

**11/2/22 Wednesday**

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TPLF, Ethiopian Gov't Reach 'Cessation of Hostilities' Deal in South Africa Peace Process  
By - Fantine Gardinier

Peace talks hosted by South Africa have yielded results as the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) reached a tentative agreement on Wednesday. The war has raged since late 2020, when the TPLF launched an uprising in Tigray state.

African Union chief mediator Olusegun Obasanjo announced Wednesday afternoon in Pretoria that the two sides had agreed on a formal "cessation of hostilities" in the two-year conflict. The TPLF has agreed to an "orderly, smooth and coordinated disarmament," he said, adding that other points included "restoration of law and order" and services, as well as "unhindered access to humanitarian supplies."

"The eyes of the world will now shift from the talks to the implementation," he said.

The TPLF's lead negotiator, Getachew Red, said that the readiness of both parties to sign a peace agreement "speaks volumes" about the readiness of both groups to chart a path for peace.

"It is my hope and expectation that two parties will honor their commitments," he added.

Redwan Hussei, the lead negotiator for Abiy's government, said that the level of destruction had been "immense" - a sentiment Getachew agreed with.

"We need to replicate the victory we got on the battlefield in peace efforts, too," Abiy said in a speech earlier on Wednesday. "We are finalizing the war in northern Ethiopia with a victory ... we will now bring peace and development."

"If a victory found in war isn't repeated in peace, if the peace found through victory isn't repeated with prosperity, Ethiopia's existence/sovereignty will inevitably be violated one way or another," he added.

A spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the truce a "welcome first step."

The Long Road to Peace

Numerous attempts have been made to end the fighting, especially since December 2021, when the TPLF's offensive into neighboring Amhara and Afar states was repulsed, and its armed forces pushed back into the northern Tigray state.

Talks hosted by the African Union were expected to begin in August after the Ethiopian government agreed to meet the TPLF's preconditions, but days before they began, [fighting broke out once again](#), with both sides blaming the other for the violence. The talks finally [began late last month](#), after South Africa agreed to host them.

The TPLF was formerly the ruling party in Ethiopia from 1991 until 2018, when its alliance of ethnic-based parties collapsed and selected an Oromo, Abiy Ahmed, to become prime minister instead of a TPLF figure. Abiy introduced new reforms to reduce the TPLF's domination of the Ethiopian government, including merging the ethnic-based parties into a single Prosperity Party.

He also ended a 20-year-long war with Eritrea and forged a new friendship with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki.

However, the TPLF rejected Abiy's government, and in November 2020, launched an uprising against it. At its height, the TPLF controlled large swaths of western Afar and northern Amhara states and attempted to march on the capital of Addis Ababa. However, that offensive was repulsed, and in late December 2021 the group was forced back into Tigray.

After the TPLF fired ballistic missiles at Asmara, Eritrea also joined the conflict. [Western commentators have tried](#) to characterize the war as an attempted genocide by Abiy, and to cast Isaias as the puppetmaster controlled Abiy's government.

As [Sputnik reported at the time](#), Western powers quietly gave the TPLF support for their uprising, even while claiming to be neutral on the international stage.

Abiy's terms for peace have included the TPLF surrendering its arms, stopping its attacks on Ethiopian government forces, and recognizing the legitimacy of his government.

The TPLF has accused Abiy's government of blockading Tigray and denying food, medicine and other goods to the region, creating a famine. However, international aid groups have also [accused the TPLF of stealing](#) their trucks and their gasoline, and said the continued fighting had made it unsafe for their convoys to travel to Tigray.

Both sides have been accused of war crimes, including mass killings. It is unclear how many have died during the conflict, but [estimates of total deaths](#) from war, disease, famine, and other causes may exceed half a million people.

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Taiwan Will Halve the Size of New Frigates to Cut Costs on Shadowing Chinese Ships  
By - Fantine Gardinier

Since Taiwan welcomed a visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) in August, the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has carried out regular drills in the waters surrounding the island in an attempt to pressure Taipei to halt its provocative actions.

In Taiwan's Legislative Yuan on Wednesday, military leaders told lawmakers that significant costs could be saved if its next generation of frigates were reduced in size by more than half. "The [PLA] has recently increased deployments of vessels and patrol missions in waters close to Taiwan ... and we have to send vessels to shadow and monitor the PLA warships every day," Chiang Cheng-kuo, chief of staff of Taiwan's navy, told lawmakers, adding that the missions were extremely costly.

The autonomous island's navy includes 26 major surface warships, including four destroyers and 22 frigates, as well as 13 smaller patrol vessels called corvettes. However, most of its warships are old, [bought from the United States](#) and France after their respective navies retired them. Moreover, none are smaller than 3,600 tons, and most of the frigates are just over 4,000 tons. Meanwhile, the destroyers clock in at 9,700 tons.

In combat, larger ships can be useful, carry more weapons or equipment, and better survive a hit from enemy weapons. However, in the cat-and-mouse game of patrolling and escorting

PLAN vessels around the island's claimed waters, they can be unwieldy and expensive, as well as taxing on their comparatively large crews.

In late August, Taiwan's navy realized this shortcoming and proposed downsizing its forthcoming class of frigates, the Zhonghai-class, reducing their tonnage from 4,500 tons to between 1,500 and 2,000 tons each. Lighter ships use less fuel and have fewer crew. A name change reflected the difference: "New Generation Guided-Missile Frigate" became "New Generation Light Frigate," Taiwan's media at the time.

In wartime, the combat duties of frigates often involve blue-water anti-submarine patrols or escort duties, although many modern frigates are often equipped with anti-air and anti-ship capabilities as well. The Zhonghai-class is anticipated to fulfill all such duties.

Beijing considers Taiwan a part of China. The government in Taipei is all that remains of the Republic of China, the government that ruled all of China between the abdication of the last Chinese emperor in 1912 and the triumph of the socialist revolution in 1949, at the conclusion of the civil war. [Beijing has proposed reunification](#) with Taiwan under a "One Country, Two Systems" principle that would respect the island's autonomy and its capitalist economy, but says continued US support for Taiwan's defiance has created a crisis.

The [US switched its recognition](#) of the legitimate Chinese government from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, but has continued to funnel weapons to Taiwan sufficient to help it defend its autonomy. The Chinese have denounced this arrangement as meddling in Chinese internal affairs and a violation of its sovereignty.

After Pelosi, the third-highest-ranking politician in the US government, [visited Taiwan in August](#) and condemned China, the PLA launched several rounds of massive military drills around the island, including firing missiles over it.

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US Defense Firms Gave \$2 Million to Election-Denying Candidates After Post-Jan 6 'Pause' - Report

By - Fantine Gardinier

In the wake of the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol, corporations rushed to distance themselves from political figures who had supported the attack or who had shared the rioters' politics. However, in the nearly two years since, many have gone back on their policies, including some of the country's major makers of military hardware.

According to a [report](#), the five largest US defense contractors have resumed their donations to politicians who have endorsed former US President Donald Trump's claims that the November 2020 US presidential election was fraudulent.

The Pentagon-focused news outlet found that Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and General Dynamics have donated a total of nearly \$2 million to Republican candidates in the November 2022 elections who voted against certifying the 2020 election results.

After Trump lost the 2020 vote to Democratic challenger Joe Biden, he launched a political movement to '[Stop the Steal](#),' which culminated in the storming of the US Capitol by thousands of his followers. At the time, Congress was meeting to certify the results of the Electoral College vote, the Constitutionally-mandated process by which the election results are made official and the peaceful transfer of power maintained.

Although the rioters temporarily dispersed Congress and looted the national legislative building they failed at their goal of capturing the election results, and after police cleared the building, lawmakers were able to reconvene and complete their task of certifying Biden's win. However, 147 Republican congress members still voted against certification of the results, signaling their support for the actions by Trump's followers earlier that day.

In the wake of the attack, many core Republican leaders distanced themselves from Trump and his followers' actions, who was later impeached and then acquitted of charges that he had incited the insurrection. Corporations rushed to end or suspend their relationships with Trump and his sympathetic lawmakers, ranging from AT&T to Airbnb, Target, and Bank of America. That [includes the aforementioned](#) defense contractors, as well as Maxar, Hunting Ingalls, Leidos, and BAE Systems, and others.

"Lockheed Martin routinely evaluates and updates our political action committee contribution strategy to reflect our core values and the constantly changing political landscape and priorities," [the defense firm said](#) a week after the riot. "As we enter a new political cycle, we are not making political contributions as we continue this evaluation to ensure our political donation and engagement program remains aligned with our business priorities."

However, according to filings with the US Federal Election Commission (FEC), between January 2021 and August 2022, Lockheed gave \$450,500 to the reelection campaigns of 91 different GOP lawmakers who rejected the legitimacy of Biden's election victory. The firm has donated a total of \$3.2 million during this election cycle.

When asked about the donations by Defense News, Lockheed said: "Our employee PAC program continues to observe long-standing principles of non-partisan political engagement in support of our business interests."

At the time of the riot, [Boeing claimed it](#) "strongly condemns the violence, lawlessness and destruction that took place in the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021". However, in the time since, Boeing has given the most money to election-denying lawmakers of any defense firm: \$455,000 to 68 lawmakers.

Defense corporations aren't alone in this behavior though: [as of a June tally](#), 15 other major corporations had also resumed donations to election-denying Republicans after having previously paused them, including BlueCross BlueShield, Walmart, and Walgreens. Dozens more have resumed donations to PACs and other fundraising groups that then pass money to election-denying lawmakers.

