmingham’s Centre for Human Brain Health. There’s a [correlation](#) between bad dreams and poor sleep quality, but Otaiku’s working theory is rooted instead in neurodegeneration (the progressive atrophy and loss of neuron function) within the brain’s right frontal lobe, which makes it harder for people to regulate their emotions while dreaming.

According to the study, statistical software was used to find out if participants experiencing frequent nightmares were more likely to experience cognitive decline, which was defined as “having an annual rate of decline in global cognitive function” measured using five different cognitive tests.

“We know that neurodegenerative conditions such as Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease often start many years before somebody is diagnosed,” Otaiku said. “In some individuals who already have [an] underlying disease, bad dreams and nightmares might be one of the earliest signs.”

Otaiku stressed that not everyone who regularly experiences nightmares is likely to develop dementia, but that with more research, bad dreams could eventually be used to identify high-risk individuals:

“If we can identify who’s at high risk for getting dementia several years or even decades earlier, we may be able to slow down the onset, or maybe even prevent it altogether.”

The findings were published in the journal [eClinicalMedicine](#).

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UN Chief Says Obstacles to Russian Fertilizer Exports Should Be Immediately Removed

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - All obstacles to the export of Russian fertilizers should be immediately removed to avoid a food supply crisis, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Thursday.

"It is essential that all States remove every remaining obstacle to the export of Russian fertilizers immediately. We need to get them to farmers at a reasonable cost, and on to fields as soon as possible," he told a UN Security Council on Ukraine.

He stressed that it is vital the shipments continue and increase, so commodity markets further stabilize.

"If the fertilizer market is not stabilized, next year could bring a food supply crisis. Simply put, the world may run out of food," the UN chief warned.

Though the United States and its allies have said that sanctions do not apply to food products and fertilizers, Russia points out that restrictions on bank settlements, insurance, and shipment of goods hinder its exports.

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Russian Companies Exploring Direct Flights to Northern Cyprus - Turkish Cypriot Leader

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - Russian companies are examining opportunities for direct flights to Northern Cyprus, but no official decision has been made yet, Turkish Cypriot President Ersin Tatar told Sputnik.

On Thursday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he has discussed with Russian President Vladimir Putin a possibility of launching direct flights from Russia to the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. CNN Turk reported, citing sources, that such flights may begin in November.

"From my Ministry of Transport, they tell me that one private company applied to ... Turkish Cypriot civil aviation, that they might fly from Russia," Tatar said.

Tatar added he has not received any direct requests from the Turkish and Russian governments to authorize such flights.

"I think it might be those private companies who are trying to explore, explore the opportunities how to carry tourists, to Northern Cyprus, it might be, which I think is only fair," Tatar said. "If private companies want to fly their airplanes to North Cyprus to carry tourists to North Cyprus, this can only be welcome, because we in Cyprus, we are trying to obviously improve our economic situation and tourism is the main industry."

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UN Chief Calls for Probe of Burial Site in Izyum

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - The burial site in the town of Izyum, Kharkiv region, should be subjected to a thorough investigation, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Thursday.

"The reports are a catalogue of cruelty: summary executions, sexual violence, torture and other inhumane and degrading treatment against civilians and prisoners of war. The latest accounts of burial sites in Izyum are extremely disturbing. All these allegations must be thoroughly investigated, to ensure accountability," Guterres told a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine. Last week, Ukrainian authorities alleged that mass burial sites were found in Izyum following Russian troops' withdrawal from the Kharkiv region in early September with more than 400 bodies reportedly found so far.

In March-April, the area was a hotbed of hostilities between Russian and Ukrainian forces, seeing control of villages outside Izyum swing back and forth. Ultimately, Russian forces established control over the fiercely contested territory.

Bodies of dead Ukrainian soldiers were transported to local morgues, where some of them were identified.

An eyewitness told Sputnik that Ukraine's command refused to take away the bodies and the soldiers were buried at a cemetery outside Izyum.

In September, Ukraine recaptured Izyum and nearby areas and accused Russia of crimes against humanity.

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Blinken, Chinese Counterpart to Meet at UNGA on Friday – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will meet on the sidelines of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Friday, the State Department said.

"As part of our ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and manage competition responsibly, the Secretary will discuss a range of bilateral and global issues with the PRC State Councilor and Foreign Minister," the release stated.

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RPT - Food Insecurity Not Due to Ukraine Conflict, Issue Has Long Existed - IFRC President

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - The current food insecurity was not caused by Russia's special military operation in Ukraine but is an issue that has continuously existed over the years, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) President Francesco Rocca told Sputnik.

"Food insecurity is not because of the war in Europe, it's something that happened before, and unfortunately it's happening again," Rocca said.

Rocca pointed out that countries around the world should work together to address climate change because it is exacerbating global food insecurity issues.

The countries of the collective West has repeatedly blamed Russia's special military operation in Ukraine for the current global shortage of food, however, several countries have claimed that Western sanctions may have complicated transactions critical in food supply chains.

US President Joe Biden will convene with several world leaders at the United Nations this week to address issues pertaining to food insecurity.

A recent United Nations-brokered agreement has resulted in Ukraine shipping grain out of the country through the Black Sea as part of an effort to help curb the food shortage that stemmed from the conflict.

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#### RPT - Kerry Says 'Always' Ready to Meet With Lavrov on Climate Issues

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly that he is always willing to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on climate matters.

"I am always ready to meet with Minister Lavrov on climate," Kerry said on Wednesday when asked if he has plans to meet with Lavrov on climate change.

Kerry also said he will not comment on Ukraine at the moment.

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#### US Court Rules Justice Dept. Can Review Classified Records Seized From Trump - Filing

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - A US appeals court ruled that Justice Department investigators can continue to review classified records seized last month from former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida, court documents revealed.

"We decide only the narrow question presented: whether the United States has established that it is entitled to a stay of the district court's order, to the extent that it (1) requires the government to submit for the special master's review the documents with classification markings and (2) enjoins the United States from using that subset of documents in a criminal investigation. We conclude that it has," the court record said on Wednesday.

The Justice Department's review is expected to be completed some time after Thanksgiving, according to media reports.

On August 8, the FBI raided Mar-a-Lago as part of an investigation into potential mishandling of sensitive presidential records. Agents examined the premises for nine hours during which they seized 11 sets of documents and other materials, some of which were labeled Top Secret, according to a disclosed search warrant.

Trump has condemned the probe and the raid as a weaponization of the US justice system against him as well as his aides and supporters.

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#### UK's Truss in UNGA Speech Pledges to Sustain or Increase Military Aid to Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - The United Kingdom will sustain or increase military assistance to Ukraine for as long as it takes, UK Prime Minister Elizabeth Truss said during her speech at the United Nations General Assembly.

"I pledge that we will sustain or increase our military support to Ukraine for as long as it takes," Truss said on Wednesday night.

Truss noted that Ukraine is currently receiving new weapons from the United Kingdom, including more Multiple-Launch Rocket Systems (MRLS).

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Cuban Official Says US Move to Resume Full Immigrant Visa Service in Cuba 'Positive Step'

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - The United States' announcement that it is resuming full immigrant visa services in Cuba is a "positive step," Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said during his speech at the UN General Assembly.

"We've heard today that the preset processing of migrant visa visas will return to the Embassy of the United States in Havana and that is a positive step," Rodriguez said on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, the US Embassy in Havana said its visa immigrant service will resume in early 2023, adding that this change will also eliminate the need for Cubans applying for immigrant visas in family preference categories to travel outside of Cuba to the capital of Guyana, Georgetown.

