

10/28/22 Friday

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'We Want to Rule Italy': 100 Years Since Mussolini's March on Rome Brought Fascism to Europe

By - Fantine Gardinier

Italians on Friday marked the centenary anniversary of the March on Rome, a fascist coup d'état by Benito Mussolini. The 1922 seizure of power marked the first time a fascist movement came to power in Europe - a grim sign of the continent's future for the next two decades.

However, the fascist rise to power didn't spring out of the blue: it came about through intense class struggle in Italy during the years immediately following World War I. The British Empire, fearful of the rise of communism, also helped grease the wheels for the fascist coup.

Biennio Rosso - Two Red Years

Although the Great War produced widespread misery and suffering across the "home front" of every nation that joined the conflict, Italy's socioeconomic malaise was amplified by its semi-industrialized character.

In the northern cities, industrialization had taken hold and a powerful banker class had risen to prominence, which dreamed of a new empire befitting an Italy reunited for the first time since the Roman Empire. In the south, including Sicily and Sardinia, an agrarian way of life still held sway among populations who a generation prior had never spoken the Italian language.

After the war and demobilization came high unemployment and rapid inflation, sending the cost of goods sky-high. Socialist and anarchist movements had grown strong during the war, and during the economic crisis, their ranks expanded rapidly. Trade unions became increasingly militant, launching not just strikes but factory takeovers. Membership in the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) reached 250,000, and the anarchist Italian Syndicalist Union (USI) reached perhaps 500,000 members.

The years 1919 and 1920 became known afterward as the Biennio Rosso - the Two Red Years, for this intense radicalization of Italian society. In one town after another, socialists and other leftists won elections and dominated civil society groups. With the triumph of the Bolsheviks in Russia in the 1917 revolution and the civil war that followed, and the bubbling communism in almost every Western European country as well as the United States, it seemed like Italy might be where they rose to power next.

Ruling Class Strikes Back

However, the bourgeoisie of every Western European nation was terrified by the events in Soviet Russia and looked desperately for a way to roll back the Red Tide. In Germany, armed veterans organized into Freikorps had suppressed a communist revolt, but elsewhere, many questioned if the regular army soldiers, drawn from working-class families themselves, could be relied upon to suppress revolution.

Out of this cauldron of class conflict came the Squadristi, gangs of thugs employed by capitalists who were furious and fearful at the socialists' factory seizures. They were better known as the "Blackshirts" for their impromptu uniforms.

The Blackshirts went into the towns controlled by socialists and attacked union organizers and municipal administrators, obstructing the basic operations of their governments. Those who escaped the beatings and lynchings were driven out of town, and by the end of 1921, the Biennio Rosso had ended in an orgy of right-wing violence, and a new Fascist Party led by [Benito Mussolini](#) was rapidly replacing socialist politicians with their own. Its rapid rise to power was aided by alliances with liberal parties, who also feared a socialist victory.

The name "fascist" came from the fasces, a bound bundle of sticks topped with an ax - the symbol of legal authority in Ancient Rome. Many liberal movements had previously used the symbol to identify themselves with the republicanism of Ancient Rome, but Mussolini used it to evoke the supremacy of the law and of the state, and the powerful nationalist desire to build a new Roman Empire in the 20th century.

[Documents in the UK](#) National Archives show that Sir Samuel Hoare, who headed the British overseas intelligence service, MI1(c), in Rome at the end of the war, had established contact with Mussolini, a former socialist who had rejected the party's anti-war stance in 1914 and become a staunch pro-war nationalist.

Hoare's goal was to keep Italy from dropping out of the war early and signing a separate peace with the Central Powers. He gave Mussolini £100 a week to keep his pro-war newspaper publishing. Hoare was not shy about this, later saying that British money had been used to "form the Fascist Party and to finance the march on Rome."

Quadrumvirs March on Rome

The socialists attempted to block the Fascist rise to power with a general strike in August 1922, but Mussolini used the incident to position the Fascists as the defenders of law and order in Italy, and appealed to the Italian government to arm the Fascists and let them suppress the strikers. The police did not act.

A [New York Times headline](#) from mid-September bluntly declared "bourgeoisie new class war victor: Italy's general strike brings novel armed forces into arena, socialist structure crumbling as a consequence."

As the fall of 1922 wore on, so did a crisis in the Italian parliament, which had proved unable to form a stable government. Here, Mussolini saw an opportunity: where he had previously been something of an iconoclast, he now made open appeals to the Catholic Church and to industrial magnates in the interests of restoring order.

On October 24, Mussolini named four "quadrumvirs," another term from Ancient Rome that was used to describe a group of four people sharing police and jurisdiction power. Each was to lead a column of Fascists and supporters to Rome and force the government of Prime Minister Luigi Facta to yield power.

"Our program is simple," Mussolini said to a crowd of 60,000 Fascists in Naples on October 24, "we want to rule Italy."

However, Mussolini did not participate in the march itself, and awaited the results of the coup from the northern city of Milan.

"The British helped orchestrate the march and propel Mussolini to power because they wanted to make him the key figure in a government which would be useful to them," Giovanni

Fasanella, who co-authored the forthcoming book "Nero di Londra" with Mario José Cereghino, [told the Times](#) of London.

According to the Times, documents in the UK National Archives show that in the days prior to the March on Rome, the British ambassador to Italy, Sir Ronald Graham, met in Perugia with many of its top leaders. During the march, Graham told London his secretary was being "constantly" updated by the marchers as they neared the Italian capital in Rome.

"We believe the ambassador was giving the Fascists useful advice," the book's second co-author, Cereghino, told the paper.

On October 28, some 30,000 Fascists were closing in on Rome, and Facta tried to order a mobilization of troops by declaring a state of siege. However, the king refused to sign the order, and negotiations with Mussolini began. That day, representatives from the country's leading industrial organizations met with Mussolini in Milan and proposed that he share power with former Prime Minister Antonio Solandra, but he refused.

The following day, King Victor Emmanuel III offered Mussolini the chance to form a government and become prime minister. Mussolini accepted, and various liberal and Catholic parties formed a coalition government with the Fascists.

Power Solidified

Contrary to how Mussolini presented his ideology and rise to power in his 1932 book "The Doctrine of Fascism," it was not all planned out beforehand, but a hodgepodge of useful ideological turns and political jockeying that slowly accumulated power in his hands.

It wasn't until 1925 that the Fascist dictatorship was complete, after years of chipping away at the electoral system had left the party in almost total control over the government. Mussolini finalized the situation by declaring the National Fascist Party the only legal party.

The situation was viewed with skepticism by some abroad, but by others, it was welcomed. During a 1927 trip to Rome to meet with Mussolini, Winston Churchill, then chancellor of the British exchequer, was full of ebullient praise for the Fascist movement.

"If I had been an Italian, I am sure I should have been whole-heartedly with you from start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism," [Churchill told a Roman crowd](#). He also said of Mussolini: "No doubt he is one of the most wonderful men of our time."

Despite the dictatorship, anti-fascist resistance continued underground, and played a vital role in the Second World War as Allied forces prepared to invade the country. In 1936, Mussolini allied with another fascist leader, Adolf Hitler, who had seized power in Germany three years earlier amid a similar economic crisis and class conflict. However, Mussolini did not share Hitler's racial theories, and a number of high-ranking fascists were Jewish. However, antisemitism became more intense amid their alliance, and racial laws began in 1938 that targeted both Jews and Ethiopians, whose country Mussolini had invaded in 1935.

Mussolini was eventually overthrown in 1943 by the king who had empowered him, and the new government signed an armistice with the invading Allies. However, he was freed after Nazi German forces seized power in the remaining parts of the country. The country devolved into civil war, and two years later, on April 28, 1945, Italian resistance forces finally caught up to Mussolini, arrested him and executed him in the small village of Giulino di Mezzegra, leaving his body [hanging in the public square](#).

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After Final State Passes Law, Same-Gender Marriage Made Legal in All of Mexico

By - Fantine Gardinier

A process that began in 2015 was completed on Wednesday, when Mexico's northeastern state of Tamaulipas voted to legalize same-gender marriages, meaning the right of LGBTQ people to marry is now protected in all 32 Mexican states.

Lawmakers in Tamaulipas, on the US border, voted on Wednesday to amend the state's Civil Code to allow gay, lesbian and bisexual couples to legally wed.

The vote was 23 in favor, 12 against, and two abstentions.

Just a day earlier, across the country in Guerrero, lawmakers [approved a similar legalization](#) of same-gender marriages.

"The whole country shines with a huge rainbow. Live the dignity and rights of all people. Love is love," Arturo Zaldívar Lelo de Larrea, president of Mexico's Supreme Court, said on Twitter in response to the news.

The high court helped set the process in motion [when in June 2015](#), it ruled that bans on same-gender marriage were in violation of the Mexican Constitution. In Mexico, only civil marriages are recognized by law.

Just days after Mexico's decision, the US Supreme Court made a similar ruling, striking down the Defense of Marriage Act and requiring all US states and territories to recognize same-gender marriages. Because of the court's recent decisions reversing its ruling on abortion rights, some fear same-gender marriage [could also be endangered](#) by the court's new conservative majority.

LGBTQ rights have made gains in Latin America in recent months, with [Cuba passing a new Family Code](#) in September that legalizes same-gender marriage and the first marriages being performed under the law [earlier this week](#). Last December, [Chile also passed a law](#) legalizing same-gender marriage.