Nor is the practice of claiming a political position and then donating to politicians who oppose it a practice limited to the situation surrounding the Capitol insurrection either. [Activists have tracked](#) the public-facing statements on LGBTQ rights by various corporations and put them up against the politics of the politicians they donate campaign funds to, and found that many firms given high marks by the national LGBTQ rights NGO Human Rights Campaign for their pro-LGBTQ policies were also financially backing the politicians pushing some of the harshest anti-LGBTQ bills in the country.

This dynamic came under a microscope earlier this year when [Disney condemned Florida's](#) "Don't Say Gay" law, and [local journalists pointed to](#) the company's financial backing of every single one of the bill's endorsers.

In response to Disney's condemnation, Florida Governor Ron [DeSantis ironically accused](#) the company of being under the control of the Communist Party of China.

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DPRK Fires Suspected Long-Range Ballistic Missile Over Japan, South Korean Military Says  
By - Fantine Gardinier

A day after a massive barrage into the Sea of Japan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has reportedly fired another weapon into the waterway, according to South Korean military sources.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff announced on Thursday morning that the launch of an "unknown ballistic missile" into the Sea of Japan had been detected.

According to Seoul, the missile was likely an intermediate-range or intercontinental-range ballistic missile, because a separation of rocket stages was detected.

An [alert was sounded](#) in Japan in the provinces of Miyagi, Yamagata, and Niigata, in north-central Honshu, for residents to seek shelter due to the launch. According to the Japanese government, the missile passed over Japan and landed in the Pacific Ocean. The missile's flight time was roughly 30 minutes.

About one hour after the first launch, Seoul reported a second missile had been fired. However, it seemed to be a shorter range weapon, splashing down in the Sea of Japan within moments of liftoff.

This would be the fourth time that the DPRK has fired a ballistic missile over Japan, but the first time one has flown over the main island of Honshu. The first two times were in 2017, and the [third just last month](#); all flew over the northern island of Hokkaido.

The launch comes a day after the DPRK [fired a barrage of 17 missiles](#) and more than 100 rounds of artillery into the Sea of Japan - the most of any such bombardment.

Since the US and South Korea began major military drills in August, which rehearsed strikes on the DPRK, the socialist state has staged an unprecedented number of missile tests and artillery firing drills, including a variety of different weapons.

The DPRK has faced intense international pressure to give up its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, but it says it needs the weapons to guarantee its safety in the absence of a permanent peace treaty with the US and South Korea. The three nations have been in a state of war since 1950, with the fighting ending in 1953 with a ceasefire instead of a permanent peace treaty. The US maintains a garrison of 28,500 troops in South Korea.

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## Montenegrin Former Heavyweight Boxer Gogic Charged by US DOJ with Trafficking 22 Tons of Cocaine

By - Mary Manley

Goran Gogic, 43, was a boxer from 2001 to 2012 and fought primarily in Germany. The heavyweight ended his career with a record of 21 wins, four losses and two draws. In 2019, Gogic allegedly oversaw the trafficking of over \$1 billion worth of cocaine through a United States port. On Sunday he was arrested at Miami International Airport.

On [Monday](#) the US Department of Justice charged the former athlete with three counts of violating the federal Maritime Drug Law Enforcement Act as well as one count of conspiracy for allegedly trafficking 22 tons of cocaine worth over \$1 billion through US ports in June of 2019, which prosecutors are saying is one of the largest drug seizures in history.

Gogic, a citizen of Montenegro, was arrested on Sunday while trying to board a flight to Zurich at Miami International Airport, following an indictment by a grand jury in New York.

Prosecutors allege that Gogic oversaw the trafficking in an effort to benefit himself and his cartels in the Balkans.

“Gogic, as alleged, is a major drug trafficker who, along with his criminal associates, is responsible for overseeing long-range narcotics transportation on container ships as well as the wholesale distribution of cocaine throughout Europe. Today’s arrest sends a message to narcotraffickers worldwide that they are not free to hijack international maritime commerce with impunity,” stated [Ivan J. Arvelo](#), Special Agent-in-Charge of the Homeland Security Investigation's Field Office in New York.

At least three commercial cargo ships were seized with 22 tons of cocaine. Some 19.8 tons (17,956 kilograms) of the cocaine was seized at a cargo ship named the MSC Gayane which was docked at the Philadelphia Packer Avenue Marine Terminal in 2019. Gayane was destined for the Netherlands after first receiving its contents in Colombia.

Prosecutors say that other seizures of the shipments were found at ports in New York, New Jersey, Panama, and Peru, as well as other countries. Prosecutors also allege that various crew members would have been needed to transport the vast amounts of cocaine onto the ships.

“Gogic allegedly conspired with drug suppliers, ships’ crewmembers, and port workers to traffic massive quantities of cocaine through the US to Europe via commercial cargo ships,” said Wayne A. Jacobs, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Washington Field Office's Criminal and Cyber Division.

Each charge carries with it a mandatory 10-year prison term, as well as a possible life sentence. Gogic’s [lawyer](#) says the charges “came as a surprise to him” and that he “maintains his innocence, and had come to the US for a boxing convention in Puerto Rico.” Thus far, eight crew members have pleaded guilty to conspiracy charges.

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South Korean Military Detects DPRK Ballistic Missile Test Fired Toward Sea of Japan

By - Mary Manley

On Wednesday an "unidentified ballistic missile" was fired by North Korea toward the Sea of Japan, South Korea's military said. The test comes after North Korea's warnings that they would retaliate following large-scale joint air drills in which more than 240 American and South Korean aircrafts took part in an air exercise called "Vigilant Storm".

On Wednesday Seoul was prompted to issue an evacuation and air raid warning for the island of Ulleungdo after North Korea fired an "unidentified ballistic missile" towards the island. The missile did not reach the island of about 10,000 people, and landed in the Sea of Japan, reported Yonhap News, which cited defense officials.

According to Yonhap News more than one missile was fired after North Korea warned of "powerful follow-up measures" in response to military drills between the United States and South Korea. The "Vigilant Storm" drill was deemed a "[ceaseless and reckless](#)" military provocation against North Korea.

"If the U.S. and South Korea attempt to use armed forces against the DPRK without any fear, the special means of the DPRK's armed forces will carry out their strategic mission without delay and the U.S. and South Korea will have to face a terrible case and pay the most horrible price in history," said Pak Jong-chon, secretary of the Central Committee of the North's ruling Workers' Party, reported [Yonhap News](#).

South Korea officials warned residents of Ulleungdo to shelter in bunkers after three short range ballistic missiles were fired by North Korea's military. Residents of the island were told to "evacuate to the nearest underground shelter".

Ulleungdo is a small island about 75 miles (120 kilometers) east of the Korean Peninsula and survives economically on its fishing and tourism industry.

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'We Are Close to a Big Victory,' Says Netanyahu After Israel Vote  
By - Mary Manley

On Wednesday Israel's former prime minister --- who served for 12 years straight until last year --- appeared positioned to reclaim power. Netanyahu, 73, is the Leader of the Opposition and Chairperson of Likud - National Liberal Movement, Israel's center-right to right-wing political party. He is also currently on trial for corruption charges.

[Benjamin Netanyahu](#) said Wednesday he was "close" to making a comeback and forming a right-wing government after projected election results showed a majority coalition was within reach for the former Israeli prime minister.

"We are close to a big victory," Netanyahu told supporters at a rally in Jerusalem. "We don't know the final results yet, but if the results are like the exit polls, I will form a national (right-wing) government."

If exit polls continue to hold Netanyahu will most likely win the country's fifth election in less than four years. The Likud Party appears to be on track for first place in the election with 30 to 32

seats, and support from the extreme-right Religious Zionism Party, and the two ultra-Orthodox parties (Shas and United Torah Judaism) would back Netanyahu with 61 or 62 seats.

Justice Minister Gideon Saar, a former member of the Knesset for the Likud Party who broke away from Netanyahu, said that Israel is risking electing a "coalition of extremists". Aida Touma-Suleiman, an Arab-Israeli lawmaker, also warned that Netanyahu is planning to ally himself with "fascists."

Yohanan Plesner, head of the Israel Democracy Institute, cautioned that the exit polls may not hold. While Netanyahu's rival, Prime Minister Yair Lapid, said "nothing" was decided.

In June of last year Lapid was able to topple Netanyahu from power after forming a coalition government of ideologically diverse parties which itself collapsed this summer. Lapid is projected to win between 22 and 24 seats in this year's election.

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Alleged Warning of 'Imminent' Iranian Attack Has Saudi Arabia and US on High Alert  
By - Mary Manley

Saudi Arabia and Iran cut ties in 2016 following Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shia cleric and subsequent attack on the country's embassy in Tehran by an angry crowd. Riyadh accused both the cleric and Tehran of meddling in its domestic affairs. Iran denied all the meddling accusations.

The United States has been warned by Saudi Arabia via shared intelligence of an "imminent" attack from Iran in a move that put the American military and other militaries in the Middle East on an "elevated alert" level, US media reported on Tuesday, citing Saudi and US officials. Saudi officials allegedly claimed that in order to distract attention from domestic protests, Iran is poised to carry out attacks on the kingdom and Iraq's Erbil, where Americans troops are based. The White House National Security Council expressed concern over the warnings and said that it was ready to respond if Iran went forward with an attack.

"We are concerned about the threat picture, and we remain in constant contact through military and intelligence channels with the Saudis," a National Security Council spokesperson said. "We will not hesitate to act in the defense of our interests and partners in the region."