Rodriguez further said Cuba reiterates its readiness to move toward a better understanding, better relations and cooperation with the United States on the basis of mutual respect and sovereign equality.

Rodriguez urged the United States to solve the issues that fuel irregular migration from Cuba, including US restrictions placed on regular transit countries and the ratcheted up economic blockade against the island nation.

US and Cuban border security officials held a meeting in early September in Havana to discuss issues concerning drug trafficking and human smuggling of migrants.

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US, Allies Will Continue to Support Ukraine After Putin Calls for Mobilization - Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States and its allies will continue to provide Ukraine with support after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a partial military mobilization.

"The United States, our allies, and partners in the international community... Together, we have provided Ukraine consistent, significant support for its defense, and we will continue that steadfast support for the Ukrainian people for as long as it takes," Blinken said in a press release on Wednesday.

Earlier on Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an order calling up 300,000 reservists to support Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

Putin accused the collective West of using the threat of nuclear weapons to blackmail Russia and warned that Moscow will use all means at its disposal in case its territorial integrity is threatened.

On February 24, Russia launched the special military operation in Ukraine after the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk requested help to defend them from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The Russian Ministry of Defense said the operation is solely targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure.

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Biden, Macron Discuss on Margins of UNGA Ukraine Support, Iran Nuclear Deal - White House

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly to discuss issues concerning Ukraine and efforts to revive the Iran nuclear agreement, the White House said.

"President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. met today with President Emmanuel Macron on the margins of the Global Fund Seventh Replenishment Conference in New York," the White House said in a press release on Wednesday. "The two leaders reaffirmed their continued support for Ukraine's efforts to defend itself against Russian aggression. They also discussed efforts to prevent Iran from ever acquiring a nuclear weapon, as well as our ongoing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and challenges posed by China."

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Canada to Continue Strengthening Anti-Russia Sanctions, Send Military Aid to Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - Canada will continue to strengthen the sanctions imposed on Russia and provide military assistance to Ukraine, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said during a press conference.

"Canada is going to continue to strengthen our sanctions, we are going to continue to send military aid to Ukraine," Trudeau said on Wednesday evening.

Trudeau added that Ukraine has been asking for more ammunition from Canada, so Ottawa is working on fulfilling that request.

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Canada Pledges Around \$1Bln to Fight Disease Worldwide, Mitigate Covid Impact - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - Canada announced a contribution of C\$1.21 billion (\$900 million) to fight a number of diseases including AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria and additional funds to mitigate the impact of covid, Ottawa said in a press release.

"As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau just announced at the Global Fund's Seventh Replenishment pledging conference, hosted by the United States in New York, Canada will commit \$1.21 billion to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria," the release said on Wednesday.

Canada will also allocate C\$100 million for the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on these diseases.

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on efforts to combat these illnesses, the release added.

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Zelenskyy Says in UNGA Video Address Neutrality Not Part of Peace Formula Proposed by Kiev

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his pre-recorded address to the UN General Assembly that Ukraine's neutral status is not a part of the peace formula proposed by Kiev when the ongoing conflict with Russia is over.

"What is not in our [peace] formula? Neutrality. Those who speak of neutrality, when human values and peace are under attack, mean something else," Zelenskyy said on Wednesday.

Zelenskyy explained the Ukraine peace formula includes five items: punishment for the aggressor; protection of life in by all available means; restoring Ukraine's security and territorial integrity; security guarantees; and a determination by Kiev to fight and by its partners to help. Kiev has proposals to upgrade the security architecture of Ukraine, Europe and the world that is expected to preclude any aggression against the country, Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine will appeal to the UN General Assembly to support an international compensation mechanism for the consequences of Russia's special military operation and has already prepared "precise steps" to establish a special tribunal to punish Russia for the alleged crimes against it, he added.

Zelenskyy addressed the UN General Assembly participants via a 27-minute pre-recorded video message despite protests by Russia given that such form of participation is prohibited by United Nations rules.

Earlier on Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an order calling up 300,000 reservists to support Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. Putin accused the collective West of using the threat of nuclear weapons to blackmail Russia and warned that Moscow will use all means at its disposal in case its territorial integrity is threatened.

On February 24, Russia launched the special military operation in Ukraine after the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk requested help to defend them from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The Russian Ministry of Defense said the operation is solely targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure and the civilian population is not in danger.

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Canadian Lawmakers Adopt Measure to Hold More Hearings on Gazprom Turbines Issue, Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - The Canadian House Foreign Affairs Committee adopted an amendment to hold more hearings related to developments in Ukraine and the sanctions waiver for Gazprom turbine engines maintained by Siemens Energy in Canada. "So the motion as amended would read as follows: So that in relation to the study of the export of Russian Gazprom turbines, the committee invite representatives of Siemens and Canadian Gas Association to testify for two hours, invite the [Canadian] Minister of Foreign Affairs to appear for two hours to provide a date on the turbine issue and other Ukrainian related development, and instruct staff to prepare a draft report on the committee study on Ukraine, including the sanctions waiver [for turbines]," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ali Ehsassi said during a meeting on Wednesday.

A few Canadian lawmakers during the meeting expressed support revoking the sanctions waiver that allowed the export of Gazprom's turbines maintained at a Siemens plant in Canada. Canadian lawmakers also felt the need to receive further hearings about new developments related to Ukraine following Russian President Vladimir Putin's mobilization announcement. On Friday, Putin said Siemens Energy confirmed that turbines of the Nord Stream pipeline are out of service. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak previously accused the West on Sunday of pushing the blame for gas cuts to Europe on Russia while being in full breach of Nord Stream 1 maintenance agreements.

Canada agreed in July to release a Russia-owned gas turbine that had been held up in Montreal during maintenance after a ban on technology exports to Russia kicked in. The turbine was shipped to its maker Siemens in Germany, which Russia argued was in violation of the contract. Russia cut gas supplies to the EU to 20% of Nord Stream's capacity in July and shut it completely this week to allow for repairs. Russian energy giant Gazprom said on Friday it would not resume gas exports due to an oil leak in a key turbine.

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## Zelenskyy Asks During UNGA Video Address for Offensive Long-Range Weapons

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy asked in his pre-recorded address to the UN General Assembly for additional defensive and long-range offensive military equipment amid Russia's special military operation in the country.

"We need defense support weapons, military equipment, shells, offensive weapons and long-range ones. It is enough to liberate our land and defensive systems, above all, air-defense [systems]," Zelenskyy said on Wednesday.

Zelenskyy added that Ukraine also needs financial support to keep internal stability and to fulfill the social obligations to its people.

Zelenskyy addressed the UN General Assembly participants via the pre-recorded video message despite Russia's protests given that such form of participation violates United Nations rules.

Earlier on Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an order calling up 300,000 reservists to support Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. Putin accused the collective West of using the threat of nuclear weapons to blackmail Russia and warned that Moscow will use all means to defend itself in case its territorial integrity is threatened.

On February 24, Russia launched the special military operation in Ukraine after the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk requested help to defend them from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The Russian Ministry of Defense said the operation is solely targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure and the civilian population is not in danger.

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## Blinken Says Welcomes Freeing of 2 US Citizens in Prisoner Swap Between Russia, Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - The United States welcomes news of the release of two US citizens as part of a Saudi-brokered prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

"The United States welcomes the negotiated prisoner exchange between Ukraine and Russia, which includes two US citizens captured while serving in Ukraine's military. The United States is appreciative of Ukraine including all prisoners of war, regardless of nationality, in its negotiations, and we look forward to these US citizens being reunited with their families," Blinken said on Wednesday.