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Ready to Blow? After Mauna Loa Rumbling Detected, Hawaiians Near Volcano Advised to Prepare 'Go Bag'

By - Fantine Gardinier

Mauna Loa, the world's largest active volcano above sea level, could soon start erupting once more, according to scientists who closely monitor its activity. Hawaiian authorities have advised residents living near the volcano to be ready to leave quickly, just in case. The giant hasn't gone off since 1984.

Seismologists monitoring Mauna Loa have detected a recent [increase in earthquakes](#) near the summit. While an eruption is not imminent, they have issued an alert, and Hawaii's civil defense agency has begun preparing for a possible emergency.

The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory warned the peak has been in a state of "heightened unrest" since mid-September, when earthquakes jumped from roughly 15 per day to roughly 45 per day. This is likely because magma has begun flowing into the summit's reservoir system underground.

Residents [have been advised](#) to prepare a "go" bag with food and to have a pre-set place of refuge to go in case they have to flee their homes in a hurry.

The 13,600-foot-high volcano, a broad shield-style mountain, hasn't erupted since 1984, but its runny lava flows are still capable of posing a risk to humans living nearby, especially in Hilo, a city of 45,000 on its northeastern slope. More than 200,000 live on the "Big Island," Hawaii, formed by Mauna Loa and four other volcanoes, two of which are dormant and one of which is extinct.

Hawaii residents are typically exposed to greater danger by Mauna Loa's much smaller sister volcano to the east, Kīlauea, which has been in continuous eruption since September 2021. It is one of the world's most active volcanoes, having previously vented lava from hotspots on its eastern side from 1983 to 2018.

However, last year scientists warned that Mauna Loa [was slowly "waking up"](#) from its slumber after detecting another prolonged cluster of earthquakes at the summit.

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Trump's Legal Team Spotted in DC Amid DOJ Push to Get Any Remaining Mar-a-Lago Files
By - Fantine Gardinier

Three top lawyers representing former US President Donald Trump were spotted outside a Washington, DC, courthouse on Thursday for what experts believe is likely talks with the US Department of Justice (DOJ) over concerns that there may still be US government documents in Trump's possession that should not be.

Attorneys Evan Corcoran, Jim Trusty, and Lindsey Halligan, known to represent the former president-turned real estate mogul, were spotted by reporters at the US District Court for the District of Columbia. However, almost no information is known about their activities, since the courtroom they entered was sealed to all except them and several members of the DOJ legal team.

"We know this was really the backdrop of all of this is the Justice Department's push for Trump to turn over whatever additional documents that, at least the Justice Department believes, are still missing and may still be in the possession of the former president," CNN reporter Evan [Perez said on-air on Thursday](#) about the sighting.

"They have continued to maintain that they believe there continues to be government documents that are missing, and they want the former president to figure out whether they are

still in possession at one of his properties and how to turn them back over to the federal government."

Beginning in January, the US government collected hundreds of documents from Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida that belonged to the US National Archives and other federal agencies, including classified documents of the highest secrecy. While the [first return was voluntary](#), the FBI returned in early August with a search and seizure warrant and [collected hundreds more](#).

Trump has not yet faced charges in connection with the raid, but the FBI's warrant cited fears he had violated the Espionage Act and federal laws against the mishandling of documents and obstruction of justice.

Earlier this month, the DOJ said it was afraid there [might still be more documents](#) in Trump's possession, and the [Archives have said](#) they still do not have all the communications documents from Trump's four-year administration that they should have.

The former president has faced a slew of legal cases in recent weeks, [being deposed twice](#) in October in one case alleging fraud and another claiming defamation. He has also been [subpoenaed by the House January 6](#) Committee, which is investigating the 2021 insurrection by his followers at the US Capitol.

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Video: Explosion in Iraq's Baghdad Leaves At Least 10 Dead, Over 20 Injured

The extent of sustained injuries and an official cause of the explosion remains unknown.

Officials are unsure whether the incident was targeted or an accident.

At least 10 individuals were killed Saturday in Baghdad, Iraq, after an explosion erupted near a football stadium and a cafe, officials have detailed. More than 20 others were left injured.

Reports citing security and medical officials have indicated that football players accounted for the majority of the victims.

Although an official cause of the blast has not been confirmed by authorities, security insiders have suggested that an explosive device had been attached to a vehicle and that the device reportedly caused the explosion of a nearby gas tanker once tripped.

Footage of the blast has surfaced on social media documenting the chaotic aftermath.

An investigation into the incident is ongoing.

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Video: Thousands of Supporters Descend on Sao Paulo to Celebrate Lula da Silva's Election Win

The Sunday win by Brazilian President-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva marks the first time since Brazil's 1985 return to democracy that the incumbent president failed to win reelection.

Thousands of supporters descended on Paulista Avenue in Brazil's Sao Paulo late Sunday to celebrate the highly-anticipated victory of leftist President-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is now set to start his third presidential term come January.

Footage of the celebrations have shown da Silva supporters cheering, crying and dancing in the streets of Sao Paulo, as others are seen igniting fireworks.

Some supporters took the opportunity to take a shot at Brazilian football star Neymar, who threw his backing behind incumbent Jair Bolsonaro. Earlier this week, the Paris Saint-Germain player reaffirmed his support by saying: "The values that the president represents, they are the same as mine."

With 99.99% of the ballots accounted for, da Silva managed to win with 50.90% of the vote, whereas Bolsonaro claimed another 49.10%.

Considered Brazil's closest election in over three decades, da Silva won the nation's top job by claiming 2.13 million votes. In 2014, Brazil saw former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff elected with a similar slim lead of just 3.46 million votes.

Shortly after the race was called by the nation's election authority, da Silva told his supporters that the win would mark the start of good things to come for the South American country. "This is the victory of an immense democratic movement that was formed, above political parties, personal interests and ideologies, so that democracy would win," he said.

As for Bolsonaro, he has not yet publicly commented on his reelection loss.

Prior to the Sunday runoff, a Datafolha poll found that some 49% of Brazilians were in favor of da Silva winning the presidential ticket. Another 44% of individuals sided with Bolsonaro.

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Report: US Considering Deploying B-52 Bombers to Australia Amid Tensions With China

In 2021, tensions between the US and China were kicked up a notch after the then-signed AUKUS agreement paved the way for the Aussie government to be provided with technology capable of deploying nuclear-powered submarines.

The US military is reportedly weighing the possibility of deploying multiple B-52 bombers to Australia in a bid to create a long-term hub in the region amid the Biden administration's ongoing tensions with China.

Citing insiders familiar with the developments, the Australian Broadcasting Corp [revealed](#) that approximately six bombers would be stationed at the remote Tindal air base in Australia's Northern Territory.

Documents detailed that a "squadron operations facility" would include a parking area for the bombers and an adjoining maintenance center. The services are expected to be used during the territory's dry season.

At present, the region already plays host to various joint military exercises with US forces on a near-annual basis, a collaboration that was first undertaken during the Obama administration.

Although US-China tensions have remained heated for quite some time, ties between the two nations reached a near-boiling point in early August when House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) opted to pay a visit to Taiwan.

At the time, talk remained high that China was planning to "invade" Taiwan, a self-governing island nation that Beijing sees as a wayward province and a matter of its own domestic policy. With Beijing's official policy envisaging a peaceful unification of Taiwan with mainland China, the Communist Party opposes any official contacts between the island and nations.

Beijing has repeatedly said that [the One-China principle](#) is a political foundation of China-US relations and that violations by Washington of its own obligations have been jeopardizing cooperation between the two countries, while posing a threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Moments after Pelosi touched down in Taipei, China's foreign ministry underscored that Pelosi's actions severely impacted already shaky relations between the US and China.

Nearly three months after the Taiwan trip, concerns are yet again on the rise over how a B-52 deployment to Australia might be received by China.

"It's a great expansion of Australian commitment to the United States' war plan with China," Richard Tanter, a senior research associate at the Nautilus Institute and a long-time, anti-nuclear activist, told the outlet.

"It's a sign to the Chinese that we are willing to be the tip of the spear."

The official further stressed that when compared to the regular deployments of US Marines in the Northern Territory, the presence of B-52s was far more significant, and proved "a more open signal to the Chinese that we are going along with American planning for a war with China."

News of the potential deployment comes as the US is already in the midst of building a \$270 million jet fuel storage facility on the outskirts of Darwin, which is located some 200 miles from the Tindal base.

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Biden Lost Temper During Call With Zelenskyy - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden lost his temper during a telephone conversation with Volodymyr Zelenskyy in June when the latter asked for even more military aid, NBC News reported on Monday, citing sources familiar with the call.

Biden routinely calls Zelenskyy when the US announces new aid packages for Ukraine. However, the June call was different, according to the report.

Biden had barely finished informing Zelenskyy that he had approved another \$1 billion in military aid for Ukraine when his counterpart started listing all the extra help he needs but isn't getting, the report said, adding that Biden lost his temper. Biden rose his voice, and said that Zelenskyy could show a little more gratitude.

Prior to the June 15 phone call, Biden's dissatisfaction with Zelenskyy had been building for weeks, the sources said. According to them, the US president and a number of his aides

believed that Washington was doing everything possible and as quickly as possible, but Zelenskyy continued to publicly pay attention only to what was not being done. After Zelenskyy was rebuffed during the June call, Zelenskyy publicly delivered a video message thanking Biden for the assistance and defusing the tensions, according to NBC News.