On Tuesday, US media reported that Saudi Arabia, the United States and several other countries in the Middle East raised threat levels due to the potential for "imminent attacks" by Iran.

"I'm not going to talk about specific force protection levels. I can say that we do remain concerned about the threat situation in the region," US Defense Department spokesperson Pat Ryde said during a press briefing when asked about the reports. He added that Washington maintained regular contact with its Saudi partners on threat information that they may provide. Iran has accused the US and Israel of stoking unrest in the country that began in mid-September after the death of a 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini, who fell into a coma and died in hospital several days after being detained by Iran's morality police for allegedly wearing her headscarf improperly. While the mainstream media claimed that the young woman had been

beaten into a coma by police, CCTV footage released by authorities appeared to show that Amini did not face any physical abuse while in custody.

A probe conducted for Iran's parliament revealed that Amini was not subjected to any bodily harm. Iran's Legal Medical Organization also stated that the young woman's death was caused by cerebral hypoxia which resulted in hypotension and multiple organ failure. The Iranian Foreign Ministry has lambasted the US for meddling in Tehran's domestic affairs. Washington, in the meantime, has admitted to [taking "aggressive steps"](#) to support Iranians taking part in protests.

Commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Major General Hossein Salami also warned those "insitigating" protests against interfering in Iran's internal affairs:

"This is our last warning, because you are interfering in our internal affairs through these media," Salami said last week. "You are involved in this matter and know that you are vulnerable."

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Tom Brady 'Didn't Want Kids to Have Divorced Parents,' Source Says After He and Gisele Divorced

By - Mary Manley

Rumors that Brady and Bündchen were speaking to divorce attorneys were confirmed in early October. Sources close to the couple told an American news outlet that Bündchen had been working with a divorce attorney for "weeks" after reports confirmed the couple were living in separate houses in Florida.

The powerhouse couple has officially separated. After 13 years of marriage Tom Brady, 45, and Gisele Bündchen, 42, finalized their divorce on Friday.

Bündchen is a Brazilian fashion model and businesswoman and has been one of the highest paid models in the world since 2001. Brady is an American football quarterback for the National Football League (NFL) who retired from the sport in his 22nd season in 2021, only to return to the field a few months later.

A source close to Brady said the NFL player "didn't want [their] kids to have divorced parents." "This was not Tom's idea," a source said about the Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback. "This was never Tom's idea."

The couple has two children, Benjamin Reing, 12, and Vivian Lake, 9. Brady has another son, John Edward Thomas Moynahan, 15, whom he shares with his ex-wife actress and supermodel Bridget Moynahan, 51. According to sources, they will be sharing joint custody of their children. "My priority has always been and will continue to be our children whom I love with all my heart," Bündchen wrote in a social media post that addressed their divorce. "We will continue co-parenting to give them the love, care and attention they greatly deserve."

The couple, who each has a [net worth](#) in the hundreds of millions, finalized their divorce using "an [ironclad prenup](#)", sources said, which allowed for the couple to divide their assets and divorce more quickly.

“There was an ironclad prenup set down before they married in 2009. They both have their own separate business entities, so the separation of their wealth wasn’t that complicated in the end. The only other major factor was dividing up their [massive property portfolio](#),” a source said.

Their “massive property portfolio” includes a \$17 million mansion which the couple bought in 2020 before demolishing it. It is currently under construction and is located on Indian Creek Island in Miami and will be retained by Brady following the couple's divorce.

Bündchen, who was reported to have a higher net worth than her husband before their divorce, bought her own home in Miami Beach: a three bedroom, three bathroom [house](#) worth \$1.25 million. Bündchen reportedly bought the pad about two weeks before Brady decided to return to the NFL. The supermodel will also keep their home on the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica for vacationing with her kids. The couple also shared properties in the Bahamas, Montana, as well as New York City.

The reason for the couple’s divorce is not entirely known. [Interviews](#) hint that Bündchen wanted Brady to step back from his football career and help raise their children after she herself had put her career on hold to support her husband and children.

“I deliberately took a step back from modeling in 2015, as I wanted to focus more on my family and personal projects,” [Bündchen](#) wrote in her memoir, “Lessons: My Path to a Meaningful Life.” The supermodel continued to work, but focused more on photo shoots as opposed to walking the runway and even relocated to Boston to support her husband’s football career while he played for the New England Patriots.

“I’ve done my part, which is [to] be there for [Tom],” Bündchen told an American magazine in [September](#). “I moved to Boston, and I focused on creating a cocoon and a loving environment for my children to grow up in and to be there supporting him and his dreams. Seeing my children succeed and become the beautiful little humans that they are, seeing him succeed, and being fulfilled in his career – it makes me happy. At this point in my life, I feel like I’ve done a good job on that.”

“I have a huge list of things that I have to do, that I want to do,” she said. “At 42, I feel more connected to my purpose.”

Brady had also admitted that Bündchen had been “holding down” the couple’s home life for “a long time”, and said that his career had taken him away from holidays as well as birthdays.

“I think my wife has, you know, held down the house for a long time now,” Brady said on his podcast last year. “And I think there’s things that she wants to accomplish. You know, she hasn’t worked as much in the last 10, 12 years, just raising our family and kind of committing to being in a life in Boston and then moving to Florida. But that’s an issue, and it’s a very difficult issue to reconcile without just saying, ‘Hey, it’s time to retire.’ And I think there’s, you know, we’re coming to the end here too, so I don’t want to miss any of the kids’ stuff.”

“I haven’t had a Christmas in 23 years and I haven’t had a Thanksgiving in 23 years,” he said on an episode of his podcast, referring to his career as an NFL star. “I haven’t celebrated birthdays with people that I care about that are born from August to late January. And I’m not able to be at funerals and I’m not able to be at weddings.” Last year, Brady [said](#) he believes he’s capable of playing until he’s 50.

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Biden Tries to Catch Up With 'Threats to American Democracy' Speech Days Before Midterms  
By - Mary Manley

Biden's speech on Wednesday comes just six days before the United States midterms and is a warning about the risk that election deniers - a term used for supporters of former President Donald Trump who believe the 2020 US election was "stolen" - pose to the country.

"This intimidation, this violence against Democrats, Republicans and non-partisan officials just doing their jobs, is the consequence of lies told for power and profit, lies of conspiracy and malice, lies repeated over and over to generate a cycle of anger, hate, vitriol and even violence," President Joe Biden said in Wednesday's [speech](#).

"In this moment, we have to confront those lies with the truth," the president continued. "The very future of our nation depends on it. My fellow Americans, we're facing a defining moment [sic] a reflection point. We must with one overwhelming unified voice speak as a country, and say there's no place, no place, for voter intimidation or political violence in America, whether it's directed at Democrats or Republicans. No place period, no place ever."

"We have to face this problem, we can't turn away from it," he said. "We can't pretend it's just going to solve itself."

"There's something else at stake: democracy itself. I'm not the only one who sees it. Recent polls have shown an overwhelming majority of Americans believe that our democracy is at risk. That our democracy is under threat. They too see that democracy is on the ballot this year, and they're deeply concerned about it," said the president in his remarks.

[Biden's](#) televised address on Wednesday led with the purpose of focusing on "the threat of election deniers and those who seek to undermine faith in voting and democracy; and the stakes for our democracy in next week's election," the Democratic National Committee said in a statement, referring to Trump supporters who view the 2020 election as "stolen".

"American democracy is under attack because the former defeated president of the United States refused to accept the results of the 2020 election. He refuses to accept the will of the people, he refuses to accept the fact that he lost. He has abused his power and put the loyalty to himself, before loyalty to the Constitution, and he's made a big lie, an article of faith in the MAGA Republican Party," the president said of Trump.

Lies that the 2020 election was "rigged" or "stolen" resulted in the January 6, 2021 protest during which a mob of the former president's supporters breached the US Capitol Building in an effort to disrupt a joint session of Congress from counting the electoral college votes that would ratify then President-elect Joe Biden's election win. A bipartisan select committee was organized in the summer of last year to investigate the attack. Close to 1,000 individuals have been charged in the attack since mid-October.

"It was an enraged mob, that had been whipped up into a frenzy by a president repeating over and over again the 'Big Lie', that the election of 2020 had been stolen. It's a lie that fueled the dangerous rise of political violence and voter intimidation over the past two years," the president said in his speech.

The speech is most likely an effort to close the voting gaps in tight races between Democrats and Republicans before midterms. Biden's remarks that democracy is still under threat by supporters of his predecessor could sway undecided voters to vote left in a race where Republicans running for Congress (49%) are [polled](#) to have an edge over their Democrat opponents (46%).

But despite Biden's speech on the threat to American democracy, [polls](#) show that 31% of American voters are more concerned about inflation and the economy, and those two issues will be the deciding factor in their vote in the upcoming midterm elections. Support for abortion rights and increased police funding were also polled to be important voting points for Americans, with three in five Americans saying they would be less likely to support a candidate that bans or restricts abortion access.

Biden opened his speech by addressing [Friday's](#) attack in which House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, Paul Pelosi, 82, suffered an injury to his skull that an intruder inflicted with a hammer after he broke into the couple's San Francisco home. The intruder, David DePape, 42, wanted to abduct Nancy Pelosi to "take [her] out" because he was sick of the "level of lies" coming from Washington, D.C.

"After the assailant entered the home asking, 'Where's Nancy? Where's Nancy?'" The president said of Friday's attack. Those are the very same words used by the mob when they stormed the United States capitol on January 6," Biden said, drawing comparisons between January 6 insurrections and the individual who assaulted Pelosi on Friday.