Earlier on Wednesday, US citizens Alexander Druke and Andy Huynh were freed in the prisoner swap. The two men, both military veterans from Alabama, were captured while working as foreign fighters in Ukraine.

Blinken also conveyed gratitude to Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan in a call on Wednesday morning to thank him for Saudi Arabia's role in negotiating the exchange, the statement added.

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Kerry Says 'Not Going to Comment on Ukraine Right Now'

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry on the margins of the UN General Assembly told Sputnik that he will not comment on Ukraine at the moment.

When asked whether he thinks it is possible to resume negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, Kerry said, "I am not going to comment on Ukraine right now."

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Kerry Says 'Always' Ready to Meet With Lavrov on Climate Issues

UNITED NATIONS, September 22 (Sputnik) - US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly that he is always willing to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on climate matters.

"I am always ready to meet with Minister Lavrov on climate," Kerry said on Wednesday when asked if he has plans to meet with Lavrov on climate change.

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Truss Tells Biden UK Boosting Defense Spending to 3% of GDP to Face Autocracies' Challenge

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - UK Prime Minister Liz Truss told US President Joe Biden on the margins of the UN General Assembly that the United Kingdom is boosting its defense spending to 3% of GDP in response to the growing challenges of autocratic nations to democracies around the world, the White House said in a press release.

"We face huge challenges as autocracies seek to cement and increase their assertiveness around the world," Truss said, according to the release on Wednesday. "And that is why we're stepping up in terms of our defense spending. We're going to be moving to 3 percent of GDP on defense spending."

Truss said her government also wanted to extend the United Kingdom's current cooperation with the United States on energy and economic security issues and on building ties with other democratic nations, the release said.

"And that's why we want to work more closely with the United States, especially on energy security, on our economic security, but also in reaching out to fellow democracies around the world," Truss said, according to the release.

Biden said the two leaders would be discussing further support for Ukraine against Russia, China and their joint efforts to Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, the release said.

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Biden, Truss Agree to Cooperate in Protecting Northern Irish Peace Deal - White House

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and newly appointed UK Prime Minister Liz Truss are both committed to upholding the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland, the White House said in press release upon their meeting at the United Nations.

"We both are committed to protecting the gains of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland," Truss said, according to the release on Wednesday. "And I'm looking forward to hearing what's on your mind and how we can continue to cooperate [on what we] have agreed to work together."

Biden, who has supported the Good Friday Peace Agreement as both a US senator and vice president, said he would discuss with Truss ways to ensure the agreement continued to be upheld.

"[O]f course, I'm looking forward to discussing the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and how we make sure that's upheld into the future," Biden said, according to the release.

The European Commission warned in June that it would take legal action against the United Kingdom because Truss' predecessor Boris Johnson had attempted to revise the provisions of the Northern Ireland Protocol reached as a part of the Brexit agreement on customs borders. The provision moves were also criticized in Ireland and the United States.

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White House Confirms 2 Americans Part of Saudi-Brokered Prisoner Exchange Deal With Russia

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan confirmed that Russia released two American prisoners as part of a Saudi-brokered prisoner exchange agreement with Ukraine.

Earlier on Wednesday, media reported that Russia released Alexander Druke and Andy Huynh, US citizens who were captured fighting as foreign mercenaries in Ukraine, as part of a prisoner exchange deal brokered by Saudi Arabia.

"We thank [Ukrainian President] Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Andriy Yermak and the Ukrainian government for including 2 US citizens in the prisoner exchange announced today," Sullivan said via Twitter on Wednesday.

Sullivan also thanked the Saudi Crown Prince and the government of Saudi Arabia for facilitating the prisoner exchange.

Russia released a total of ten foreign prisoners as part of the exchange, the report also said as per the Saudi Foreign Ministry. The freed prisoners include US, UK, Croatian, Moroccan and Swedish nationals, according to the report.

The State Department did not immediately respond to an inquiry from Sputnik for comment on this matter.

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### US House Passes Bill Reforming Presidential Election Laws, Curbing Objection Process

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Wednesday passed legislation to reform federal presidential election laws, making the process of challenging election outcomes more difficult.

House lawmakers passed the Electoral Count Reform Act of 2022, which reforms the 1887 Electoral Count Act to clarify certification procedures and implement more stringent requirements to challenge election outcomes, in a vote of 229-203. Nine Republicans, including co-sponsor Liz Cheney, joined all Democrats in supporting the bill.

The legislation, which has a Senate counterpart under consideration, would clarify the process of submitting state electors to Congress, provide for expedited review of claims brought by aggrieved presidential candidates in order to resolve challenges more quickly and affirm that the Vice President's role in presiding over Congress' confirmation of election results is solely ministerial.

In addition, the measure would increase the threshold needed by lawmakers to object to electors from one member of both the House and Senate to at least one-fifth of members in both chambers in an attempt to prevent frivolous objections.

The legislation would also strike a provision of an 1845 law that allowed state legislatures to override the popular vote of their state by declaring a failed election. The bill would instead allow states to move presidential election day if necessitated by extraordinary and catastrophic events.

Republican leadership whipped against the bill, arguing that it creates easily abused mechanisms to drag out elections, unconstitutionally takes away election authorities from states and was rushed through Congress without standard review processes.

The bill was introduced following the January 6 events at the US Capitol, during which demonstrators entered the Capitol building in an attempt to protest the certification of the 2020 US presidential election results from several US states in favor of Joe Biden. The certification process was interrupted for several hours.

A special House panel investigating the incident has claimed during public hearings that former US President Donald Trump may have been at the center of a conspiracy to undermine the election results, including by urging then-Vice President Mike Pence to object to the certification

as the official overseeing the process. Trump has maintained that the election victory was stolen from him due to vote and election fraud.

The Biden administration supports the passage of the legislation and shares Congress' interest in safeguarding the electoral process, the White House said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Biden administration looks forward to working with Congress to ensure lasting reform as the bill proceeds through the legislative process, the statement added.

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#### SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) -

#### UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

\* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has arrived at the United Nations headquarters in New York, where he will take part in the high-level week of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Wednesday.

\* US President Joe Biden said during his UN General Assembly speech that the United States is ready to pursue important arms control measures.

\* The United States urges the world's biggest creditors, including the Paris Club, to issue debt relief to the poorest countries, Biden said.

\* Biden called for extending the Ukraine grain deal to address global food insecurity.

\* Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said his country has been "extremely flexible" during the negotiations to revive the JCPOA nuclear agreement and blasted the United States for withdrawing from the nuclear deal.

\* Raisi said that Iran is not seeking to build or obtain nuclear weapons.

#### US-RUSSIA RELATIONS

\* The United States is not engaged in a direct war with Russia at the moment despite the current tensions over Ukraine, White House National Security Coordinator John Kirby told Fox News on Wednesday.

\* Moscow is picking up fragmentary signals from the US government and personally from President Joe Biden about the resumption of the dialogue on strategic offensive arms, but it is still unclear what is behind them, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

#### PARTIAL MOBILIZATION IN RUSSIA

\* Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on Wednesday ordered that President Vladimir Putin's decree on partial mobilization in the country be implemented.

\* Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, commenting on the allegations of the closure of Russian borders for citizens subject to partial mobilization, said clarification on the issue would follow and the Russian government would promptly determine the categories of citizens eligible to receive a deferment.

\* The duration of partial mobilization in Russia is not determined, Peskov said.

\* The United States takes Russian President Vladimir Putin's words about nuclear weapons use seriously, but sees no need to boost readiness of its own strategic deterrent forces at the moment, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said.