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Almost Half of US Voters Say Economy 'Extremely Important' Policy Issue – Poll

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – Ahead of US mid-term elections, the economy is the leading issue of importance to Americans, with 49% of voters saying it is "extremely important" when they cast their vote for Congress, according to a Gallup poll released Monday. Abortion and crime rated second and third, with 42% and 40% of voters, respectively, saying they are also "extremely important" issues.

Gun policy and immigration, rated by 38% and 37% of voters, respectively, rounded out the top five of the seven issues queried. Relations with Russia, at 31%, and climate change, at 26%, scored the lowest. The ranking is similar to that found in June, aside from gun policy falling to fourth place rather than tying for first with economy at 55%.

However, when considering the political leanings of respondents, the economy was less important to Democrats, who prioritized abortion, climate change, and gun policy. Republicans cited the economy, immigration, and crime as their top three of the issues surveyed.

The poll noted that 2022 has one of the most "issue-heavy" mid-term elections in the past two decades. It was conducted over the phone with 1,009 adult Americans, 897 of them registered voters, from October 3-20.

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Musk to Lay Off 25% of Twitter Workforce in 1st Round of Cuts - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - American billionaire Elon Musk is planning to lay off 25% of Twitter workforce in an initial round of cuts since taking over the social media website, The Washington Post reported on Monday, citing sources in the know.

Musk's team is deciding who will be fired first, one of the sources said. This first round of layoffs will impact almost all departments across the company, particularly sales, product, engineering, legal, and trust and safety. The process is expected to start in the coming days, the report said.

On Thursday, Musk closed a \$44 billion deal to acquire Twitter, negotiations for which began in April. The New York Times reported on Sunday citing sources that Musk was going to start laying off Twitter workers before November 1, when Twitter employees are scheduled to receive additional compensation related to stock grants. Musk dismissed the information as "false."

The Washington Post, citing corporate documents, said earlier that Musk intends to fire 75% of Twitter employees. The entrepreneur also denied the reports.

After completing the acquisition of Twitter, which was delayed due to concerns by Musk about the number of fake accounts on the platform, the entrepreneur fired former CEO Parag Agrawal, former CFO Ned Segal and former Chief Legal Officer Vijaya Gadde. He also said that a special council "with widely diverse viewpoints" will be set up to moderate the platform.

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Inflation, Denial of Rights Key Issues in 2022 Midterm Elections - Texas State Lawmaker

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - Inflation and the denial of rights in the United States will be key issues most US voters may consider when they head to the polls in next week's midterm elections, Texas state representative Mary Gonzalez told Sputnik.

US voters head to the polls for midterm elections on November 8 to determine who controls Congress, with Republicans poised to seize the House from the Democrats while the Senate struggle is expected to come down to the wire.

"Inflation and the denial of rights. I think those two things are [key issues]," Gonzalez, a Democrat, said.

Gonzalez said this year's midterm election is unique because there is an interesting balance between day-to-day and future dynamics coming into play.

"I think there's very real day-to-day concerns, i.e. inflation, the economy, but then there's also long term concerns about like the future of our country, for example, like rights, voting rights or women's rights, all these rights that are now being limited or denied," Gonzalez said.

The Supreme Court in June overturned the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, which had for decades upheld a pregnant women's right to seek an abortion without government restrictions.

On matters of gun control rights, Gonzalez said she believes it is possible to find a balance on respecting Americans' second amendment right to bear arms but also adopt measures to help curb gun violence issues in the United States.

"I think that we can have balanced gun control policy that can both honor people's understanding of their rights and keep communities and families safe," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez and several of her colleagues were appointed to a state investigative committee tasked with conducting an examination of the circumstances in the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, that left 19 children and two teachers dead.

Thirty-five of the 100 seats in the US Senate and all 435 House seats are up for election this year, in addition to state and local positions. The Democrats currently control the House of Representatives by eight seats while the Senate is split 50-50 with Vice President Kamala Harris representing the tie-breaking vote in her role as president of the upper chamber.

According to the averages of surveys gathered by poll aggregator RealClearPolitics (RCP), Republicans are likely to win 225 House seats, well over the 218 needed to win the majority.

House Democrats are likely to win 173 seats while 37 are in the toss-up category, according to

the RCP data. If the Senate races ended today, the Republicans would likely end up with at least 48 seats to the Democrats 46, with six still too close to call, the data shows.

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Texas Lawmaker Says Biden Not Only One to Blame on Migration Issues, Congress Must Address

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is not the only one to blame on any issues related to immigration because US Congress has failed to act and must now address the problem, Texas state representative Mary Gonzalez told Sputnik.

Immigration is one of several hot issues on the table when US voters head to the voting booths on November 8 for the midterm elections, with control of US Congress up-for-grabs.

"I think people always look at the administration for all the solutions," Gonzalez, a Democrat, said. "Congress hasn't acted to change immigration policy. We know it's not working. It hasn't been working for decades and yet nothing's changed. That's really a congressional conversation."

Some 2.3 million migrants have entered the United States illegally via the US southern border since October 2021, according to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data. This sets a second-consecutive year the Biden administration has witnessed record breaking numbers on the southern border.

Gonzalez said the history of US immigration is an ebb and flow situation.

"Sometimes you have high numbers, sometimes you have low numbers, and this moment in time, we have some high numbers from Venezuela, but that's not unique to America's history as a whole," Gonzalez said.

The southern states of the United States, particularly those bordering Mexico, have been protesting what they call the Biden administration's lax immigration policy by relocating migrants to so-called "sanctuary" states.

The influx has severely strained local, state and federal resources on the southern border that are trying to handle the situation.

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RPT - Biden Defense Strategy Declares Economic, Tech War on China, Beijing to React - Experts

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration's new National Defense Strategy effectively declares economic and technological war against China, but Beijing will certainly react against it, analysts told Sputnik .

The Pentagon released its National Defense Strategy (NDS) on Thursday, which said China remains the US' top competitor and warned that Beijing and Moscow collaborating might threaten US interests. The document also characterizes Russia as an acute and more immediate threat to US interests and values than China, which is characterized as a "pacing challenge."

"[The strategy] confirms and supplements the US declaration of economic and technological war against China," former Assistant Secretary of Defense Chas Freeman, who held the post under President Bill Clinton, said. "China will react. It will be interesting to see how."

Freeman also said the new strategy was in fact a continuation of long-held, deeply embedded policies in the US national security establishment determined to maintain global hegemony. "It's steady as you go on US defense of global primacy against both Russia and, especially, China," he said.

Biden's new strategy relies far too much on the direct threat of military escalation and will not reduce tensions or increase the possibilities of peace in the Indo-Pacific region, Freeman said. "The 'strategy' typically equates deterrence with military confrontation, though it requires reassurance of potential adversaries as well. It adds nothing to the prospects for peace," he said.

Los Alamos Group Director Greg Mello said the strategy would increase the dangers of confrontation and conflict in the Indo-Pacific region between the United States and China rather than reduce them.

"While none of this will be news to China, being formally named, again, as an adversary and nuclear deterrence guarantees, again, being provided to US allies in the Indo-Pacific region cannot but encourage China to continue expanding its own nuclear and conventional military capabilities," he said.

The new strategy just repeats many of the worst impulses already clearly previously expressed by different bodies in the US government, Mello said.

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RPT - OSCE Says Has 40 Long-Term Observers Across US, 17 Experts in Capital to Monitor Midterms

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has deployed 40 long-term observers across the United States and 17 experts in Washington to monitor the midterm elections next month, Katya Andrusz, spokesperson for the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), told Sputnik.

"Our observer mission to the US midterm elections opened on 26 September, following an invitation from the US authorities," Andrusz said. "In addition to the team of 17 experts based in Washington, D.C., the mission has 40 long-term observers spread out across the country." Over 16.9 million Americans have cast their ballots in early voting for the midterm elections, US Elections Project data showed on Friday.

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

The elections come amid issues such as high inflation level, the conflict in Ukraine and the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision to return abortion regulation to states – all of which are expected to play a role in the outcome of the midterms.

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RPT - Canada Sanctions, Ukraine Bond Offer Show Allegiance to US, UK Anti-Russia Line - Stepanov

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - Ottawa's new sanctions against Moscow and its announcement of new government-backed Ukrainian sovereignty bond demonstrate its allegiance to the anti-Russia line pursued by Washington and London, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

Canada announced sanctions on Friday against 35 more Russian individuals, including Gazprom leaders, and six energy entities in a show of support for Ukraine. The move comes as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is on an official visit to Canada.

"It's another senseless, absurd anti-Russian, hostile move by the Trudeau cabinet. It continues to mindlessly churn out symbolic sanctions in automatic mode, which cannot have any impact either on Russia or on the persons involved in these lists," Stepanov said. "This is a purely symbolic gesture, which was timed by Prime Minister Trudeau to coincide with the opening of the next assembly of the Canadian-Ukrainian Congress, which is held every three years and will be held this weekend. This is a gesture of such servility to the Bandera-Ukrainian diaspora here in Canada, counting on its votes in some electoral cycles."

The timing of the steps - sanctions, bonds, and a report on how much they are doing for Ukraine's regime - are no coincidence.

"All these announcements, they, of course, were planned for Blinken's visit to bow in their allegiance to the common anti-Russian line that the United States and Great Britain are leading, and Canada also wants to be a member of this trio of such leaders," Stepanov said. "To some extent, it even ideologically, if not practically, runs ahead of the American steam locomotive." Stepanov went on to say that the Trudeau government is showing absolute political unscrupulousness by recklessly supporting the Kiev regime.