The president's party is suffering continued criticism surrounding inflation and fears of a looming recession. The Federal Reserve has continued to hike interest rates in an effort to cool inflation despite criticism from [analysts](#) that hiking interest rates is not the solution. Biden acknowledged on Wednesday that "inflation is still hurting" his country even as the US central bank raised the benchmark borrowing rate by 0.75 percentage points that same day---the sixth hike this year alone.

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Security Cameras Active But Not Monitored During Alleged Pelosi Attack, US Capitol Police Say  
By - Mary Manley

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) - Security cameras operated by the US Capitol Police (USCP) were functional but not monitored during the alleged attack on Paul Pelosi, husband of House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, at their San Francisco residence last week, the USCP said. A majority of the speaker's security had left with her to go to DC.

"The Command Center has access to roughly 1,800 cameras, which provide us the capability to collect evidence from any camera's location at any time, while also allowing Command Center personnel to monitor select video feeds," the USCP said in a statement on Wednesday. "While the Speaker was with her security detail in Washington, DC, the San Francisco cameras were not actively monitored as they are when the Speaker is at the residence."

However, one officer reportedly noticed police activity on screen which included police lights outside the Pelosi residence and used the live feeds to monitor the response and assist

investigators, the statement said. But if officers had been watching the feed in real-time then the break-in, which led to the assault, would have been noticed, one American news source [reported](#).

The USCP launched an internal security review and is fast-tracking efforts to enhance the protection of members of Congress when they are outside of Washington, the statement added. San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins was pressed for answers about security presence at the House Speaker's residence, to which Jenkins said there "was no security present".

Early on Friday morning, San Francisco police responded to a wellbeing check at the Pelosi residence, where they found Paul Pelosi, 82, and 42-year old David DePape struggling over a hammer. DePape reportedly took the hammer and beat Pelosi's head with it before he was detained by police. Pelosi had to undergo surgery to repair a skull fracture in addition to other injuries. Pelosi had called 911 after he was able to escape DePape and go to the bathroom. The [USCP](#) first installed security cameras around Pelosi's home more than eight years ago. And while the House Speaker has her own security detail, they left with her to go to Washington, D.C. this week. Pelosi has received the most death threats of any member of Congress. Her home, which is located in Pacific Heights, a wealthy neighborhood where homes are worth tens of millions of dollars, was the target of protests days before the January 6 Capitol attacks. In one instance protestors had spray painted the speaker's home and left a pig's head outside her door.

On Tuesday, [DePape](#) pleaded not guilty to state-level charges, including attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon and elder abuse. DePape also faces federal charges of assault and attempted kidnapping of a US official or their family member with intent to retaliate on account of their duties.

DePape is being held without bail ahead of a Friday court session to schedule a preliminary and bail hearing, which are likely to be set in conjunction, defense attorney Adam Lipson said on Tuesday after DePape's arraignment.

[DePape](#) had entered the home and was searching for Nancy Pelosi, 82, in an attempt to abduct her because he was "sick of all the f\*\*\*\*\* lies coming out of Washington, D.C." he allegedly said at the time of his arrest. He told investigators he was planning to break the House Speaker's knee caps unless she told the "truth". He now faces state and federal charges including attempted murder, burglary, and elder abuse as well as separate federal charges. He has pleaded not guilty.

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Miss USA Pageant Can Exclude Transgender Contestants, US Court Rules  
By - Mary Manley

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) - The Miss United States of America beauty pageant cannot be forced to allow transgender women to compete because doing so would interfere with its ability to express "the ideal vision of American womanhood," a US appeals court ruled on Wednesday.

In a 2-1 decision, the San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals rejected a lawsuit by transgender activist Anita Green claiming that Miss USA's policy of only allowing "natural born" women to compete violates an Oregon anti-discrimination law.

Green, a transgender activist from Oregon, sued Miss USA in federal court in Portland last year after her application to participate in the pageant was rejected.

The 9th Circuit argued that applying the Oregon law to the company would violate the pageant's free speech rights under the United States Constitution, and ruled in favor of Miss USA's ability to freely express their views on the concept of "womanhood" even if that view does not apply to persons in the transgender community.

"It is commonly understood that beauty pageants are generally designed to express the 'ideal vision of American womanhood,'" wrote Circuit Judge Lawrence [VanDyke](#), an appointee of former President Donald Trump who was joined by Circuit Judge Carlos Bea, an appointee of former President George W. Bush in affirming the 2021 decision by federal judge to dismiss Green's lawsuit.

Circuit Judge Susan Graver said in a dissenting opinion that the court should have first decided whether the Oregon law even applies to Miss USA before addressing it as a constitutional issue. On Wednesday it was also announced that Anne Jakkaphong, a Thai media tycoon, transgender woman and activist, bought the Miss Universe Organization---not to be confused with Miss USA---for \$20 million. Jakrajutatip is the CEO of JKN Global Group which announced plans to grow the Miss Universe business across Asia with skin care, cosmetics, and lifestyle products carrying the Miss Universe brand.

"We seek not only to continue its legacy of providing a platform to passionate individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and traditions, but also to evolve the brand for the next generation," Jakrajutatip said. Her company added that their "progressive approach" continues to push them towards the "forefront" of their industry.

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Guterres Urges Grain Deal Extension, Says 10Mln Tonnes Shipped in Just 3 Months

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on all parties to the grain deal to focus on extending it after Russia resumed its participation in the agreement, while expressing satisfaction at the shipment of 10 million metric tonnes of grain through the Black Sea corridor in just three months.

"Now that the initiative has fully resumed, I appeal to all parties to concentrate efforts in two areas. First, to renewal and full implementation of the Black Sea Initiative. Second, to removing the remaining obstacles to the exports of Russian food and fertilizer," Guterres said at a press stakeout.

The UN chief noted that the grain initiative has hit a new milestone.

"As of today, ten million metric tonnes of grain have been shipped through the Black Sea corridor. It has taken just three months to reach this milestone. It is time for an historic climate pact between developed and emerging economies. At COP27, I look forward to launching an

initiative to ensure every person on earth is protected by an early warning system within five years," he said.

The grain deal expires on November 19. On Thursday, the Kremlin said Russia has not committed to extending the deal, and is yet to assess its effectiveness. Moscow has repeatedly said the agreement is not effective in bringing grain and fertilizer to developing countries, while sanctions continue hindering Russia's grain and fertilizer exports even though the deal is supposed to guarantee their free flow to global markets.

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Man Who Attacked Pelosi's Husband Was in US Illegally - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Canadian citizen David DePape, who attacked the husband of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi at the couple's home in San Francisco, was in the United States illegally, The Washington Post reported on Thursday, citing the Department of Homeland Security.

According to a statement from the US Department of Homeland Security, DePape will be deported from the country after his criminal cases are resolved.

"U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) lodged an immigration detainer on Canadian national David DePape with San Francisco County Jail, Nov. 1, following his Oct. 28 arrest," DHS officials were quoted as saying by the newspaper.

Early on Friday morning, San Francisco police responded to a wellbeing check at the Pelosi residence, where they found Paul Pelosi and 42-year old David DePape struggling over a hammer. DePape reportedly took the hammer and beat Pelosi with it before being detained by police.

On Tuesday, DePape pleaded not guilty to state-level charges, including attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon and elder abuse. DePape also faces federal charges of assault and attempted kidnapping of a US official or their family member with intent to retaliate on account of their duties.

DePape is being held without bail ahead of Friday court session to schedule a preliminary and bail hearing, which are likely to be set in conjunction, defense attorney Adam Lipson said on Tuesday after DePape's arraignment.

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Microsoft Announces Another \$100Mln in Technology Support for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – Microsoft will provide an additional \$100 million worth of technology support for Ukraine through the end of next year, the company's Vice Chair and President Brad Smith announced in a blog post on Thursday.

"Today, we are announcing that Microsoft will extend technology support free of charge for Ukraine throughout calendar year 2023. This commits our company to providing additional technology aid valued at roughly \$100 million, which will ensure that government agencies, critical infrastructure and other sectors in Ukraine can continue to run their digital infrastructure and serve citizens through the Microsoft Cloud," Smith said.

The new commitment will bring Microsoft's total aid contribution to Ukraine to more than \$400 million since the beginning of the conflict in February, he added.

Microsoft pledged to support Ukrainian services through cloud services and data centers across Europe. The tech giant also promised to provide cybersecurity protection, and support nonprofits and humanitarian organizations operating in Ukraine, Poland and elsewhere in the European Union, according to the statement.

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US Envoy on Visit to UAE, Saudi Arabia to Support Yemen Truce - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking is on a visit to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to support the truce in Yemen, the State Department said on Thursday.

"Lenderking started travel to the UAE and Saudi Arabia on November 2 to support efforts to renew and expand the UN-mediated truce in Yemen," the statement read.

Washington urged the Houthis to cooperate with the United Nations and listen to Yemenis' appeals for peace.

"The only path forward to ending eight years of destructive war is through a durable ceasefire and political settlement that allows Yemenis to determine the future of their country," the statement added.

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Russia Resumes Work at Grain Deal Joint Coordination Center, Joins Inspections - UN

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - Russia resumed its work at the Istanbul-based Joint Coordination Center on Thursday and joined inspections under the grain deal, with eight vessels now transiting the humanitarian corridor in the Black Sea, the UN Secretariat at the JCC said in a statement.

"Today, the Russian Federation delegation resumed its work at the JCC and joined vessel inspections," the statement said.