#### REFERENDUMS IN DNR, LNR, KHERSON AND ZAPORIZHZHIA REGIONS

\* A number of international observers have submitted their applications to monitor the referendum on the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) joining Russia, the chairwoman of LPR's Election Committee, Elena Kravchenko, said.

\* The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP) has to be protected regardless of whether or not referendums are held in eastern Ukraine, Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said.

\* Russia is organizing "sham" referenda in Ukraine, US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday in his address to the UN General Assembly.

\* The United Kingdom will not acknowledge the results of the referendums on accession to Russia that are set to take place in eastern Ukraine, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said.

#### UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

\* A powerful explosion occurred in the KhBK microdistrict in Kherson, not far from the KhBK-Tavrichesky bridge crossing, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene.

\* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi discussed the situation around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP) and Moscow intends to cooperate with the agency to force Kiev to stop shelling the plant, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

\* Grossi said he is planning to visit Kiev soon and then perhaps will also visit Moscow amid the emergency situation around the ZNPP.

#### NEW YORK LAWSUIT AGAINST TRUMP

\* New York Attorney General Letitia James has filed a lawsuit against former US President Donald Trump, his three eldest children and others for "acts of fraud and misrepresentation" that inflated his net worth by billions of dollars, according to a court document.

\* The lawsuit of the New York state authorities against Trump seeks to bar the former US president and his children from serving as executives at any company as well as from acquiring real estate and applying for loans in the state for five years, James said.

#### SPACE COOPERATION

\* Russia will most likely participate in the International Space Station (ISS) project through 2028, Roscosmos CEO Yuri Borisov said on Wednesday.

\* The Soyuz-2.1a rocket with the Soyuz MS-22 spacecraft was launched to the ISS from Baikonur, carrying Russian cosmonauts Sergei Prokopyev and Dmitry Petelin as well as NASA astronaut Francisco Rubio, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

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### IAEA Mission Has Access to Every Part of Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant - Director General

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) mission at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP) has access to every part of the facility, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said on Wednesday.

"We do have access to every part [of the ZNPP]," Grossi said during a press briefing. "If they [the mission] were denied access to a place where they should be, I would report it immediately."

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### IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi Says Plans to Visit Kiev Soon, Perhaps Moscow Later On

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said on Wednesday that he is planning to visit Kiev soon and then perhaps will also visit Moscow amid the emergency situation regarding the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP).

"I hope to be heading to Kiev or to Ukraine, soon, and perhaps later on to Russia, at some point," Grossi said during a press briefing. "Given the urgency of the situation and the gravity of what's going on in the field, we have to move fast so I'm trying to make it happen as soon as I can."

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### UPDATE - US Rate Hikes Have 'Ways to Go,' Another 125 Basis Points Likely by Year-End - Powell

(Adds details, background and context, paragraphs 4-19)

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - US interest rate hikes have some ways to go before the Federal Reserve considers a pause or reduction, with the likelihood of another 125 basis points being added before the end of this year, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"In my view and the view of the committee, there's a ways to go," Powell told a news conference after chairing the September meeting of the Fed's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). "The median [projection] for the year end suggests another 125 basis points in rate increases."

Powell's comments came after the FOMC announced a third straight 75-basis point rate hike since June. It was the fifth hike for the year that brought key lending rates to a peak of 3.25% from a mere 0.25% in February.

An additional 1.25% in increases would bring rates to a peak of 4.5%. Asked if this would be “restrictive enough” for the Fed’s aim to discourage inflation, the central bank chief replied: “We’ll be looking at a few things. First, we’ll want to see growth continuing to run below trend, to see movements in the labor market showing a return to a better balance between supply and demand, and clear evidence that inflation is moving back down to 2%.”

To a related question, Powell said, “clearly, today we’re just moved into the very lowest level of what might be restrictive.”

He warned of job losses and cuts in wage gains as the Fed embarked on fighting inflation, which was its main game.

“We can’t fail to do that,” he said, referring to the central bank’s mission against price growth.

“That would be the thing that would be most painful for the people that we serve. We have got to get inflation behind us. I wish there were a painless way to do that. There isn’t. What we need to do is get rates up to the point where we’re putting meaningful downward pressure on inflation. That’s what we’re doing. We haven’t given up the idea that we can have a relatively modest increase in unemployment.”

Annual inflation growth of 2% or below and “maximum employment” - defined by a jobless rate of 4% or below — are the Fed’s two mandates.

For more than a decade, the central bank barely had a problem with inflation, with annual price growth remaining below 2% most of that period. It could be argued then that the Fed’s real problem was a lack of inflation. All that changed with the 2020 coronavirus outbreak which upended global commodities production and supply chains. Since then US inflation, as measured by the broad Consumer Price Index, or CPI, has been at or near four-decade highs. Even after the Fed’s first 75-basis point rate hike in June, the CPI grew by an annualized 9.1% that month, marking a 41-year high. Price pressures have come down since, with the CPI slowing to an annualized 8.5% in July and 8.3% in August. However, its retreat of 0.8% over two months versus two rate hikes totaling 1.5% in the same period — hasn’t been encouraging. To be sure, the Fed follows a different inflation reading compared with the CPI, one that is called the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index, or PCE Index. Readings for the PCE Index, typically released at a two-month lag to the current month, showed a 6.3% growth for July. The Fed on Wednesday forecast an annual 5.4% growth for the PCE Index in 2022 — still way above its 2% target.

While it has earned criticism for falling short in its inflation fight, the Fed has earned kudos for the performance on the jobs market.

The jobs market has been the juggernaut of the US economy, powering its recovery from the 2020 coronavirus outbreak.

Unemployment among Americans reached a record high rate of 14.8% in April 2020, with the loss of some 20 million jobs after the COVID-19 breakout. Since then, hundreds of thousands of jobs have been added every month, with the trend keeping up in August.

As for the US economy itself, the Fed projected a Gross Domestic Product growth of 0.2% for all of this year and 1.2% for 2023. That would compare with the 2021 GDP growth of 5.7% as the United States recovered robustly from the business lockdowns associated with the pandemic from a year ago.

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

Powell acknowledged those concerns on Wednesday, saying he could not guarantee the US economy will remain recession-free.

"We have always understood that restoring price stability while achieving a relatively modest increase in unemployment and a soft landing would be very challenging," he said. "No one knows whether this process will lead to a recession or if so, how significant that recession would be."

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

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IAEA Starts Negotiations With Ukraine, Russia on Aspects of ZNPP Security Zone – Grossi

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has started negotiations with Ukraine, Russia, and other partners on the parameters of a potential security zone around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP) and specific aspects of it, Director General Rafael Grossi said on Wednesday.

"I'm here working on the establishment of a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the nuclear power plant Zaporizhzhia here. I had a meeting with the two foreign ministers – [Russian] Foreign Minister [Sergey] Lavrov, [Ukrainian] Foreign Minister [Dmytro] Kuleba, and then a meeting organized or presided by [French] President [Emmanuel] Macron and the Ukrainian Prime Minister [Denys Shmyhal], with the foreign ministers of the G7 countries, the EU, High Representative Josep Borrell, and Mexico as well was present. The wheels are in motion," Grossi told a press briefing on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

"We are already working on the very concrete aspects that would be required to have the zone to be established," Grossi added.

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US Announces New \$200Mln in Humanitarian Aid for Mexico, Central America - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States has announced that it will provide \$200 million in additional humanitarian assistance to Mexico and Central America, the US State Department said on Wednesday.

"The United States is providing nearly \$200 million in additional humanitarian assistance through international organizations and NGO partners in Mexico and Central America, bringing

our total humanitarian assistance for the region since FY 2018 to more than \$594 million," the State Department said in a press release.