"For many years, since 2014, since the anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine, Canada has never once condemned the crimes of the Kiev regime against civilians, against the population of

Donbas," the Ambassador said. "It turns a blind eye to the regular shelling of the civilian population and civilian infrastructure. Donetsk was shelled 36 times today. Of course, we will not hear a word of condemnation from this government."

Moreover, Stepanov continued to say, Ottawa did not condemn the terrorist act against the Crimean bridge, remained silent about the explosions on the Nord Stream and did not condemn the murder of Russian journalist Daria Dugina.

At the same time Canada continues to provide military, military-technical, consulting, training and broad economic assistance to the Kiev regime, he added.

Thereby Ottawa is supporting Ukraine's inhuman war and the crimes that this regime commits. "It's unfortunate," he stated. "This is just a demonstration of such a gutta-percha conscience of the current government headed by Mr. Trudeau."

Stepanov also said that Moscow will respond to the latest move by Ottawa on the principle of reciprocity.

"Even realizing all the symbolism and absurdity of Canadian measures, it is customary in interstate relations to respond proportionately," he said. "Therefore, the answer will follow, although at the level of diplomatic communication through diplomatic channels we tell the Canadian side that 'you probably yourself understand the meaninglessness of these gestures, and you impose sanctions, we will answer you and this will continue in a circle until you stop, because we are never the first to introduce any sanctions.'"

Russia, he added, only recognizes sanctions that are imposed under the mandate of the UN Security Council.

"Unilateral sanctions are illegal, they are simply illegal," the ambassador said.

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Biden Calls Attack on Pelosi 'Despicable,' Says Too Much Political Violence in US

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden called the attack on House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband Paul despicable and urged everyone to stand against political violence after saying the attacker reportedly chanted the same slogan protesters used during the 2021 Capitol riot.

San Francisco police said early Friday morning 42-year old David Depape violently assaulted Paul Pelosi in his home with a hammer. Speaker Pelosi's office later in the day said Paul Pelosi underwent a successful surgery to repair a fractured skull and other serious injuries and is expected to recover.

"This is despicable," Biden said at a rally in Pennsylvania. "There's too much violence... political violence."

Biden said the attacker reportedly said "where's Nancy," the same chant pro-Trump supporters made during the Capitol assault on January 6, 2021.

The president called on everyone to clearly stand up against violence in politics "regardless what your politics are."

Police later said the detained suspect would be charged with attempted homicide.

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Thick Cloud Threat May Delay US Polar Weather Satellite Launch on Tuesday - NASA

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - There is a more than 50% chance that thick cloud weather conditions and the threat of lightning could force a postponement of the launch of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s third polar orbiting weather satellite in its current series from California on Tuesday, the mission's weather officer said.

"There is [only] a 40% chance of 'Go' (approval for launch): Thick clouds are a concern," US Space Force launch weather officer Captain Zack Zounes told the press conference broadcast on NASA television on Friday. Ten thousand foot high clouds are being projected and "we expect them to be a threat."

NASA said the Joint Polar Satellite System-2 (JPSS-2) will have advanced capabilities to predict severe weather around the world and monitor the planet's environment as it orbits from the North Pole to the South Pole and will cross the equator 14 times a day to provide full global coverage twice a day.

The Atlas rocket propelling JPSS-2 into orbit will also carry the first flight test of the new Low-Earth Orbit Flight Test of an Inflatable Decelerator (LOFTID) technology, NASA said.

"After JPSS-2 safely reaches orbit, LOFTID will follow a re-entry trajectory from low-Earth orbit to demonstrate the inflatable heat shield's ability to slow down and survive re-entry," NASA added.

LOFTID will demonstrate how the inflatable aeroshell, or heat shield, can slow down and survive re-entry in conditions relevant to many potential applications, whether landing humans on Mars, new missions to Venus and Titan or carrying back heavier payloads and samples from low-Earth orbit (LEO), according to NASA.

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Russia Unlike Canada Understands Regional Peace Mutually Beneficial - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - Russia and Canada will never be allies, but Moscow, in contrast to Ottawa, understands the simple truth that regional peace and stability are mutually beneficial, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"We [Russia and Canada] do not have to entwine in love ecstasy, we will never be allies, but we [Russia] understand that peace and stability in our region are mutually beneficial. This, in my opinion, is some common truth for us, but not for them, apparently, at least not for the current cabinet," Stepanov said on Friday.

Russians, he added, do not judge Canadians by the actions of the political leadership. On the contrary, Russia sees Canada as its neighbor and wants the relations between the countries to be predictable.

As regards the situation in Ukraine, the members of the Canadian government today act as "temporary workers" who follow the philosophy – "after us the deluge," Stepanov said and added that such "workers" can destroy Russian-Canadian relations, complicate interpersonal relations between the two nations, and then leave their posts to continue working somewhere else and not even care of what they have done.

On Friday, Canada announced sanctions against 35 more Russian individuals, including Gazprom leaders, and six energy entities in a show of support for Ukraine.

On February 24, Russia launched a military operation in Ukraine after the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk appealed for help in defending themselves against Ukrainian provocations.

In response to Russia's operation, Western countries have rolled out a comprehensive sanctions campaign against Moscow, which includes airspace closures and restrictive measures targeting numerous Russian officials and entities, media, and financial institutions. Some foreign companies have decided to leave Russia altogether.

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The timing of the steps - sanctions, bonds, and a report on how much they are doing for Ukraine's regime - are no coincidence.

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"For many years, since 2014, since the anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine, Canada has never once condemned the crimes of the Kiev regime against civilians, against the population of Donbas," the Ambassador said. "It turns a blind eye to the regular shelling of the civilian population and civilian infrastructure. Donetsk was shelled 36 times today. Of course, we will not hear a word of condemnation from this government."

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Biden to Visit Egypt, Cambodia, Indonesia for Dialogues Starting November 11 - White House

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will travel to Egypt, Cambodia and Indonesia to attend a series of global dialogues starting on November 11, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said.

"President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. will visit Egypt, Cambodia, and Indonesia. On November 11th, President Biden will attend the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt," Jean-Pierre said in a statement on Friday.

Biden will then visit Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from November 12-13 for the US-ASEAN Summit and the East Asia Summit, the statement said.

From November 13-16, Biden will participate in the G20 Leaders' Summit in Bali, Indonesia, the statement added.

Biden will address a variety of global issues during the events, including climate change, the conflict in Ukraine and food security, according to the statement.

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UN Chief Seeks to Extend Grain Deal, Underlies Positive Impact on Food Security -Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 29 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres wishes to extend the grain agreement with Ukraine and Russia, and emphasizes that it will improve food security around the world, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement. "The Secretary-General expresses his unwavering commitment and strong support to the renewal and full implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, as well as for the full implementation of the agreement signed with the Russian Federation. Both agreements aim to ensure that grain and fertilizers from Ukraine and the Russian Federation reach global markets at the speed and price needed to avert a global food crisis and ensure food security," the statement said on Friday.

The United Nations underlines the urgency of extending the grain agreement to contribute to food security across the world, the statement added.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative will expire on November 22 after being in effect for 120 days. The United Nations has been trying to extend the agreement, but Russia has not been satisfied with the results. The Russian Ambassador to the United Nations said last week that they have seen zero results.

Earlier on Friday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Russia continues to inform the UN Secretariat about the failure to fulfill the second part of the grain deal on a regular basis.

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Russian, Georgian Churches Must Show Governments How to Improve Relations - Metropolitan

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - The Russian and Georgian Orthodox churches should show the governments of their countries how to improve relations in the spirit of love, Georgian Metropolitan Nikoloz (Pachuashvili) of Akhalkalaki and Kumurdo told Sputnik.

"Despite all difficulties between our countries, we are all brothers, we are all Orthodox Christians. And we have to show our governments the right relationship and how they should develop. We are trying to do this," Nikoloz said.

The Metropolitan noted that Russia and Georgia do not have diplomatic relations since 2008 and this situation creates difficulties in communicating on a practical level.

"Of course, our church is trying to improve the situation, but sometimes it is related to even technical issues on how the Russians can visit us or how we can visit Russia. Both, our church and the Russian church, have to take that into account," he said.

Nikoloz called for establishing the right priorities by always remembering the church is one of Christ, not of a government.

"We should put Christ in the central place in the church. I am urging everyone, all Christians, and myself first of all, to do that," he said.

Nikoloz acknowledged that sometimes it is very difficult to proceed in this manner because the current conditions and situations put people ahead of challenges, but expressed confidence that if Christ is placed first then everything will be good "because Christ is Love."

Nikoloz also noted that the Georgian Orthodox Church will invite to Georgia one of the major relics of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) - the myrrh-streaming miraculous Hawaiian Iveron icon of the Mother of God.

"The icon visited us several years ago and now we are going to invite it, most likely in February, when we will organize the conference about Georgia as a land of the Mother of God," Nikoloz said.

The Metropolitan said he is visiting the United States to participate at the conference at ROCOR's Holy Trinity monastery in the town of Jordanville, New York.

"The conference is dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the myrrh-streaming of the Montreal Iveron icon of the Mother of God, 25th anniversary of martyrdom of its custodian brother Joseph Munoz-Cortez and the 25 years of myrrh-streaming of the Hawaiian icon," Nikoloz added.

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Paul Pelosi Underwent Successful Surgery After Hammer Attack - US House Speaker's Office

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - Paul Pelosi, husband to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, successfully underwent surgery to treat injuries incurred during an attack at his San Francisco residence, the Speaker Office's spokesman Drew Hammill said.