Seven vessels carrying a total of 290,102 metric tons of grain and food products are transiting the maritime humanitarian corridor under the Black Sea Grain Initiative on Thursday.

"In addition, there is an inbound vessel transiting with destination Yuzhny/Pivdennyi," the secretariat said.

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Ex-Lehman Brothers Executive Says De-Dollarization Possible Within Next 20 to 30 Years

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Global de-dollarization is possible within the next 20 to 30 years but the currency is enjoying its peak years at the moment, former Lehman Brothers executive Lawrence McDonald told Sputnik.

"It's definitely going to happen," McDonald said. "It's not a near term problem, maybe 20 to 30 because the US has so much wealth, we've got a lot of military power, but there's no question. The peak dollar best years are right about here."

McDonald, who served as the vice president of distress debt and convertible securities trading at Lehman Brothers, pointed out that the weaponization of the SWIFT financial system may harm the US dollar's dominance by pushing banks to other substitutes.

"The sanctions-SWIFT game should be used by the West once every 10 years, but they've been using this against multiple countries," McDonald said. "Sanctions against Russia in a war, okay, that's fine. From a US perspective the problem is you've hit 10 different countries over the head with the sanctions card, so you're forcing these countries to form a bloc against you. That's what's happening.

Two years from now the US dollar is going to probably be much lower because countries and banks will be searching for ways around SWIFT, McDonald said.

China's Charge d'Affaires to Russia Sun Weidong said last week that switching to payments in national currencies in Russian-Chinese trade is speeding up the process of global de-dollarization.

Moscow has repeatedly pointed out that Washington's sanctions policy undermines confidence in the dollar, reduces national reserves investment in the US public debt, and contributes to increasing the volume of foreign trade in rubles and other currencies.

At the same time, the Russian authorities have maintained that the de-dollarization policy does not entail a ban on dollar circulation, but rather creates economically beneficial conditions for the use of other currencies.

McDonald is co-author with Patrick Robinson of "A Colossal Failure of Common Sense," which is about the fall of Lehman Brothers and the 2008 financial crisis.

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US Gave Saudis, Russians Control of Oil Price by Taking Rigs Offline - Ex-Lehman Executive

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United States gave Saudi Arabia and the Russians control over the price of oil in the global market when it reduced domestic energy production, former Lehman Brothers executive Lawrence McDonald told Sputnik.

In early October, OPEC+ unanimously agreed to decrease oil production by 2 million barrels per day starting in November in response to uncertainty in global energy markets, ignoring the United States request to delay cuts.

"The US has handed more control over the price to the Saudis and the Russians," McDonald said. "[The United States] We've taken hundreds and hundreds of rigs offline and we've given more production power and control over the price to the Saudis and Russians. Not a very smart thing."

McDonald served as the vice president of distress debt and convertible securities trading at Lehman Brothers, which collapsed during the financial crisis in 2008.

The Saudis are bold to push back against the United States and it's a bold move, but OPEC+ countries have their own economic models and reasons to cut production, including concerns about further coronavirus-related lockdowns in China that will decrease demand, McDonald said.

"The global economy is crashing," McDonald said.

The United States sustained a self-inflicted wound when it decreased domestic oil production between 2019 to 2021, from a peak of 13 million barrels a day to a low 10 million barrels a day, McDonald said.

"I want to be clear, that's coming back, US production is coming back, but bottom line is that when you cut production that much, you hand more control over the price to the Saudis and Russians," McDonald said.

US oil production has been increasing throughout 2022, but has only reached a high of about 11.9 million barrels per day in August, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

"We should be pumping 16 million barrels a day today," McDonald said. "If we were pumping 16 million barrels a day, the Saudis and the Russians would not have, they wouldn't have the ability to cut production the way they are because the US would steal more market share."

Since 2021, energy prices have been surging worldwide as the global economy rebooted after the pandemic. The growth increased after the European Union and other Western states imposed sanctions on Russian oil and gas, disrupting supply chains amid surging demand. A price cap on Russian seaborne oil, suggested by the G7 and expected to be implemented in December, and the decision by OPEC+ to curb production also strained the already tense global energy situation.

McDonald is co-author with Patrick Robinson of "A Colossal Failure of Common Sense," which is about the fall of Lehman Brothers and the 2008 financial crisis.

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Fed Pushing Fund Rate to 5% May Trigger Event Like 2008 Financial Crisis - Ex-Lehman Exec

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Potentially increasing the US federal fund rate to 5% may trigger an economic collapse comparable to the 2008 financial crisis, former Lehman Brothers executive Lawrence McDonald told Sputnik.

The Fed on Wednesday raised rates by 75 basis points for a fourth straight time in November. The sixth rate hike of the year effectively brought rates to a peak of 400 basis points from just 25 in March. The central bank said rates had to be "sufficiently restrictive" to bring inflation down to its 2% objective over the medium term.

The Federal Open Market Committee anticipates the target rate for the federal fund rate to be about 4.4% by the end of 2022, up from 3.4% projected by the committee in June, as it tightens monetary policy to try to rein in inflation.

"It's pretty clear that financial stability risks are overpowering the inflation fight for now, and so they're trying to avoid another Lehman Brothers, because bottom line is if you move the Fed funds rate to 5%, I think it guarantees you some type of Lehman events, it's too much leverage." McDonald served as the vice president of distress debt and convertible securities trading at Lehman Brothers, which collapsed during the financial crisis in 2008.

The Fed's target for inflation is a mere 2% a year and it has said it will not back off on interest rate hikes until it achieves its aim. Since March, the central bank has raised rates by 300 basis points from an original base of just 25. The Fed intends to add another 125 basis points to rates before the year-end.

Investors, economists and business leaders have warned for a while that the US economy was on the verge of a downturn - just two-and-a-half years after the last recession that broke out with the coronavirus pandemic measures in mid-2020.

McDonald is co-author with Patrick Robinson of "A Colossal Failure of Common Sense," which is about the fall of Lehman Brothers and the 2008 financial crisis.

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US Sanctions on Russia Dangerous, Push Nations Into Bloc - Ex-Lehman Executive

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United States' efforts to isolate Russia with sanctions appear to be pushing nations into a bloc, former Lehman Brothers executive Lawrence McDonald told Sputnik.

"They're trying to, yeah, but Russia is going around them through a lot of different avenues, like through China," McDonald said when asked if US sanctions against Russia are effective. "The BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] are essentially forming this - look at the way the Saudis and the Russians are cooperating - the BRICS are forming like an alliance around the United States. Very dangerous moves the United States makes, they're pushing these countries together as a bloc."

Russia's central bank was proactive in terms of preparing for the US sanctions, McDonald said. Western countries have imposed several packages of sanctions on Russia, including its energy sector, since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine on February 24. Disruption in supply chains has led to higher fuel and food prices across the EU and the United States, driving inflation to record levels and causing cost of living to soar.

In an effort to rein in surging energy prices, the Group of Seven is planning to set a price cap on crude Russian oil and refined products coming from Russia, urging other countries to join in. The recent OPEC+ decision to cut oil production, however, may reportedly delay the plan, media reported. The alliance's move has also further strained US-Saudi relationship, with Washington accusing Riyadh of partnering up with Russia.

Russian Ambassador to Turkey Alexei Yerkhov said in an interview with the Turkish newspaper *Dunya* published on Monday that the West is also trying to force Turkey to join the sanctions against Russia using any means, including blackmail.

Earlier in October, following the visit to Saudi Arabia, President of South Africa Cyril Ramaposa, said that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud had expressed Riyadh's desire to join the BRICS.

McDonald is co-author with Patrick Robinson of "A Colossal Failure of Common Sense," which is about the fall of Lehman Brothers and the 2008 financial crisis.

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Biden Misjudged Energy Crisis, Dems Will Lose Congress in Midterms - Ex-Lehman Executive  
WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration misjudged the current energy crisis and Democrats are expected to lose control of Congress in the midterm elections, former Lehman Brothers executive Lawrence McDonald 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.

"They're gonna lose the House, they're probably going to lose the Senate and then we go into gridlock," McDonald said. "That's why bonds are starting to rally here, because it's going to be just massive gridlock for a couple of years."

McDonald, who served as the vice president of distress debt and convertible securities trading at Lehman Brothers, said the Biden administration misjudged the energy crisis and failed to secure US energy independence.

"When they [Democrats] took office, they attack the oil industry, there was like 12 to 18 months where there was no investment at all and now we're under invested," McDonald said. "We don't have the resources on the ground to get enough oil out to satisfy demand and the entire administration has misjudged the energy crisis."

Since 2021, energy prices have been surging worldwide as the global economy rebooted after the pandemic. The growth increased after the European Union and other Western states imposed sanctions on Russian oil and gas, disrupting supply chains amid surging demand. A price cap on Russian seaborne oil, suggested by the G7 and expected to be implemented in December, and the decision by OPEC+ to curb production also strained the already tense global energy situation.

McDonald is co-author with Patrick Robinson of "A Colossal Failure of Common Sense," which is about the fall of Lehman Brothers and the 2008 financial crisis.

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Russian Central Bank Was Proactive Getting Ahead of West's Sanctions - Ex-Lehman Executive

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Russia's central bank was proactive in preparing its financial system for additional sanctions from the United States and its allies, former Lehman Brothers executive Lawrence McDonald told Sputnik.

Western countries have imposed several packages of sanctions on Russia, including its energy sector, since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine on February 24.