The assistance will support the humanitarian and protection needs of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and vulnerable migrants in Mexico and Central America, the release said.

The funding will also continue the existing efforts to assist governments by "providing an array of support across the region," the release added.

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US Treasury Made \$8.28Bln of Investments in 162 Community Institutions - White House

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States Treasury has made more than \$8.28 billion of investments in 162 community financial institutions to facilitate loans, grants, and other forms of assistance to small and minority-owned businesses in low-income communities following the COVID-19 pandemic, the White House said on Wednesday.

"Today, Vice President [Kamala] Harris and Secretary [Janet] Yellen announced that the Department of the Treasury has made over \$8.28 billion of investments in 162 community financial institutions across the country through the Emergency Capital Investment Program (ECIP). These funds will support the efforts of community financial institutions to provide loans, grants, and other assistance to small and minority-owned businesses and consumers, especially in low-income and financially underserved communities that struggled during the COVID-19 crisis," the White House said in a press release.

Among the US states receiving the most investment assistance are Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, California, and Texas, the release added.

Banks, holding companies, and credit unions are among the recipients of financial support in such communities that are designated as community development financial institutions or minority depository institutions, according to the release.

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Biden-Guterres Meeting on UNGA Margins Focuses on Ukraine, Grain Deal - White House

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during a meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly debate discussed Russia's special military operation in Ukraine and the UN-brokered initiative to facilitate exports of grain from the country, the White House said on Wednesday.

"President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. met today with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres during the UN General Assembly in New York," the White House said in a press

release. "The leaders reaffirmed the strong partnership between the United States and the United Nations. They discussed pressing issues facing the UN, including ... Ukraine." The two leaders also went over the UN-brokered Black Sea Grain Initiative, the release said. Biden and Guterres underscored the need for the international community to address the global climate and food security crisis, the release said. Biden announced earlier in the day that the United States will provide nearly \$3 billion to address global food insecurity this year.

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#### US Senator Urges Probe of Abuse of Private Browsing Records by Federal Agencies

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The inspectors general charged with overseeing the operations of the departments of Homeland Security, Defense and Justice must investigate the widespread use and reported abuse of the web browsing records of US citizens without warrants being issued and due process being followed, Sen. Ron Wyden wrote in a letter to the three officials on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Vice.com reported that many elements in the US armed forces have bought access to Augury, a powerful internet monitoring tool developed by Team Cymru that claims to monitor more than 90% of global internet traffic, and that can offer access to private email data and browsing history.

Wyden "today requested the inspectors general for the departments of Homeland Security, Defense and Justice to investigate the warrantless purchase and use of American's web browsing records, based on evidence in public records and from a government whistleblower," a press release from his office said.

In his letter to the three inspectors general, Wyden said public contracting records and a Defense Department whistleblower had revealed new details about the extent of federal internet record purchases.

"[P]ublicly available government contracts show multiple federal agencies have purchased access to internet metadata, including US Cyber Command, the Army, the Navy's Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation," the Democratic senator wrote.

The US Secret Service also has contracts with the same data broker, according to public records, the senator wrote in his letter.

"I request that your offices investigate the warrantless purchase and use of Americans' internet browsing records by the agencies under your jurisdictions. Your independent oversight must ensure that the government's surveillance activities are consistent with the Supreme Court's Carpenter decision and safeguard Americans' Fourth Amendment rights," Wyden wrote.

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US Views German Reconsideration of Nuclear Power 'Favorably' - State Dept. Energy Chief

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States views German officials' reconsideration of nuclear power capabilities as favorable amid a looming energy crisis in Europe, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Jose Fernandez said on Wednesday.

On Monday, German Finance Minister Christian Lindner called for a restoration of operations at nuclear power plants the country phased out starting in 2011 in response to the Fukushima disaster in Japan.

"It's their [Germany's] decision to change that. We respected their earlier decision and we will do so whatever they decide to do. But we've also said that nuclear energy can be part of the clean energy future, and you have seen the US support nuclear power in several nations," Fernandez said during a press briefing. "We see a decision like that favorably, but it's ultimately Germany's decision."

On January 1, 2022, Germany disconnected three of its remaining six nuclear power plants. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has proposed prolonging operations at the remaining three plants amid the looming energy crisis in Europe, sparked by sanctions on Russian energy. German Economy and Climate Minister Robert Habeck, a Green Party member, has opposed the continued use of the facilities for electric generation.

The Biden administration has been engaged with major energy producers at home and abroad to increase production and exports in order to help address the energy crisis in Europe, Fernandez said.

US natural gas companies are now exporting at full capacity and will bring more capacity in coming months, Fernandez also said. However, a transition to clean energy is critical in the long term, Fernandez added.

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US Rate Hikes Have 'Ways to Go,' Another 125 Basis Points Likely by Year-End - Powell

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - US interest rate hikes have some ways to go before the Federal Reserve considers a pause or reduction, with the likelihood of another 125 basis points being added before the end of this year, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"In my view and the view of the committee, there's a ways to go," Powell told a news conference after chairing the September meeting of the Fed's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). "The median [projection] for the year end suggests another 125 basis points in rate increases."

Powell's comments came after the FOMC announced a third straight 75-basis point rate hike since June. It was the fifth hike for the year that brought key lending rates to a peak of 3.25% from a mere 0.25% in February.

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Price Cap on Russian Oil Shows Ukraine Response Solidarity - US State Dept. Energy Chief

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The multilateral price cap on Russian oil planned by western governments demonstrates international unity in imposing consequences on Moscow for its special military operation in Ukraine, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Jose Fernandez said on Wednesday.

"With respect to the price cap, it's a global effort to ensure oil supply while limiting the benefit to Russia," Fernandez said during a press briefing. "It's yet another example of this unprecedented solidarity that's been engendered by Russia's aggression."

Earlier this month, G7 finance ministers confirmed their intention to impose price caps for Russian oil and called on all nations to support the initiative. The price cap is planned to take effect on December 5 for crude oil and on February 5 of next year for refined products coming from Russia.

Moscow, in turn, has pledged to altogether stop exporting Russian oil to the states that impose a price cap.

The measure is intended to impede Russia's ability to use energy export revenues to fund their special military operation in Ukraine, according to Fernandez.

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Fed Chair Says No Idea Yet Whether US Economy Can Have Soft Landing, Avoid Recession

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - No one can determine whether the US economy will have a soft landing or avoid a recession, US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said on Wednesday.

"No one knows whether this process will lead to a recession or if so, how significant that recession would be," Powell said during a press conference. "The chances of a soft landing are likely to diminish to the extent that policy needs to be more restrictive, or restrictive for longer. Nonetheless, we're committed to getting inflation back down to 2% because we think that a failure to restore price stability would mean far greater pain later on."

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### Powell Says at Some Point It Will Become Appropriate to Slow Pace of US Rate Increases

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said on Wednesday that at some point it will become appropriate to slow the pace of federal rate hikes.

"At some point as the stance of monetary policy tightens further, it will become appropriate to slow the pace of increases while we assess how our cumulative policy adjustments are affecting the economy and inflation," Powell said during a press conference.

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### US Fed Moving Policy Stance to Restrictive Level to Return Inflation to 2% - Powell

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The US Federal Reserve is deliberately adjusting its policy stance to a restrictive level to return inflation to 2%, Chairman Jerome Powell said on Wednesday.

"We are moving our policy stance purposefully to a level that will be sufficiently restrictive to return inflation to 2%," Powell said during a press conference.