"Mr. Pelosi was admitted to Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital where he underwent successful surgery to repair a skull fracture and serious injuries to his right arm and hands. His doctors expect a full recovery," Hammill said in a statement on Friday.

Early on Friday morning, law enforcement responded to a well-being check at the Pelosi residence, where they found Pelosi and 42-year old David Depape both holding a hammer, San Francisco Police Chief Bill Scott said in a press conference. Depape took the hammer and allegedly began assaulting Pelosi, prompting officers to detain him, Scott said.

The motive behind the incident is not known at this time, Scott said.

Depape was booked in the San Francisco County Jail on charges including attempted homicide, assault with a deadly weapon, elder abuse and burglary, Scott also said.

The altercation is being investigated by the San Francisco Police Department's Special Investigations Division with support from federal partners such as the FBI and Capitol Police, Scott added.

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Biden Defense Strategy Declares Economic, Tech War on China, Beijing to React - Experts

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration's new National Defense Strategy effectively declares economic and technological war against China, but Beijing will certainly react against it, analysts told Sputnik .

The Pentagon released its National Defense Strategy (NDS) on Thursday, which said China remains the US' top competitor and warned that Beijing and Moscow collaborating might threaten US interests. The document also characterizes Russia as an acute and more immediate threat to US interests and values than China, which is characterized as a "pacing challenge."

"[The strategy] confirms and supplements the US declaration of economic and technological war against China," former Assistant Secretary of Defense Chas Freeman, who held the post under President Bill Clinton, said. "China will react. It will be interesting to see how."

Freeman also said the new strategy was in fact a continuation of long-held, deeply embedded policies in the US national security establishment determined to maintain global hegemony.

"It's steady as you go on US defense of global primacy against both Russia and, especially, China," he said.

Biden's new strategy relies far too much on the direct threat of military escalation and will not reduce tensions or increase the possibilities of peace in the Indo-Pacific region, Freeman said.

"The 'strategy' typically equates deterrence with military confrontation, though it requires reassurance of potential adversaries as well. It adds nothing to the prospects for peace," he said.

Los Alamos Group Director Greg Mello said the strategy would increase the dangers of confrontation and conflict in the Indo-Pacific region between the United States and China rather than reduce them.

"While none of this will be news to China, being formally named, again, as an adversary and nuclear deterrence guarantees, again, being provided to US allies in the Indo-Pacific region cannot but encourage China to continue expanding its own nuclear and conventional military capabilities," he said.

The new strategy just repeats many of the worst impulses already clearly previously expressed by different bodies in the US government, Mello said.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 29 (Sputnik) -

WESTERN MILITARY SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

* The United States is sending four satellite communication antennas to Ukraine for the first time in the newly announced Ukraine aid package, but they are not meant to substitute Starlink satellites, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

* The United States announced a new \$275 million military assistance package for Ukraine, Singh said.

CANADA SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

* Canada has introduced sanctions against Russian Deputy Prime Ministers Alexander Novak and Denis Manturov, the Canadian government said on Friday.

* Canada announced sanctions on Friday against 35 more Russian individuals, including Gazprom leaders, and six energy entities in a show of support for Ukraine.

MOBILIZATION IN RUSSIA

* The goal to mobilize 300,000 people has been completed and no additional activities are necessary, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told President Vladimir Putin on Friday.

* Shoigu told Putin that during the partial mobilization, 1,300 employees of the executive branch were drafted into the country's armed forces, and the average age of those mobilized was 35.

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN-RUSSIA TALKS

* Russia is doing everything possible to achieve a comprehensive stabilization of relations between Yerevan and Baku, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday.

* The next trilateral meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan will be held on October 31, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed to Sputnik.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH INCIDENT IN GENEVA

* The Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Geneva was attacked by unknown persons who doused it with red paint on the night of October 27-28, the Russian mission to the UN in Geneva said on Friday.

* The Russian embassy in Bern sent a note to the Swiss Foreign Ministry after the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Geneva was attacked by unknown persons who doused it with red paint.

ATTACK ON US HOUSE SPEAKER'S HUSBAND

* Paul Pelosi, the husband of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, was "violently assaulted" by a home intruder on Friday, according to the speaker's spokesperson.

* The man who assaulted Nancy Pelosi's husband with a hammer at the couple's home in San Francisco was looking for the House speaker, CNN reported.

* The suspect apprehended in connection with an alleged attack on Paul Pelosi is being charged with crimes including attempted homicide and elder abuse, San Francisco Police Chief Bill Scott said,

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US Encourages Kosovo to Extend Deadline for New License Plate Plan - State Dept.

Washington, October 28 (Sputnik) - Biden administration officials are pressing their Kosovo counterparts that in the interest of keeping the peace they should delay the date to implement a new license plate plan, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Friday.

"The United States, alongside our international partners, urges the government of Kosovo to extend the implementation period for the new license plate regime," Price said. "Kosovo has the right to implement the license plate regime under the Brussels Agreement, but an extension of the timeline is in the interest of making progress on the EU-facilitated dialogue to normalize Kosovo-Serbia relations."

Price said the United States is disappointed and concerned that the Kosovo government has rejected requests from its international partners to normalize relations with Serbia.

"Kosovo and Serbia should urgently and flexibly work to reach a comprehensive agreement on normalized relations, centered on mutual recognition," Price said. "It is important that both parties reduce inflammatory rhetoric and undertake concrete actions to demonstrate their commitment to constructive collaboration to ensure a stable and prosperous future for the region."

The Albanians in Kosovo have pressured ethnic Serbs to abide by a new rule and get the Pristina-issued plates on their vehicles. Those who do so, will not have to pay taxes or registration fees if they complete the process done before October 31, a day before the new rule comes into force.

Serbia does not recognize its forcefully captured province of Kosovo and Metohija as a state. Forcing Albanian license plates on Serbs in Kosovo would also be forcing them to accept it as a state, something that Serbs and other non-Albanians vehemently object to. UN Resolution 1244 explicitly states that Kosovo and Metohija belongs to Serbia.

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UNSC to Hold Meeting on Ryanair Incident Monday at Request of US - Source to Sputnik

UNITED NATIONS, October 28 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council will hold a meeting on the so-called Ryanair incident on Monday at the request of the United States and Albania, a UN source told Sputnik.

"The topic is: Threat to international peace and security. I think briefing by ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organization]. Albania and US requested - the meeting is on Monday," the source said on Friday.

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Social Media May Accelerate Even More Spread of Misinformation, Hate Speech - UN Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is concerned that social media platforms may become a greater accelerants for the spread of misinformation and hate speech, the UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"Our concern with all social media platforms is that they do not become even greater accelerant for the spread of misinformation and hate speech and every social media platform in every country has a responsibility to ensure freedom of expression, which is a basic human right," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The international community has to make sure that the platforms are not used in a nefarious way and do not lead to violence, Dujarric said.

The UN spokesperson's comment came in response to a question about what the United Nations' wishes are for Twitter after billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk acquired the social media company on Thursday and said he would respect the right to free speech as protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

Musk has voiced his plans for Twitter several times, including to get rid of fake accounts that - according to some estimates - make up 80% of the accounts on the media platform and make Twitter a global platform for "citizen journalism."

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Germany Never Going Back to Nuclear Power, Will Not Rely on Russian Uranium - Minister

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - Germany will close down its last three remaining nuclear-fueled power plants and will never start constructing new ones or reopening others in order to avoid ever again being dependent on uranium imports from Russia, Minister of State Katja Keul told a conference at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) on Friday.

"We are never going to start investing in new uranium that comes from Russia: Too many European partners [already] depend upon it," Keul said. "The future is [in] renewable [energy]. ... We don't see any role for nuclear energy in our country. We have three (nuclear-fueled) power plants left."

Germany's European Union neighbor France had 54 nuclear power plants but because of a shortage of uranium fuel they were now running at only 50% generating capacity overall and Germany was seeking to help France with its own electrical power supplies, Keul said.

"We are using coal to get through the winter but in the long term we want to get out of it. ...If this is going to be a cold winter, a lot of people are going to be in trouble," Keul said.

Gas energy prices in Germany were now four to five times higher than they had been before the start of the Ukraine conflict on February 24, Keul added.

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NATO, Russia Unlikely to Start Talks Soon on Ukraine, Arms Control - German Official

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - NATO and Russia are unlikely to start any new negotiations to reduce tensions to seek a settlement over the Ukraine conflict or seek new arms control talks soon, German Minister of State Katja Keul of the Green Party in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's ruling coalition said on Friday.

"I don't see NATO and Russia talking about strategic arms control: It has to be after [Russian President Vladimir] Putin, but anything we can do to save New START (the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), it would be in our interest," Keul told a conference at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Eventually, NATO and Russia would have no alternative but to sit down together and negotiate new arms control agreements but that would not be for the foreseeable future as the West had lost all trust in the current Russian leadership, Keul said.

"We don't have someone that we can talk to about it. I don't know the timing but I don't see the alternative ... I can't imagine Putin being the one that we sit down with and talk with: This trust has been destroyed," Keul said.

Also, following the Ukraine conflict, Germany needed to invest more in its own military and maintain domestic unity to reassure its neighbors, Keul added.

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Poland Selects US Gov't, Westinghouse for 1st Part of 40Bln Nuclear Project – Granholm

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – Poland selected the US government and Westinghouse for its first nuclear power plant, US Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm said on Friday.