"Russian Central Bank policy... overall, they were pretty well ahead of this," McDonald said regarding the impact Western sanctions have had on Russia. "The central bank was pretty proactive in terms of getting ahead."

McDonald, who served as the vice president of distressed debt and convertible securities trading at Lehman Brothers, explained that Russia's central bank bought a lot of gold and sold a lot of treasuries to strengthen its financial system against sanctions.

"Russia [has] a lot more hard assets per capita than Western countries, and hard assets do well in inflationary regimes," McDonald said.

Western sanctions have caused disruptions in several supply chains, which have led to higher fuel and food prices across the European Union and the United States, driving inflation to record levels and causing cost of living to soar.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said earlier this week that Russia had faced sanctions before and the experience it had gained over the decades prepared it to successfully overcome the challenge.

Russia, the minister added, has many friends in all regions of the world, including countries of the former Soviet Union, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, and it does not cut itself off from business partners in Europe and North America. He also noted that breaking mutually beneficial ties has never been the choice of the Russian government.

McDonald is co-author with Patrick Robinson of "A Colossal Failure of Common Sense," which is about the fall of Lehman Brothers and the 2008 financial crisis.

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Ex-Lehman Executive Says Rate Hikes, Trillions in World Debt May 'Blow Up Lots of Things'

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Former Lehman Brothers executive Lawrence McDonald warned that constant rate hikes when there's too much national debt across the world may lead to drastic consequences.

The Fed on Wednesday raised rates by 75 basis points for a fourth straight time in November.

The sixth rate hike of the year effectively brought rates to a peak of 400 basis points from just 25

in March. The central bank said rates had to be "sufficiently restrictive" to bring inflation down to its 2% objective over the medium term.

Inflation has hit 40-year highs, driving the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates significantly throughout the course of the year. The US inflation rate, currently running at 8.2%, is one of the top issues on voters' minds going into the November 8 midterm elections, according to polls.

"When you hike rates today, it's extreme, it's much more dangerous than 20 years ago because there's 200 trillion more debt today on the planet," McDonald said. "So with just too much debt, when you hike rates, it really blows up a lot of things."

McDonald, who served as the vice president of distressed debt and convertible securities trading at Lehman Brothers, suggested avoiding over 300 basis points in rate hikes in six months on a US economy that is massively leveraged.

Last month, US national debt reached a new historical milestone as it topped \$31 trillion for the first time in history, according to US Treasury Department data.

Moreover, McDonald said the United States is pretty much already in a recession.

"The only metric that hasn't gone into inflation territory is jobs, and there's a lot of reasons behind that: it's a big summer driving season, there's a lot of people that come back to the labor force, but things are really slowing down hard," McDonald said.

The Fed is all but certain to deliver a 75-basis-point rate hike on Wednesday, the fourth of its kind, as the US central bank keeps to a series of interest rate increases to get inflation back to its target of 2% per year.

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, stood at 8.2% during the year to September, not too far from the 40-year peak of 9.1% noted in the 12 months to June.

McDonald is co-author with Patrick Robinson of "A Colossal Failure of Common Sense," which is about the fall of Lehman Brothers and the 2008 financial crisis.

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REVIEW - US Midterm Outcome Could Complicate Future Ukraine Aid, But Support Likely to Continue

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The outcome of the US midterm elections on November 8 could pose challenges to the passage of future funding for Ukraine amid reluctance by some Republicans about continuing the foreign aid, although the support is likely to continue in the next Congress.

Both the House of Representatives and Senate are up for grabs, with Democrats seeking to retain control of both chambers while Republicans seek to obtain a majority of their own. All 435 House seats will be contested alongside 35 Senate seats to determine control of Congress for the latter half of US President Joe Biden's term.

The conflict in Ukraine and related funding from Congress has been among the major policy issues heading into midterms,

Since the beginning of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, Congress has approved approximately \$70 billion in aid to Kiev, a massive spending spree that both parties initially

backed, including anti-war progressives, although the sentiment seems to have recently changed on at least one side of the political aisle.

#### BLANK CHECK

In October, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy pledged that if Republicans obtain a majority in the lower chamber, Ukraine would not get a “blank check” for aid. He also said the public will not be willing to continue extraordinary funding to Ukraine amid concerns about a recession. Following the statement, Biden said he worried about the future of congressional aid to Ukraine. “These guys [Republicans] don’t get it. It’s a lot bigger than Ukraine. It’s Eastern Europe. It’s NATO. It’s really serious, serious consequential outcomes,” Biden said.

Meanwhile, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi rejected the idea that Congress is providing Ukraine a blank check.

“If the Republican Party takes the House of Representatives, more funding will be more difficult to get, but the Biden administration will not change course as they are convinced the Ukraine proxy war is serving their interests by weakening Russia, even under heightened threat of nuclear war,” Beau Grosscup, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at California State University, Chico, told Sputnik.

However, Republican reluctance to continue funding Ukraine is not ubiquitous across the party. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said a Republican majority in the upper chamber will focus on ensuring timely delivery of weapons to Ukraine, as well as greater allied assistance. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken cited bipartisan support for Ukraine aid as a source of his confidence in the continuation of assistance from Congress even if Republicans gain control in the midterms.

Support for Ukraine is more uniform among Democrats, although 30 Democratic House lawmakers drafted a letter to Biden urging him to change the administration’s approach towards diplomacy and direct negotiations with Russia. The letter was later withdrawn after Progressive Caucus Chair Pramila Jayapal claimed the letter was months-old and released without vetting. “I think that support for the Ukraine war is weakening, although the tendency is still in its earliest stages. The disastrous letter signed by 30 members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus – both the text and the cowardly backpedaling that followed – is a sign of how tentative the process still is,” historian and political commentator Dan Lazare told Sputnik.

Anti-war sentiment will strengthen the longer the conflict continues and as economic consequences intensify, Lazare said. Due to the unpredictable nature of the conflict and potential escalations, US policy is likewise difficult to predict, Lazare added.

The uncertainty is leaving Ukrainian officials concerned about the future of assistance to their country, according to Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. Kiev is working with both Republicans and Democrats to ensure aid continues, Kuleba said.

In contrast to Ukrainian officials, only 1-2% of voters say the conflict in Ukraine is a significant issue in determining who to vote for in the midterms, Quinnipiac University Poll Director Doug Schultz said in October.

On Tuesday, a new Rasmussen Reports survey showed only two percent of voters polled named Ukraine as the most important issue for them in the midterms.

#### RUSSIA

Although congressional support for Ukraine appears widespread, the willingness to involve US resources in the conflict may stem more from a desire by lawmakers to counter Russia rather than to aid Ukraine.

“The original goal that was widely accepted, at first, was to assist Ukraine in pushing back against Russian incursions into Ukrainian territory. Very quickly, this goal has evolved into working with Ukraine and with western allies, potentially, to topple the duly elected administration in Russia,” political commentator and former hedge fund manager Charles Ortel told Sputnik.

Regime change is a policy of suspect merit that does little to advance US strategic interests, Ortel added.

Moreover, prolonging the conflict between Ukraine serves to help sustain the political unity of the collective West around the fight against Russia, University of Rhode Island Professor of Peace Studies Nikolai Petro told Sputnik.

“The overwhelming majority still views the main goal of this war as not to help Ukrainians, but to weaken Russia while using Ukraine as a country of mercenaries and its citizens as cannon fodder to achieve this goal,” Professor Edward Lozansky, President of American University in Moscow, also told Sputnik.

However, almost half of Americans, 47%, oppose sending military aid to Ukraine without engaging in diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, a poll by the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft found in September.

Moreover, the poll found that roughly 58% of Americans would oppose current Ukraine aid levels if gas prices and goods continue to rise in price, and 57% support immediate peace negotiations.

Biden administration officials have repeatedly said that the onus to end the war is on Russia, and that the US's role in the conflict is to set Ukraine up for a well-positioned spot at the negotiation table. Russia shows no signs of interest in such dialogues, the administration claims.

Officials from countries including Turkey, India, Hungary, Italy and the Holy See have recently advocated for peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine.

However, former Virginia State Senator Richard Black told Sputnik in August that the Biden administration is unlikely to allow peace talks between Russia and Ukraine to occur ahead of midterm elections.

A potential peace plan proposed by billionaire tech entrepreneur Elon Musk, which would leave Crimea under Russian control and hold UN-monitored referenda in other regions seeking to leave Ukraine, was condemned by US and Ukrainian officials.

One-third of eligible US voters say they agree with Musk's plan, according to a Redfield and Wilton Strategies/Newsweek poll released Monday. Over half of respondents, 52%, believe that Ukraine should focus on recovering territories lost since the start of Russia's special military operation on February 24 instead of trying to recover Crimea, the poll also said.

In comparison, around 26% of Ukrainians believe the conflict should be diplomatically resolved as soon as possible, while around 70% support fighting to victory, which 91% of respondents said would entail retaking territory lost since 2014, including Crimea, a Gallup poll released in October found.

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US Congressman Gosar Yet to Hear From Russia, Ukraine on Invite to Arizona Talks - Office

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Paul Gosar's spokesperson Anthony Foti told Sputnik neither Russia or Ukraine have responded to the lawmaker's invite to Arizona for peace talks.

Gosar recently invited Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to his home state of Arizona for peace talks to resolve the conflict in Ukraine.

"No response to the letter has yet been received," Foti said. "It was acknowledged in the letter that it was a long shot, but Congressman Gosar felt that the need for deescalation was too important not to take this step."