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### Federal Reserve Forecasts US GDP Growth at 0.2% in 2022, 1.2% in 2023

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve has projected a US gross domestic product of 0.2% for all of this year and 1.2% for 2023, the central bank said Wednesday in projections that accompanied its latest interest rate decision. GDP grew by 5.7% in 2021 as the United States recovered robustly from the 2020 coronavirus outbreak.

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### Fed's Preferred Inflation Gauge PCE Index Seen at 5.4% in 2022 vs 2% Target - Central Bank

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve is forecasting an annual 5.4% growth in its preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index, or PCE Index, for 2022, the central bank said Wednesday in projections that accompanied its latest interest rate decision.

Readings for the PCE Index, typically released at a two-month lag to the current month, showed a 6.3% growth for July. The Fed's target for annual inflation is a mere 2% and it has vowed to do as many rate hikes as necessary to get there. The central bank announced its third straight 75-basis point rate hike on Wednesday, for September. It was the fifth hike for the year that brought key lending rates to a peak of 3.25% from a mere 0.25% in February.

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UN Has Enough Backing to Start Salvaging Oil From Stranded Tanker Near Yemen - Official

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United Nations has received enough pledges of financial support from the international community to begin an operation to salvage oil from a supertanker that has long been stranded off the coast of Yemen, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen David Gressly said on Wednesday.

The Safer oil tanker has been abandoned in the Red Sea north of the Yemeni city of Al Hudaydah for more than six years while loaded with 1.1 million barrels of oil and remains in urgent need of repairs.

"We have now received pledges and commitments sufficient to start the FSO Safer salvage operation," Gressly said during a press conference.

The United Nations received pledges of some \$78 million from the international community, which will be sufficient to cover the costs of transferring oil from the Safer tanker to another vessel, Gressly said.

However, an additional \$38 million will be needed to create long-term storage for the oil, Gressly said. The oil will be able to be sold or transported elsewhere once the political situation in Yemen eases, he added.

The operation will take several months to complete, Gressly said.

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Yemen Conflict Stakeholders 'Working Very Hard' on Extending Truce - US Special Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - The stakeholders in the Yemen conflict are working very hard to negotiate the extension of the truce between the government and the Houthi rebels, US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking said on Wednesday.

In April 2022, a two-month ceasefire was declared in Yemen under the auspices of the United Nations and the support of the parties to the conflict. In early August, the warring sides agreed to extend the truce by two months to negotiate an expanded truce agreement.

"We're looking and working very hard toward extending and expanding the truce on October 2...the door is truly open come this fall for a durable ceasefire," Lenderking said during a press conference.

The US Special Envoy underscored that there is a lot of hard work left to be done among the United Nations, United States, Yemen government, Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis. Lenderking also said Iran has been supportive of the truce and Tehran welcoming a truce extension next month is very much needed.

The United States would like to see more destinations for commercial flights in Yemen and more oil enter the market in the country, Lenderking added.

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Federal Reserve Raises US Rates by 75 Basis Points in 5th Interest Rate Hike of Year

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve announced on Wednesday a 75-basis point, or a three-quarter percentage point, increase for the fifth US interest rate hike since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic two years ago.

"The Committee decided to raise the target range for the federal funds rate to 3 to 3-1/4 percent and anticipates that ongoing increases in the target range will be appropriate," the US central bank's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) said in a statement on its interest rate decision for September.

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Russia Releases 2 Americans Captured Fighting in Ukraine in Saudi-Brokered Deal - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - Russia released Alexander Drueke and Andy Huynh, US citizens who were captured fighting as foreign mercenaries in Ukraine, as part of a prisoner exchange deal brokered by Saudi Arabia, Reuters reported on Wednesday.

Drueke, 39, and Huynh, 27, were captured by Russian forces in June while fighting near the city of Kharkiv. Both men were veterans of the US military from Alabama.

Drueke and Huynh were released as part of a prisoner exchange deal negotiated by Saudi Arabia, the report said, citing a family representative.

Russia released a total of ten foreign prisoners as part of the exchange, the report also said as per the Saudi Foreign Ministry. The freed prisoners include US, UK, Croatian, Moroccan and Swedish nationals, according to the report.

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EU Foreign Ministers Meeting Tonight on UNGA Margins Over Putin Speech - Diplomatic Source

(Adds details to headline)

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - EU foreign ministers will convene for a special meeting on Ukraine Wednesday night on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly because of Russian President Vladimir Putin's address, a diplomatic source told Sputnik.

"EU FM [Foreign Ministers] meeting happening tonight," the source said, adding that Putin's address from earlier in the day is a major factor for convening the meeting.

Earlier in the day, Putin signed a decree calling up 300,000 reservists.

Only citizens in military reserve will be subject to conscription and undergo additional training.

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EU Foreign Ministers to Meet Wednesday Night Due to Putin's Address - Diplomatic Source

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US to Resume Full Immigrant Visa Services in Cuba For First Time Since 2017 - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States will resume full immigrant visa processing services in Cuba in early 2023, the US Embassy in Havana announced on Wednesday.

"Beginning in early 2023, the US Embassy in Havana will resume full immigrant visa processing for the first time since 2017," the Embassy said in a press release. "Immigrant visas provide eligible individuals with an avenue for safe and orderly migration. This change will also eliminate the need for Cubans applying for immigrant visas in family preference categories to travel outside of Cuba to Georgetown, Guyana for their interviews."

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New York Attorney General Sues Trump, Children for Fraud - Court Document

(Updates with additional details in paras 3-7, provides background in para 8)

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - New York Attorney General Letitia James has filed a lawsuit against former US President Donald Trump, his three eldest children, and others for "acts of fraud and misrepresentation" that inflated his net worth by billions of dollars, according to a court document.

"Following a comprehensive three-year investigation by the Office of the Attorney General, involving interviews with more than 65 witnesses and review of millions of pages of documents produced by Defendants and others, OAG has determined that Defendants Donald J. Trump, Trump Organization LLC, and the Trump Organization, Inc, Allen Weisselberg, and the other individuals and entities affiliated with Mr. Trump and his companies named as Defendants, engaged in numerous acts of fraud and misrepresentation in the preparation of Mr. Trump's annual statements of financial condition covering at least the years 2011 through 2021," the document stated.

The New York Attorney General alleges that the former US president, aided by his children Donald Trump Jr., Ivanka Trump, and Eric Trump, and senior executives at the Trump Organization falsely inflated his net worth by billions of dollars to influence banks' decisions to lend money to the Trump Organization on more favorable terms among other benefits, the attorney's office said in a press release.

Moreover, the lawsuit also alleges that between 2011 and 2021, Donald Trump and his organization "knowingly and intentionally" created more than 200 false and misleading valuations of assets on his annual statements of financial condition to defraud financial institutions, according to the release.

The New York Attorney General seeks to permanently bar all four of them from serving as an officer or director in any New York corporation, bar Trump and the Trump Organization from entering into any New York real estate acquisitions for five years, and obtain disgorgement of all financial benefits in the amount of \$250 million, the release said.

The Office of the Attorney General is also asking the court to bar Trump and the Trump Organization from applying for loans from any financial institution registered with the New York Department of Financial Services for a period of five years, according to the release.

The 214-page complaint, filed by James, lists 23 of Trump's properties that were allegedly used in the fraudulent conduct, including several properties in New York City and three golf clubs, among others.

Earlier in the day, E. Jean Carroll, a woman who accused former US President Donald Trump of sexually assaulting her in the mid-1990s, announced her intent to launch a new lawsuit against him in addition to an ongoing defamation case.