"I've just been informed that Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki just announced that Poland has selected the US government and Westinghouse for the first part of their \$40 billion nuclear project," Granholm said.

Warsaw's decision will strengthen the two countries' cooperation on energy security, she added.

"I think it sends a clear message to Russia that the Atlantic alliance stands together to diversify our energy supply, to strengthen climate cooperation and to resist Russian weaponization of energy," Granholm stated.

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Protesters Interrupt Blinken Event in Canada With Anti-War Slogans on Ukraine

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – A group of protesters confronted US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly at an event in Montreal on Friday to demand an end to the US involvement in the Ukraine conflict.

The incident occurred when the two ministers were meeting with an organization supporting Syrian refugees.

Protesters can be heard shouting "No foreign military intervention in Ukraine," "Yankee go home," and "We want nothing to do with your war-mongering, Secretary Blinken," according to videos from social media.

They also said: "We do not want you." One of the demonstrators carried a hand-written banner "United States = Terrorist State."

Both Blinken and Joly were in no danger, but had to relocate their scheduled remarks to the press, according to media reports.

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UPDATE - Pentagon Announces New \$275Mln Military Assistance Package for Ukraine (Modifies para 3, provides additional details in paras 4, 6)

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United States announced a new \$275 million military assistance package for Ukraine, US Department of Defense spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

"Today the Department [of Defense] is announcing the authorization of the 24th presidential drawdown of security assistance, valued at up to \$275 million to meet Ukraine's critical security and defense needs," Singh said during a press briefing.

The package includes ammunition for HIMARS launchers, 500 precision-guided 155mm artillery rounds, 2,000 155mm rounds of Remote Anti-Armor Mine systems, 1,300 anti-armor systems, and 125 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs), the US Defense Department said in a press release.

The United States has also included four satellite communications antennas and small arms along with more than 2,750,000 rounds of small arms ammunition.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued a statement saying that he is authorizing the drawdown in the amount of \$275 million.

The new package has brought the total amount of US security assistance committed for Ukraine to \$18.5 billion since January 2021, the release said.

Blinken explained that the United States is currently working to provide Ukraine with air defense capabilities by delivering two additional National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) next month.

Earlier this week, Raytheon Technologies CEO Greg Hayes said the two NASAMS recently delivered to the US government were already being installed in Ukraine.

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Twitter Will Form Content Moderation Council, No Major Decisions Before Group Meets - Musk

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - Social media company Twitter will form a special council to moderate the platform as part of its overhaul by billionaire purchaser Elon Musk, with no decisions on content or account reinstatements expected before the group convenes, the tech entrepreneur said on Friday.

"Twitter will be forming a content moderation council with widely diverse viewpoints," Musk said via social media. "No major content decisions or account reinstatements will happen before that council convenes."

On Thursday, Musk closed the \$44 billion deal to acquire Twitter, negotiations for which began in April. The acquisition was delayed due to concerns by Musk about the number of fake accounts on the platform.

Musk vowed to bolster protections for free speech on Twitter as part of his acquisition of the platform. Additionally, Musk said earlier this year he would be willing to reverse Twitter's ban of former US President Donald Trump, instated following the January 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol.

Musk's new statement suggests the reinstatement may instead be a decision made by the content moderation council.

However, earlier on Friday, Trump reportedly said he would stay on his own platform, Truth Social, but wished Musk luck with his acquisition of Twitter.

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US Music Star Jerry Lee Lewis Dies at 87 - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - One of the most famous US singers and songwriters Jerry Lee Lewis died at the age of 87, CNN reported on Friday, citing Lewis' representative Zach Farnum.

The legendary musician died of natural causes in his home in the state of Mississippi, the report said.

Lewis' wife was near him at the moment of death, the report added.

Lewis was born in 1938 in the state of Louisiana and began his music career at the age of 18. He became one of the most influential musicians of 20th century.

He received four Grammy awards, including a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and two Grammy Hall of Fame Awards.

In 1986, Lewis was inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He was also a member of the Memphis Music Hall of Fame. In 2022, Lewis was inducted in the Country Music Hall of Fame.

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US Armed Forces Seeing Impact of Inflation on Supply Chains - Pentagon Logistics Chief

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The US armed forces are dealing with the impact of growing inflation across the economy that added \$2 billion to their fuel costs over the summer, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Director of Logistics Operations and Joint Regional Combat Support Commander Rear Adm. Joseph Noble told a Defense News podcast on Friday.

"We are seeing the impact of inflation as it has taken hold in the economy," Noble said. "We do see some specific impacts, we are seeing the impact of inflationary [pressures]."

The DLA budgeted \$2 billion extra over the summer to cover increased fuel costs, Defense News noted.

"[An] increased area where I have seen those challenges on the distribution side of things [are in] trucking assets," Noble said.

The DLA has an annual budget of \$40 billion covering procurement and sales to the armed forces. It must also deal with the challenges of aging weapons systems, spare parts for obsolete items and compensating for vendors who no longer make such items, Noble added.

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Trump Wishes Musk 'Lot of Luck' at Twitter But Promised to Stay on Truth Social - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump wished Elon Musk "a lot of luck" at Twitter after the billionaire entrepreneur acquired the social media company but promised to stay on his Truth Social platform even if reinstated on Twitter, Fox News reported on Friday.

On Thursday, Musk finally closed the \$44 billion deal to acquire Twitter that was negotiated since April.

Trump said he wished Musk "a lot of luck" and admitted that he likes the SpaceX and Tesla founder.

Trump also said he does not think Twitter can be successful without him, but at the same time he refused to move his social media activity from his own platform Truth Social.

"I am staying on Truth. I like it better, I like the way it works, I like Elon, but I'm staying on Truth," the report cited Trump as saying.

Musk said earlier this year that he would reverse the permanent ban on Trump's Twitter account, which was suspended in January 2021 following the January 6, 2021, events at the US Capitol.

Trump, who was also banned from Facebook (outlawed in Russia as an extremist organization) subsequently moved to his Truth Social.

"Twitter has been taken over, and, if it wasn't for me, it would have never been taken over. No one would have even thought about it," Trump said.

Moreover, in Trump's view, it was he who made Twitter successful after it was a "failed enterprise" 12 years ago, the report said.

The former US president also noted that if he chooses to run in the 2024 presidential race, he is planning to solely use Truth Social in his campaign, the report added.

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Pentagon Announces New \$275Mln Military Assistance Package for Ukraine

(Updates with additional details, background in paras 4-6)

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United States announced a new \$275 million military assistance package for Ukraine, US Department of Defense spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

"Today the Department [of Defense] is announcing the authorization of the 24th presidential drawdown of security assistance, valued at up to \$275 million to meet Ukraine's critical security and defense needs," Singh said during a press briefing.

The package includes ammunition for HIMARS launchers and 155mm artillery rounds, Singh added.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued a statement saying that he is authorizing the drawdown in the amount of \$275 million.

Blinken explained that the United States is currently working to provide Ukraine air defense capabilities by delivering two additional National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) next month.

Earlier this week, Raytheon Technologies CEO Greg Hayes said the two NASAMS recently delivered to the US government were already being installed in Ukraine.

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Suspect in Paul Pelosi Attack Charged With Attempted Homicide, Motive Unknown - Police

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The suspect apprehended in connection with an alleged attack on Paul Pelosi, husband of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, is being charged with crimes including attempted homicide and elder abuse, San Francisco Police Chief Bill Scott said on Friday.

Police detained 42-year old suspect David Depape after being called to the Pelosi residence early Friday morning for a wellbeing check. Police entered the scene to see both Pelosi and

Depape holding a hammer, which Depape allegedly took and used to begin assaulting Pelosi, Scott said.

"The motive for this attack is still being determined," Scott said during a press conference. "Mr. Depape will be booked at the San Francisco County Jail on the following charges: attempted homicide; assault with a deadly weapon; elder abuse, burglary; and several other additional felonies."

The San Francisco Police Department's Special Investigations Division is leading an investigation into the incident with support from the FBI, US Capitol Police and other federal partners, Scott added.

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Entire Twitter Data Engineer Team Let Go - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The entire Twitter data engineer team has been let go and employees were seen carrying cardboard boxes while leaving the company's headquarters in San Francisco, California, CNBC reported on Friday.

Earlier in the day, US billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, who acquired Twitter and had criticized the company for limiting freedom of expression, hinted that he finalized the purchase by tweeting - "The bird is free."

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Russia Remains Main Nuclear Vendor While US Firms Proactive in Eastern Europe – Grossi

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – While Russia remains the main nuclear vendor in the world and the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) is very active in the market, US companies are being proactive in Eastern Europe, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said on Friday.

"The main [nuclear] vendor is Russia, and the Chinese CNNC is very, very active, and of course, they have a different financing model, which allows them to move more flexibly, including in international markets. So, that is the challenge for American companies abroad," Grossi said during a Carnegie Endowment for International Peace event. "We are seeing, for example, active and proactive initiatives from American companies in Eastern Europe, [...] Poland, Czechia, Romania..."

According to Grossi, the growing presence of US nuclear companies competing with others in Europe is something new, because earlier there were French, Korean, Russian, and Chinese vendors.

In November, the United States announced it is going to build a first ever small nuclear reactor in Romania in a bid to address climate change and growing demand for clean energy in Europe.

The "multi-billion-dollar" deal will allow Romania to begin the process of gradually replacing its seven coal power plants, the State Department said.