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Lawmaker Concerned Biden Fails to Secure US Border But Sends Billions to Ukraine - Office

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Paul Gosar's spokesperson Anthony Foti told Sputnik that the congressman disapproves of the US government being unable to provide funding to better secure the US southern border during record-high illegal migration but willing to provide Ukraine with tens of billions of dollars in assistance.

Gosar recently invited Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to his home state of Arizona for peace talks to resolve the conflict in Ukraine.

"Americans are told that there was not enough money to build a wall along their own border, but suddenly \$50 billion is magically available to defend Ukraine's border," Foti said. "Congressman Gosar believes that putting Americans first is the best policy."

US lawmakers reportedly want to try to approve an additional \$50 billion assistance package for Ukraine before the end of the year following the US midterm elections on November 8.

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US Must Not Meddle in Russia-Ukraine Conflict, Boundary Disputes - Lawmaker's Office

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Paul Gosar's spokesperson Anthony Foti told Sputnik that the United States should not meddle in the Ukraine conflict, adding that issue over the boundaries between Russia and Ukraine should not be Washington's concern.

Gosar recently invited Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to his home state of Arizona for peace talks to resolve the conflict in Ukraine.

"Congressmen Gosar has been adamant since the beginning of the conflict that the US has no role in this matter," Foti said. "The boundaries between Ukraine and Russia are not a matter of US concern, particularly when our own Southern border is open, unprotected and over 5 million illegal aliens have crossed in 20 months, along with enough fentanyl to kill every man, woman and child in the US."

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Congressman Gosar Urges US, UN to Help Facilitate Russia-Ukraine Talks - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Paul Gosar encourages the US and UN to facilitate talks between Russia and Ukraine, which should commence immediately, spokesperson Anthony Foti told Sputnik.

Gosar recently invited Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to his home state of Arizona for peace talks to resolve the conflict in Ukraine.

"Yes, negotiations are possible and should be commenced," Foti said when asked about Gosar's stance on Russia-Ukraine talks. "Helping to achieve peace is an appropriate role for the US and the UN."

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RPT - Biden's Release of Oil From US Reserve 'Political,' Signals Panic - Ex-Texas Regulator

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden's decision to release additional oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) ahead of the midterms was political and will not likely lower prices because it signals a panic, a former commissioner in the Texas Railroad Commission, the industry regulator in the top oil-producing state, told Sputnik.

Biden has authorized the withdrawal of more than 200 million barrels from the SPR since November 202 and is prepared to release more throughout the winter if necessary. The US president has said his top priority is alleviating the hardship of Americans suffering from the worst inflation in 40 years and high energy prices.

"Absolutely," former Texas oil regulator Ryan Sitton said when asked if Biden's decision was political. "In fact... prices aren't dropping very much as a result of that announcement. In fact, what you're going to see is they're going to go up because as Biden signals a panic, that's going to fuel the market saying maybe there really is demand, there is supply problems."

Biden is reinforcing the narrative that there is a supply problem when he releases additional oil from the US strategic reserve, Sitton said.

Sitton further said Biden's plan of releasing oil from the national reserve to lower gasoline prices is a bad strategy.

"When people start realizing how low the reserve is and in contrast that demand is not shrinking with the recession, we're gonna see incredibly high oil prices," Sitton said.

Last week, data from the Energy Information Administration showed that the US emergency oil reserve is less than 2 million barrels from breaking below the key 400-million-barrel level after the previous week's outflow of almost 3.5 million barrels.

Gasoline at the pump in the United States reached a record high of \$5 per gallon in mid-June but has come down since to an average of below \$4.

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RPT: PREVIEW - Blinken Embarks on Trip to Germany for G7 Ministerial, US-German Futures Forum

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Secretary of State Antony Blinken is heading to Germany to participate in the G7 foreign ministers ministerial and the US-German Futures Forum on November 3-4.

After his arrival to Germany on Wednesday, Secretary Blinken will join German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock at the first-ever 2022 US-German Futures Forum in Munster for a discussion entitled "The future of democracy in a digital world" on Thursday, according to the State Department.

The forum is expected to bring together American and German experts, as well as leaders from civil society, academia, and the private sector for two days to discuss the interplay of Democracy and Technology.

On the same day, Blinken will take part in the G7 ministerial meeting at the invitation of Germany, which holds the rotating presidency of the group this year. The meeting will focus mainly on the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine.

Additionally, Blinken's agenda for the day includes meetings on strategic challenges and engagement in Africa, partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, Iran, and Central Asia.

The first day of Blinken's trip to Europe will conclude with a reception for G7 ministers and a working dinner that includes a discussion of the G7 shared interest in a free and open Indo-Pacific, the State Department said on Tuesday.

On Friday, Blinken will hold meetings with a focus on the ongoing protests in Iran and regional stability, infrastructure, energy, and climate issues in Central Asia.

Later in the day, the US Secretary of State will have a working lunch with senior African officials from Ghana, Kenya, and the African Union focused on the region, including Sahel, northern Ethiopia, and the Great Lakes, according to the State Department.

In the afternoon, Blinken will attend another meeting on strategic challenges for the G7 and Africa. The attendees will discuss the global consequences of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, including with respect to food and energy security.

G7 foreign ministers are expected to conclude the ministerial by releasing the chair's statement on the topics discussed and a joint statement with African representatives.

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RPT - UN to Evaluate How Changes at Twitter Impact Its Communications on Platform - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is seeing fast-moving developments on Twitter and will evaluate how the changes may impact its communication on the social media platform, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told Sputnik.

"We are seeing the fast-moving developments at Twitter and, as the situation evolves, will need to evaluate if and how these changes in areas including fees for verification and content moderation may impact how we communicate on the platform," Dujarric said on Wednesday. Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, who recently completed the acquisition of Twitter for \$44 billion, has introduced a new verification policy that requires users to pay \$8 per month to get verified and be able use advanced Twitter features.

Despite encountering some criticism for the new policy, Musk said he believes it is important to make Twitter independent from advertising revenue.

The United Nations has extensively relied on Twitter to communicate with the public. The world body's main account has 16 million followers, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has 1.9 million followers and the Office of the UN Spokesperson has 900,000 followers.

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US Private Payrolls Growth Beats Forecast by 23% in October, Hardening Fed Inflation Fight

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US private sector jobs grew 23% above expectations in October while wages came in just below forecasts, according to data from private payrolls processor ADP that underscored the Federal Reserve's tough fight against inflation.

US companies added 239,000 positions last month versus September's 192,000 and the 195,000 forecast by media-pollled economists. Wages rose 7.7% on an annual basis, down just 0.1 percentage point from September.

"This is a really strong number given the maturity of the economic recovery but the hiring was not broad-based," ADP chief economist Nela Richardson said in a statement. "Goods producers, which are sensitive to interest rates, are pulling back, and job changers are commanding smaller pay gains. While we're seeing early signs of Fed-driven demand destruction, it's affecting only certain sectors of the labor market."

Economists also pointed to the ever-narrowing win for the Fed in its year-long campaign to bring inflation down meaningfully.

Since the end of 2021, the central bank has plowed thousands of man-hours into plotting multiple schemes to shield the US economy from the worst price pressures experienced since

the 1980s. Despite that, inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, stood at 8.2% for the year to September, not too far from the 40-year peak of 9.1% during the 12 months to June. "The Fed won't like to see the uptick in jobs growth in October," economist Adam Button said in a post on the ForexLive forum.

A sterling labor market has been one the greatest redeeming qualities of the US economy over the past two years. But it is also an anathema of sorts for the Fed as robust wage growth has added to the worst inflation in four decades. The Labor Department's Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, or JOLTS, showed on Tuesday that there were 10.72 million available positions in September, above the estimated 9.85 million.

The JOLTS reading "reverses a recent decline and raises the risk of a tight jobs market for longer and the Fed needing to hike more", economist Button said in a separate post on the ForexLive forum on Tuesday, noting that there were 1.9 positions available for every job-seeker. Since March, the Fed has raised rates by 300 basis points from an original base of just 25. The central bank is almost certain to add another 75 basis points at its November policy decision due later on Wednesday. After that, it has another rates' decision before the year-end, due on December 15.

The ADP private payrolls comes ahead of the more important October US jobs report due on Friday. Economists expect that so-called non-farm payrolls report to state a jobs growth of about 200,000 versus September's 263,000. If history is any guide, it could end up being higher than forecast, as almost every monthly non-farm payrolls report has been over the past year. Fighting inflation is not the Fed's only agenda. It is also mandated to ensure "maximum employment" for Americans, further adding to the central bank's headache in ensuring a balance between the two priorities even as it tries to cool employment in order to get price pressures down. Under the Fed's definition, maximum employment is achieved when the monthly jobless rate is at 4% or below. The central bank has scored full points on this task since the start of this year, as unemployment hit 4% in January and has stayed below that level.

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#### Canada Orders Divestiture of Investments by Foreign Investors in Critical Mineral Firms

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Canada has ordered three foreign companies to divest investments in Canadian critical mineral firms due to national security concerns, Canadian Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry Francois-Philippe Champagne said in a press release.

"We reviewed a number of investments in Canadian companies engaged in the critical minerals sector, including lithium," the minister said in the release on Wednesday. "These companies were reviewed via the multi-step national security review process, which involves rigorous scrutiny by Canada's national security and intelligence community."

As a result of the review, Canada is ordering three foreign companies to divest from investments in the Canadian critical mineral industry, the release said.

Sinomine Rare Metals Resources Co. Limite, is required to divest itself of its investment in Power Metals Corp, the release said.

Chengze Lithium International Limited is required to divest itself of its investment in Lithium Chile Inc, the release said.