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Trump Says Would Have Prevented Ukraine Conflict But Now It Could Lead to 'World War III'

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that the conflict in Ukraine would not have occurred under his presidency but now

the situation threatens to escalate into World War III after Russia announced a partial mobilization and the potential use of all weapons in its arsenal if its territorial integrity is violated. "President [Vladimir] Putin of Russia is now threatening the use of Nuclear Weapons, saying 'It is not a bluff.' The Ukrainian conflict should never have happened, and would not have happened if I were President. But as I have made very clear for quite some time, this could now end up being World War III," Trump said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Putin announced a partial mobilization of Russian forces, consisting of 300,000 soldiers, to assist the special military operation in support of the breakaway Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics, as well as the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. All four territories are set to hold referenda to join the Russian Federation.

Current US President Joe Biden said in a speech to the UN General Assembly on Wednesday that the United States does not seek a new Cold War and hopes the conflict in Ukraine ends on "just terms." However, Biden also characterized the referenda as "sham," indicating that the US does not plan to recognize their outcomes.

Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine on February 24 after escalating attacks against the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics by forces of the regime in Kiev prompted local authorities to request support from Moscow.

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NY AG Seeks to Bar Trumps From Serving as Executives at Any Entity, Acquiring Real Estate  
WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) – The lawsuit of the New York state authorities against Donald Trump seeks to bar the former US president and his children from serving as executives at any company as well as from acquiring real estate and applying for loans in the state for five years, New York Attorney General Letitia James said on Wednesday.

"We are asking the court to, among other things, permanently bar Mr. Trump, Donald Trump Jr, Ivanka Trump, Eric Trump from serving as an officer or director of any corporation or similar entity registered and licensed in New York," James told reporters.

She also seeks barring Trump and the Trump Organization from entering into any New York state commercial real estate acquisition and applying for loans from any financial institution in New York for five years.

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Ex-Officer Thomas Lane Sentenced to 3 Year Prison Term in George Floyd's Murder - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - Thomas Lane, a former Minneapolis police officer who helped pin down George Floyd as his colleague knelt on Floyd's neck causing him to die, has been sentenced to a three year prison term for aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter, NBC News reported on Wednesday.

Lane held down Floyd's legs as he cried out that he couldn't breathe, while another former officer, Derek Chauvin, knelt on Floyd's neck for nine-and-a-half minutes on May 25, 2020, the report said.

Lane pleaded guilty in May to a state charge of aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter. State prosecutors and Lane's attorney had jointly recommended a three-year sentence, the report said.

Lane is serving a two-and-a-half-year prison sentence in Englewood, Colorado, after being found guilty this summer on a federal charge of violating Floyd's civil rights for not offering medical care after his colleague Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes, the report added.

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New York Attorney General Sues Trump, Children for Fraud – Court Document

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"Following a comprehensive three-year investigation by the Office of the Attorney General, involving interviews with more than 65 witnesses and review of millions of pages of documents produced by Defendants and others, OAG has determined that Defendants Donald J. Trump, Trump Organization LLC and the Trump Organization, Inc, Allen Weisselberg, and the other individuals and entities affiliated with Mr. Trump and his companies named as Defendants, engaged in numerous acts of fraud and misrepresentation in the preparation of Mr. Trump's annual statements of financial condition covering at least the years 2011 through 2021," the document stated.

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US Integrated Deterrence Ineffective Unless Underpinned by Nuclear Capabilities – Admiral

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) – The United States integrated deterrence concept is ineffectual unless it is underpinned by nuclear capabilities, US Adm. Charles Richard said on Wednesday.

"If you don't underpin it [integrated deterrence concept] with nuclear, because there is no other capability or combination of capabilities demonstrated today, that gets anywhere close to the demonstrated destructive potential of nuclear if you don't underpin integrated deterrence with your strategic forces, the whole concept doesn't work," Richard said during an Air & Space Forces Association conference.

Richard pointed out that the threat of a nuclear conflict has ceased to be theoretical after the conflict in Ukraine, and this change will have profound implications for strategic deterrence, homeland defense, and achieving US national objectives.

The US admiral added that he "can't get through a week without a reminder that this is a very real threat" of a conflict with a nuclear armed peer that the United States faces these days.

The United States has not faced competitors that can escalate to any level of violence with any instrument of power worldwide in a very long time, Richard said.

Earlier in the day, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an order calling up 300,000 reservists to support Russia's military operation in Ukraine. He accused the west of using the threat of nuclear weapons to blackmail Russia and warned that Moscow will use all means in case its territorial integrity is threatened.

Commenting on the announcement, National Security Council Coordinator John Kirby said that the United States takes Putin's words about nuclear weapons use seriously, but sees no need to boost the readiness of its own strategic deterrent forces at the moment.

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Biden Says UN Must Believe It Can Bend Arc of History Toward 'Freer, More Just World'  
UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - United Nations member states must continue to believe that the world body has the ability to sway history toward the advancement of freedom and justice, US President Joe Biden said in his speech at the UN General Assembly on Wednesday.

"Let's stand together to again declare the unmistakable resolve that nations of the world are united still, and we stand for the values of the UN Charter, that we still believe by working together we can bend the arc of history toward a freer and more just world for all our children, although none of us have fully achieved it. We are not passive witnesses to history, we are the authors of history," Biden said.

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Biden Says US Ready to Pursue 'Critical' Arms Control Measures

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States is ready to pursue important arms control measures, President Joe Biden said during his United Nations General Assembly speech on Wednesday.

"The United States is ready to pursue critical arms control measures," Biden said. "A nuclear war can not be won and must never be fought."

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US Urges World's Biggest Creditors to Agree on Debt Relief for Poorest Countries - Biden

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States urges the world's biggest creditors, including the Paris Club, to issue debt relief to the poorest countries, President Joe Biden said on Wednesday during his United Nations General Assembly speech.

"We're also calling on major global creditors, including the non-Paris Club countries, to transparently negotiate debt forgiveness for lower income countries to forestall broader economic and political crisis around the world," Biden said.

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Biden Says in UN General Assembly Speech US Committed to One China Policy

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - US President Biden on Wednesday said in his speech at the UN General Assembly that the United States remained committed to its One China policy.

"We seek to hold peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits and remain committed to our One China policy, which has helped prevent conflict for four decades," Biden said. "We continue to oppose unilateral changes to the status quo by either side."

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Biden in UNGA Address Says US Does Not Seek Conflict, Cold War

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden during his United Nations General Assembly speech on Wednesday said the United States does not seek seek conflict or a new Cold War.

"As we manage shifting geopolitical trends, the United States will conduct itself as a reasonable leader," Biden said at the UN. "We do not seek conflict, we do not seek a Cold War, we do not ask any nation to choose between the United States or any other partner, but the United States will be on a bastion promoting our vision of a free, open, secure and prosperous world."

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### Biden in UNGA Address Urges Extension of Ukraine Grain Deal

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden in his United Nations General Assembly speech on Wednesday called for extending the Ukraine grain deal to address global food insecurity.

"I am grateful for the work here at the UN, including your leadership, Mr. Secretary General [Antonio Guterres], establishing a mechanism to export grain from Black Sea ports in Ukraine that Russia blocked for months, and we need to make sure it's extended," Biden said.

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### Biden Announces at UN General Assembly \$2.9Bln Aid to Fight Food Crisis - White House

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has announced a new \$2.9 billion emergency aid package to combat the global food crisis in his speech at the UN General Assembly, the White House said on Tuesday.