Small modular reactors (SMRs) are nuclear fission reactors that are significantly smaller than traditional nuclear reactors and can be built at one location and then transferred to another. In 2018, the IAEA called them among the most promising emerging technologies in nuclear power.

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US Court Weighs Which Expert Witnesses to Allow in Case of Michigan School Shooter Parents

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The Oakland County Circuit Court is holding a hearing on Friday to determine which expert witnesses will be allowed to testify in the trial against James and Jennifer Crumbley, parents of Michigan school shooter suspect Ethan Crumbley. Crumbley, 16, pleaded guilty earlier this week to 24 charges connected to a school shooting at the Oxford High School in Michigan that killed four people. Charges included terrorism causing death and first-degree premeditated murder among other felonies, for which he faces a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Crumbley's parents are facing four counts of involuntary manslaughter each for their alleged role in obtaining the gun used in the shooting and failing to prevent the incident after not taking seriously reports from the school about their son's disturbing behavior.

Prosecutors contend that a "pathway to violence" - a pattern of behaviors in the buildup to an act of violence - was present in Crumbley's case and ignored by his parents. Crumbley was returned to class on the day of the shooting after his parents attended a meeting earlier that day to address disturbing drawings made by their son.

Crumbley's parents also helped him obtain the firearms used in the shooting, the teen said during his guilty plea hearing.

The prosecution and defense teams argued about whether to allow expert witnesses to testify in their trial on the pathway to violence for the mass shooting, which defense attorneys say is a novel and inconsistent area of research.

The prosecution wishes to allow the testimony to show evidence of an observable buildup to the shooting that could have been addressed by the Crumbleys.

Their trial for involuntary manslaughter is scheduled for January 17.

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Pentagon Confirms North Korea Fired 2 Ballistic Missiles, Posed No Threat to Allies

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department confirmed that North Korea fired two ballistic missiles earlier in the day but assesses that they did not pose any threat

to the United States or its allies, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

"We can confirm that North Korea did launch two ballistic missiles," Singh said during a press briefing. "We have assessed that these these launches this event does not pose any immediate threat to us personnel or our allies."

The missiles were launched from the central part of North Korea and landed in the vicinity of Alsom Island, Singh said.

The United States will continue to work with North Korea and Japan to address the issue, Singh added.

North Korea has already conducted nine missile tests since September 25 and 28 tests since the beginning of 2022. Pyongyang has emphasized that its test launches are carried out in response to the refusal of the United States and South Korea to stop joint military drills that North Korea believes threaten regional stability.

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UN Delivers Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine's Kharkiv Region for Fifth Time - Spokesperson UNITED NATIONS, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United Nations and their partners have delivered the humanitarian aid to the people of the Kharkiv region, which is the fifth time, UN spokesperson Stephanie Dujarric said on Friday.

"This is the fifth time in the last two weeks that we, along with our humanitarian partners... managed to deliver much needed food assistance through interagency convoys in area recently retaken by the Ukrainian government. As you know humanitarian access to these regions of Ukraine have been impossible," he said.

The partners delivered hygiene kits, blankets, bed linens, window sheeting, tarpaulin, jerrycans and kitchen sets, Dujarric said.

"That will support over 8,000 people to be better prepared for the coming winter months," he added.

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

The Russian Defense Ministry said it moved its troops near Kharkiv to other positions and regrouped to more effectively continue the special military operation in the Donbas.

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Man Who Assaulted Pelosi's Husband With Hammer Was Looking for House Speaker - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The man who assaulted Nancy Pelosi's husband with a hammer at the couple's home in San Francisco was looking for the House speaker, CNN reported on Friday, citing law enforcement sources.

Earlier in the day, the speaker's spokesperson said that Paul Pelosi was "violently assaulted" by a home intruder on Friday, while the Speaker was not in San Francisco at the time. Paul Pelosi, 82, was taken to the hospital, and is expected to make a full recovery.

According to the United States Capitol Police (USCP), the suspect is currently in custody, while his motivation is still being investigated.

Nancy Pelosi was in Washington, D.C. when the break-in took place, the USCP said in a statement.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the San Francisco Police Department are conducting a joint investigation of the incident. The USCP's California Field Office and a team of investigators from the Department's Threat Assessment Section are assisting in the investigation.

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US Will Deliver NASAMS to Kiev When Ukrainians Complete Training Soon - Pentagon
WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United States will deliver two National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) to Ukraine once Ukrainian soldiers complete their training on the systems, US Defense Department spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Friday. "On your question with training on the NASAMS, there is a training program with this system, and once it has been completed, the system will be ready for delivery to Ukraine and we anticipate that that training program will conclude soon," Singh said during a press briefing. The first two NASAMS committed to Ukraine will be sent to the country by next month, Singh added.

Earlier this week, Raytheon Technologies CEO Greg Hayes said the two NASAMS recently delivered to the US government were already being installed in Ukraine.

The United States will provide six additional NASAMS to Ukraine but those are not expected to be delivered anytime soon.

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DHS Focused on Securing US Election System Ahead of Midterms - Policy Chief

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is focused on securing cyber and physical aspects of the US election system ahead of the midterms in November, DHS Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans Rob Silvers said on Friday.

"We're very focused on securing our election system, certainly for the midterm elections that are coming up so soon, and then beyond that as well. We're taking that really seriously and we're approaching it from different angles" Silvers said during an interview.

On the cyber side, DHS is working on securing election infrastructure such as voter registration databases and voting equipment, Silvers said.

DHS is also addressing physical security concerns at polling places and vote tabulation centers amid threats to election administrators, Silvers said.

On Election Day, DHS will run a 24/7 watch operation and maintain live contact with state and local election officials, Silvers added.

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IAEA Director Grossi Says Many Arab Countries Interested in Developing Nuclear Programs

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - Many Arab countries are either already developing nuclear power plants or interested in moving forward with nuclear programs, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said on Friday.

"We know that there is now a lot of nuclear development in Arab countries," Grossi said during a Carnegie Endowment for International Peace event. "There is the big Arab nation, Egypt, [that] is going to have nuclear power plants. They are building nuclear power plants. You have the UAE [United Arab Emirates] that already has four shining reactors. There are others in this, Jordan, as well, that already has a big research reactor and it is moving into a nuclear program. There is Saudi Arabia that is very interested."

In Africa, Kenya and Ghana are actively looking into having their nuclear programs, while South Africa has finally made a decision to expand its program, Grossi said.

Grossi pointed out that nuclear security is as important as nuclear safety and that is why the IAEA is now building the first international center for nuclear security in the world.

Earlier on Friday, Grossi said the IAEA will be conducting a "very detailed work" in several places across Ukraine, including in the southern part, in search of nuclear materials that can be used to develop a so-called "dirty bomb."

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Blinken Says US Concerned About Alleged Chinese 'Aggression' Toward Taiwan

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is concerned about the alleged increased Chinese "aggression" toward Taiwan, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said in an interview on Friday.

"We're seeing more repression in China and more aggression on the outside, including on Taiwan," Blinken told the Quebecois broadcaster TVA. "Maritime trade, in that area, represents 50 percent of trade every day, and the chips that we have in our phones and everything - most of them come from Taiwan."

Blinken said that the crisis between China and Taiwan would be "bad for the entire world" and needed to be resolved peacefully.

Blinken's remarks come amid a period of heightened tensions in relations between the United States and China, particularly with respect to Taiwan.

The series of visits earlier this year by US lawmakers to Taiwan, mostly notably by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August, has further exacerbated existing tensions.

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US Says Sending 4 Satellite Comms Antennas to Ukraine, Not Meant to Substitute Starlink

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United States is sending four satellite communication antennas to Ukraine for the first time in the newly announced Ukraine aid package, but they are not meant to substitute Starlink satellites, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

"These antennas provide an additional capability on the ground at a critical time when Ukraine's infrastructure is being hit," Singh said during a press briefing. "These sat comms are not intended to serve as a substitute for service like Starlink. They help increase communication efforts on the battlefield."

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US Sanctions Iranian Foundation Behind Bounty on Salman Rushdie

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on an Iranian foundation believed to be behind a bounty on writer Salman Rushdie, the Treasury Department said on Friday.

"Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) took action today against the 15 Khordad Foundation, an Iran-based foundation that has issued a multi-million-dollar bounty for the killing of prominent Indian-born, British-American author Salman Rushdie. Since Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's order pronouncing a death sentence on Rushdie in February 1989, 15 Khordad Foundation has committed millions of dollars to anyone willing to carry out this heinous act," according to a statement released by the department.

The Treasury added that the organization has been sanctioned due to its support of terrorism.

"The United States will not waver in its determination to stand up to threats posed by Iranian authorities against the universal rights of freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of the press. This act of violence, which has been praised by the Iranian regime, is appalling. We all hope for Salman Rushdie's speedy recovery following the attack on his life," Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson was quoted as saying in the statement.

Rushdie is an India-born British-American author and winner of numerous literary prizes. In 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran at the time, issued an edict calling for the killing of Rushdie, whose book "The Satanic Verses" is viewed as blasphemous by many Muslims.

On August 12, Rushdie was stabbed by 24-year-old man Hadi Matar while he was preparing to deliver a lecture at the Chautauqua Institution in western New York. The attacker was arrested for second-degree attempted murder and second-degree assault but pleaded not guilty and is being held in detention without bail.

Rushdie has lost sight in one eye and the use of one hand as a result of the attack.

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Pentagon Announces New \$275Mln Military Assistance Package for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – The United States announced a new \$275 million military assistance package for Ukraine, Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Friday. "Today the Department [of Defense] is announcing the authorization of the 24th presidential drawdown of security assistance, valued at up to \$275 million to meet Ukraine's critical security and defense needs," Singh said at a briefing.

The packages includes ammunition for HIMARS launchers and 155mm artillery rounds, she added.

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US Treasury Chief Yellen Says Sees No Signs of Recession, Labor Market Strong

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in an interview that she sees no signs of a recession, pointing to a strong labor market and recent growth as evidence of a recovering economy.

"What we're seeing right now is solid growth this quarter. Growth has obviously slowed following a very rapid recovery from high unemployment," Yellen told CNN on Thursday. "We have a strong labor market. I don't see signs of a recession in this economy at this point."

Slow growth is expected in an economy with high employment, Yellen added.

US gross domestic product grew by an annualized rate of 2.6% in the third quarter of this year, ending two consecutive quarters of decline, the Bureau of Economic Analysis said on Thursday in initial estimates.

Earlier today, the US Commerce Department said that the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, remained at 6.2% during the year to September, unchanged from the previous month.

Food prices in the US have risen 11.9% from the previous year and energy prices by 20.3%, the Bureau of Economic Analysis also said.

The reports show the US economy is making progress, but the country still has more work to do, President Joe Biden said on Friday.

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Canada to Offer New Government-Backed Ukrainian Sovereignty Bond - Trudeau

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - Canada will offer a new Ukrainian sovereignty bond backed by the government, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Friday.

"Today, we are announcing that Canada will be offering a new government-backed Ukrainian sovereignty bond," Trudeau said at the meeting of the Congress of Ukrainian Canadians. People can purchase such bonds at major Canadian banks, Trudeau said, adding that the bonds will mature after five years with interest.

The prime minister pointed out that the new bond will be similar to others backed by the government.

"These funds will go to support the government of Ukraine, so they continue to support the Ukrainian people," Trudeau said.

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UN Security Council Adopts Unanimously Resolution to Extend Libya Mission - President

UNITED NATIONS, October 28 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council has adopted unanimously an extension of a United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) for another 12 months, Gabon Ambassador to the world body Parfait Onanga-Anyanga said on Friday.

"The resolution has been adopted unanimously, with 15 members in favor," Onanga-Anyanga, who presides with the UN Security Council during the month of October, said.

Libya ceased to be a unified country in 2011, when US- and EU-supported Islamic extremists assassinated the country's leader Muammar Gaddafi. Last March, a transition government was voted in at a United Nations-backed gathering of Libyan delegates in Geneva in the hope that it would lead to holding general elections on December 24. However, the elections were delayed after the eligibility of a significant number of candidates was put under question.

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OSCE Says Has 40 Long-Term Observers Across US, 17 Experts in Capital to Monitor Midterms

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has deployed 40 long-term observers across the United States and 17 experts in Washington to monitor the midterm elections next month, Katya Andrusz, spokesperson for the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), told Sputnik on Friday. "Our observer mission to the US midterm elections opened on 26 September, following an invitation from the US authorities," Andrusz said. "In addition to the team of 17 experts based in Washington, D.C., the mission has 40 long-term observers spread out across the country." Over 16.9 million Americans have cast their ballots in early voting for the midterm elections, US Elections Project data showed on Friday.

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

The elections come amid issues such as high inflation level, the conflict in Ukraine and the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision to return abortion regulation to states – all of which are expected to play a role in the outcome of the midterms.

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Voting Rights Restricted in US, Two Parties Using 'Divisive' Rhetoric in Midterms - OSCE

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights released an interim report analyzing the US electoral environment prior to midterms in November, assessing that voting rights are subject to restrictions and that the two major parties are engaged in divisive rhetoric.

An interim report, released Wednesday, stated that voting rights in the US are subject to "numerous restrictions," including restrictions on the voting rights of inmates, former felons and the disabled.

Moreover, the political campaigns of the Republican and Democratic parties are marked by "intensely divisive and at times inflammatory rhetoric," the interim report said.

With absentee voting by mail possible in all states, claims continue to circulate that absentee ballots are more susceptible to fraud, impacting levels of trust in the current election process, the interim report also said.

The report of preliminary findings by the OSCE watchdog on the US midterm elections will be presented during a press conference on November 9.

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Canada Imposes Sanctions on Russian Deputy Prime Ministers Novak, Manturov

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - Canada has introduced sanctions against Russian Deputy Prime Ministers Alexander Novak and Denis Manturov, the government announced on Friday.

"1 Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations¹ is amended by adding the following in numerical order:... Alexander Valentinovich NOVAK (born on August 23, 1971), Denis Valentinovich MANTUROV (born on February 23, 1969),"it said.

Canada also sanctioned Viktor Zubkov, the chairman of the board of directors of Russia's Gazprom.

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UN Chief Welcomes Forming of New Government in Iraq - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, October 28 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomes the forming of a new government in Iraq and the inclusion of three women in ministerial positions, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"The Secretary-General welcomes the formation of a new government in Iraq, led by Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al-Sudani. He takes note of the appointment of women to three of the 21 ministerial positions filled on 27 October," Dujarric said in a statement.

The UN Secretary-General hopes the remaining two cabinet positions will be filled swiftly, Dujarric added.

Iraq is governed by a law that stipulates a power sharing system whereby the cabinet posts are shared among the ethnic groups in the country.

Iraq held early elections in 2019 after anti-government protests erupted in the country. However, the forming of a new government was delayed for more than a year due to infighting among the rival groups.

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Suspect in Attack on Speaker Pelosi's Husband Used Hammer – Reports

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – A male suspect in a Friday morning attack on US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband at their San Francisco home was armed with a hammer, CNN reported on Friday, citing police.

Earlier in the day, the speaker's spokesperson said that Paul Pelosi was "violently assaulted" by a home intruder on Friday, while the Speaker was not in San Francisco at the time.

According to the United States Capitol Police (USCP), the suspect is currently in custody, while his motivation is still being investigated.

Nancy Pelosi was in Washington, D.C. when the break-in took place, the USCP said in a statement.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the San Francisco Police Department are conducting a joint investigation of the incident. The USCP's California Field Office and a team of investigators from the Department's Threat Assessment Section are assisting in the investigation.

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Twitter Confirms Elon Musk's Acquisition of Social Media Company - SEC Filing

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – Twitter has confirmed that Elon Musk officially sealed his deal to acquire the social media company, a filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) showed on Friday.

“The merger between Twitter, Inc. and X Holdings II, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of X Holdings I, Inc., wholly owned by Elon R. Musk became effective on October 27, 2022. Each share of Twitter, Inc. Common Stock was exchanged for USD 54.20 in cash, without interest and less any applicable withholding taxes,” the filing said.

The New York Stock Exchange, where the Twitter stocks have been listed, will remove the company's shares from its listing and register them again at the opening of business on November 8, according to the filing.

Musk, who has criticized Twitter for limiting freedom of expression in the past, hinted that he finalized the platform's purchase in a tweet earlier on Friday reading, "the bird is free."

On Thursday, media reported that Musk finally closed the deal to acquire Twitter and has already taken over management of the company.

Following the reports, screenshots of Trump's alleged statement appeared on social media congratulating the SpaceX and Tesla founder on the new acquisition and announcing plans to restore Trump's Twitter account.

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Canada Imposes Sanctions on 35 More Russian Individuals, 6 Energy Entities – PM

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – Canada announced sanctions on Friday against 35 more Russian individuals, including Gazprom leaders, and six energy entities in a show of support for Ukraine.

"Today I can announce that we are adding 35 more individuals to that list, including influential leaders of the state-owned energy company Gazprom and sanctioning six energy sector entities," Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau said at the opening ceremony of the Triennial Congress of Ukrainian Canadians on Friday.

"We intend to impose new sanctions on members of the Russian justice and security sectors, including police officers and investigators, prosecutors, judges and prison officials, anyone

involved in gross and systemic human rights violations against Russian opposition leaders," he added.

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Biden Calls Pelosi to Express Support After 'Horrible' Attack on Her Husband - White House
WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke by phone with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi after an assailant allegedly armed with a hammer attacked her husband in the couple's San Francisco home, the White House said in a statement on Friday.

"The President is praying for Paul Pelosi and for Speaker Pelosi's whole family. This morning he called Speaker Pelosi to express his support after this horrible attack. He is also very glad that a full recovery is expected. The President continues to condemn all violence, and asks that the family's desire for privacy be respected," the statement said.

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Biden Says Inflation Slowing, But More Work Needed to Address US Economic Situation

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that there is more work to be done to address the economic situation in the United States despite inflation rates slowing to 6.2% on year for September.

Earlier in the day, the Commerce Department said that the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, remained at 6.2% during the year to September, unchanged from the previous month,

"This week, the economic reports show we are making progress on our economic plan: lower inflation, higher incomes, and solid growth. Inflation slowed in the third quarter, with energy prices coming down," Biden said in a statement. "We have more work to do."

However, if Republicans take control of Congress in the midterms, their agenda will instead drive up inflation and increase the cost of prescription drugs, healthcare and energy, according to Biden.

Food prices in the US have risen 11.9% from the previous year and energy prices by 20.3%, the Bureau of Economic Analysis announced on Friday.

The US Federal Reserve is working to address inflation through interest rate hikes, which the central bank will likely continue to practice until inflation reduces, Chairman Jerome Powell said.