"Today, in his address to the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly President Joseph Biden announced over \$2.9 billion in new assistance from the US government to address global food insecurity," the White House said in a press release.

Biden's announcement builds on the \$6.9 billion in US government assistance to support

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### Biden Calls for UN to Become 'More Inclusive,' Add Security Council Seats

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) – President Joe Biden called Wednesday for the United Nations to become "more inclusive," lending US support for increasing the number of seats on the UN Security Council.

"The time has come for this institution to become more inclusive, so they can better respond to needs of today's world," Biden said during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly. He added that UN Security Council members have to consistently uphold the UN charter and "refrain from the use of the veto except in rare, extraordinary situations to ensure the council remains credible and effective."

To this end, he said the US supports increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent representatives to the council.

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### Iranian President Calls for 'Fair Tribunal' to Investigate Gen. Soleimani Assassination

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Wednesday called for establishing a "fair tribunal" to investigate the 2020 assassination of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)'s Quds Force Commander Gen. Qasem Soleimani by the United States.

"We seek a fair tribunal... to bring to justice those who martyred our beloved General Qasem Soleimani," Raisi said during his address at the UN General Assembly.

Raisi singled out former US President Donald Trump for culpability, saying "the previous president of the United States effectively managed to sign the document of the savage crime, an illegal crime, an immoral crime."

Soleimani was targeted and killed by a US drone near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

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### Biden in UNGA Address Says Kremlin Organizing 'Sham Referenda' in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - Russia is organizing "sham referenda" in Ukraine, US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday in his address to the UN General Assembly.

"The Kremlin is organizing sham referenda in Ukraine," he said.

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### Biden Says in UN General Assembly Address US Wants Ukraine War to End on 'Just Terms'

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - The United States want the war in Ukraine to end on "just terms," US President Joe Biden said in his address to the UN General Assembly on Wednesday.

"The US wants this war to end on just terms," Biden said.

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### Biden in UNGA Address Accuses Russia of 'Shamelessly' Violating UN Charter

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden during his United Nations General Assembly speech on Wednesday accused Russia of violating the UN Charter with its special military operation in Ukraine.

"Russia has shamelessly violated the core tenants of the United Nations Charter," Biden said at the UN.

Biden added that no other country threatened Russia.

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US Special Envoy for Climate Kerry Calls Donbas, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia Referenda 'Phony'

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate and former Secretary of State John Kerry called the upcoming referenda in Ukrainian regions to join Russia "phony."

"I think they are phony," Kerry told reporters.

On Tuesday, the breakaway Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics (DPR, LPR) as well as the Russian-controlled parts of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions said they would hold referenda on joining the Russian Federation from September 23-27.

The DPR and LPR proclaimed their independence from Ukraine in 2014 after holding self-determination referenda. In February, Russia recognized the DPR and LPR and launched a special military operation in Ukraine in response to calls for help to defend the two breakaway republics, who said were under increasing attacks by Ukrainian troops.

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Raisi at UNGA Says Iran Not Seeking to Obtain or Build Nuclear Weapons

(Adds details in paras 3-5)

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) – Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said Wednesday that his country is not seeking to obtain or build nuclear weapons.

"Iran is not seeking to obtain or build nuclear weapons," Raisi said during his address at the United Nations General Assembly, adding that they have "no place in our doctrine."

Raisi also blasted the US for "trampling" on the JCPOA, noting that the International Atomic Energy Agency had repeatedly found that the US withdrew its commitments. Iran, on the other hand, "paid the price for having lived up to our commitments." He added that the US' maximum pressure policy on Iran had also failed.

Raisi said Iran only had one wish regarding the JCPOA: the "observation of commitments."

He contended that Iran had been "extremely flexible" during the negotiations, which would have not advanced beyond the first few days had it not been for Iran's flexibility. Iran remained "very serious" about the negotiations and was willing to resolve all issues as long as the rights of Iranian people were respected.

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Estonian Prime Minister Says Will Not Accept Russian Citizens Avoiding Mobilization

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) - Estonia will not accept as asylum seekers any Russian citizens who are attempting to avoid the announced partial mobilization in their country, Prime Minister Kaja Kallas said on Wednesday.

"We are providing shelter for the Ukrainian war refugees here. Every citizen is responsible for their country's deeds; so are Russian citizens. So, we are not giving any asylum, or this is not the basis of asylum, for Russian men who flee the country. They should stand up and say that they are against this war," Kaja told CNN.

Earlier on Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a partial mobilization of the country's armed forces, including calling up 300,000 reservists to hold the 1,000-kilometer (621 miles) long line of contact with Ukrainian forces in Russian-controlled territories.

Putin said the partial mobilization is in support of the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics and the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions as they hold referenda on accession to the Russian Federation. Russia's special military operation in Ukraine was launched on February 24 after the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics requested help to defend them from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops.

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World Falls Short of Fulfilling Declaration on Minorities Rights 30 Years on - Guterres

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - The world still falls short of fulfilling the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, which was adopted 30 years ago, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday.

"The hard truth is that – thirty years on – the world is falling short. Far short. We are not dealing with gaps – we are dealing with outright inaction and negligence in the protection of minority rights. We see minorities face forced assimilation, persecution, prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, hatred, and violence," Guterres said.

The world sees minorities stripped of their political and citizenship rights, he added.

"More than three-quarters of the world's stateless people belong to minorities. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed deep-rooted patterns of exclusion and discrimination disproportionately affecting minority communities," Guterres said.

That is why, every member state should step up and take action, Guterres stressed.

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### Biden Arrives at UN HQ in New York to Deliver Speech at General Assembly

UNITED NATIONS, September 21 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has arrived at the UN headquarters in New York to take part in the high-level week of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly.

The president ignored questions from the press. Biden is due to deliver his speech at the General Assembly later on Wednesday.

The 77th session of the UN General Assembly kicked off on Tuesday. The main event — the general debate during which world leaders gather to discuss world issues — starts on September 20. The 77th high-level week of the UN General Assembly is the first in-person gathering of the body since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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### Raisi Says Iran Has Been 'Extremely Flexible' During Nuclear Deal Talks

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) – Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said Wednesday that his country has been "extremely flexible" during the JCPOA negotiations, blasting the United States for withdrawing from the nuclear deal.

"We have been extremely flexible," Raisi said during his address at the United Nations General Assembly," adding that "had it not been for our flexibility, the negotiations would have stopped in the very first few days."

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### US Airstrike Kills 27 Al-Shabab Terrorists in Somalia – AFRICOM

WASHINGTON, September 21 (Sputnik) – The United States killed 27 al-Shabab terrorists (affiliated with the al-Qaeda terror group, banned in Russia) in an airstrike in Somalia, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) said on Wednesday.

"The command's initial assessment is that the strike killed 27 al-Shabab terrorists and that no civilians were injured," AFRICOM said in a statement.

The strike took place near the city of Buulobarde on September 18 at the request of the government of Somalia, following attacks on the Somali armed forces.

"The defensive strikes allowed the Somali National Army and African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) forces to regain the initiative and continue the operation to disrupt al-Shabab in the Hiraan region of central Somalia. This operation is the largest combined Somali and ATMIS offensive operation in five years," the statement added.

Somalia collapsed as a unified nation in 1991 with the downfall of the Siad Barre's dictatorship. The international community recognized the federal government as the only legitimate authority, which controls the capital of Mogadishu and several areas of Somalia.

The al-Shabab terror group is waging an armed struggle against the federal government and controls large areas of Somalia's southern and central parts.

In May, the United States decided to renew strikes against the terror group in order to combat the growing threat it poses to American partner forces.