Zangge Mining Investment (Chengdu) Co., Ltd. is required to divest itself of its investment in Ultra Lithium Inc., the release said.

The release said this decision was authorized by the Investment Canada Act.

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US Lawmaker Who Invited Putin, Zelenskyy to Talks Thinks War Always Avoidable - Spokesman

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Paul Gosar believes that, while talks can end any political dispute, the UN has been noticeably silent with respect to the Ukraine crisis, spokesperson Anthony Foti told Sputnik.

Gosar recently invited Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to his home state of Arizona for peace talks to resolve the conflict in Ukraine.

"The purpose of the [invitation] letter, and the request, is to prevent further loss of life and property in both countries," Foti said when asked about the congressman's idea to host the US and Russian leaders to end the conflict. "Almost every political dispute can be negotiated without resort to war. The UN was created to avoid another world war, and it has been conspicuously silent."

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Biden Says Worried About Claims of Election Fraud in Outcome of Midterm Vote

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said he is concerned that candidates on all levels of elected positions are already claiming they will not concede to their opponents if they lose in next week's midterm elections.

"I wish I could say the assault on democracy ended that day [January 6], but I cannot," Biden said in a speech on Wednesday. "As I stand here today, there are candidates running for every level of office in America for governor, Congress, Attorney General, Secretary of State, who won't commit, that will not commit to accepting the results of the election that they're running in." Moreover, Biden highlighted that although the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement is a minority in the Republican Party, it is now driving the party.

Biden said critical US institutions that hold the United States together are at stake in this year's midterm elections and both, Democratic and Republican voters alike should consider this when they vote.

Voters will head to the polls on November 8 to determine who controls Congress, with Republicans poised to seize the House of Representatives from the Democrats and possibly the Senate though the struggle for control of the latter is expected to come down to the wire.

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Security Cameras Active But Not Monitored During Alleged Pelosi Attack - US Capitol Police

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Security cameras operated by the US Capitol Police (USCP) were functional but not monitored during the alleged attack on Paul Pelosi, husband of House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, at their San Francisco residence last week, the USCP said.

"The Command Center has access to roughly 1,800 cameras, which provide us the capability to collect evidence from any camera's location at any time, while also allowing Command Center personnel to monitor select video feeds," the USCP said in a statement on Wednesday. "While the Speaker was with her security detail in Washington, DC, the San Francisco cameras were not actively monitored as they are when the Speaker is at the residence."

However, the Command Center personnel noticed police activity on the screen and used the live feeds to monitor the response and assist investigators, the statement said.

The USCP launched an internal security review and is fast-tracking efforts to enhance the protection of members of Congress when they are outside of Washington, the statement also said.

Early on Friday morning, San Francisco police responded to a wellbeing check at the Pelosi residence, where they found Paul Pelosi and 42-year old David DePape struggling over a hammer. DePape reportedly took the hammer and beat Pelosi with it before being detained by police.

On Tuesday, DePape pleaded not guilty to state-level charges, including attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon and elder abuse. DePape also faces federal charges of assault and attempted kidnapping of a US official or their family member with intent to retaliate on account of their duties.

DePape is being held without bail ahead of a Friday court session to schedule a preliminary and bail hearing, which are likely to be set in conjunction, defense attorney Adam Lipson said on Tuesday after DePape's arraignment.

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US Reporter James Meek Seen Again After He Went Missing Following FBI Raid - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Award-winning US journalist James Gordon Meek was seen for the first time since the FBI raided his Virginia home in April reportedly seeking classified information, the Daily Mail reported.

The report said on Wednesday that Meek, a former ABC News producer, was seen last week in McLean, Virginia, near his mother's home.

Meek declined to answer questions from the Daily Mail regarding the matter.

Meek had been missing for the last six weeks after his residence in an upscale apartment building in Arlington, Virginia, was raided by heavily-armed federal agents in April.

Following the raid, Meek resigned from ABC News and moved out of the apartment complex.

Meek had recently been awarded for his coverage of President Joe Biden's chaotic military withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021. A ceremony was held a week after the raid of his home, but Meek declined to accept the award.

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Canada Must Invest in Military Capabilities to Project Arctic Power - Top General

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Canada must invest big in military capabilities to be able to project power northward and retain sovereignty over its vast Arctic regions in the coming decades, the country's top military commander Chief of the Defense Staff General Wayne Eyre said in remarks at a think tank event.

"The Arctic is becoming increasingly important [and there] could be a threat to our sovereignty in the decades ahead," Eyre said in his presentation at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on Wednesday. "We have to invest in capabilities to be able to project power in the future from the south to the north."

Developing threats to Canada and North America from across the Arctic already included missiles, cruise missiles and hypersonic weapons, Eyre said.

Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and Secretary of State Blinken during a panel in Montreal last week discussed the compatibility of Washington and Ottawa's Arctic strategies. Joly said it is part of a new dialogue between the United States and Canada on Arctic strategy, prompted by the US recent unveiling of theirs.

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UN to Evaluate How Changes at Twitter Impact Its Communications on Platform - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is seeing fast-moving developments on Twitter and will evaluate how the changes may impact its communication on the social media platform, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told Sputnik.

"We are seeing the fast-moving developments at Twitter and, as the situation evolves, will need to evaluate if and how these changes in areas including fees for verification and content moderation may impact how we communicate on the platform," Dujarric said on Wednesday. Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, who recently completed the acquisition of Twitter for \$44 billion, has introduced a new verification policy that requires users to pay \$8 per month to get verified and be able use advanced Twitter features.

Despite encountering some criticism for the new policy, Musk said he believes it is important to make Twitter independent from advertising revenue.

The United Nations has extensively relied on Twitter to communicate with the public. The world body's main account has 16 million followers, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has 1.9 million followers and the Office of the UN Spokesperson has 900,000 followers.

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US Bio-Military Activities in Ukraine Should Receive 'Full Attention'- Chinese Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - China is concerned about the allegations made by Russia of United States' bio-military activities throughout Ukraine and calls on the international community to give this issue its "full attention," China's Deputy Representative to the United Nations Geng Shuang said.

"Russia has repeatedly launched allegations to the UN Security Council that the United States is suspected of conducting bio-military activities in Ukraine. China is gravely concerned. We believe that any evidence of clues related to compliance with the convention [Biological Weapons Convention] should receive full attention from the international community and deserve thorough and to-the-point responses and clarifications by the party concerned," Geng told the UN Security Council on Wednesday.

China believes that a fair and transparent investigation by the UN Security Council can effectively address compliance concerns and can help uphold the authority and effectiveness of the convention, Geng added.

Earlier in the day, Russia submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council to decide on forming a commission to investigate Moscow's claims presented a complaint against the United States and Ukraine regarding their compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention for activities in biological laboratories on Ukrainian territory.

The draft resolution submitted by Russia was not adopted because there were not enough votes in its favor.

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Sikorsky, DARPA Test Fly Black Hawk Helicopter on Missions Without Human Crew - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The Sikorsky helicopter company, a division of Lockheed Martin, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) have successfully demonstrated how a Black Hawk helicopter flying without any human crew can reliably perform cargo resupply and rescue missions, the company said in a press release. "Sikorsky and DARPA have successfully demonstrated to the US Army for the first time how an uninhabited Black Hawk helicopter flying autonomously can safely and reliably perform internal and external cargo resupply missions, and a rescue operation," the release said on Wednesday. The test exercises were carried out on October 12, 14 and 18 as part of the US Army's Project Convergence 2022 experiment, the release said. "The flights show how existing and future piloted utility helicopters could one day fly complex missions in reduced crew or autonomous mode," the release added. This capability would give US Army commanders and aviators greater flexibility in how and when aircraft and pilots are used, especially in limited visibility or contested environments, according to the release.

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Canada's Military-Industrial Base Can Not Sustain Prolonged War - Chief of Defense Staff

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Canada's industrial base is not prepared to sustain the country's armed forces through any long war, Chief of the Defense Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre told an audience at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"I am very concerned: I don't think the defense industrial base in my own country is where it needs to be to support [a] conflict of any duration," Eyre said on Wednesday. "We've got some real challenges. There's just not the capacity there. The supply chains are much more complex than they were before."

Canada's military-industrial base was still on a peacetime footing and there was a need for much larger and secure supply sources for rare earths - largely mined and controlled by China - micro electronics and computer chips, Eyre said.

"It is going to take time and money to develop. ...Great power war is not [a] short war. It is [a] long war," he said.

Canada has the third largest Ukrainian population in the world and the West must continue to stand firm behind Ukraine in its current conflict with Russia even if Moscow ever uses a tactical nuclear weapon there, Eyre added.

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Miss USA pageant Can Exclude Transgender Contestants, US Court Rules

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The Miss United States of America beauty pageant cannot be forced to allow transgender women to compete because doing so would interfere with its ability to express "the ideal vision of American womanhood," a US appeals court ruled on Wednesday.

In a 2-1 decision, the San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals rejected a lawsuit by transgender activist Anita Green claiming that Miss USA's policy of only allowing "natural born" women to compete violates an Oregon anti-discrimination law.

Green, who is from Oregon, sued Miss USA in federal court in Portland last year after her application to participate in the pageant was dismissed.

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Senators Cruz, Rubio Send Letter to Biden Against More Concessions to Maduro

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – US Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz sent a letter to President Biden expressing concern over any further sanctions relief offered to Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and asking the Biden administration to cease plans to make more concessions, a statement released by Cruz said.

"Your administration's actions give unwarranted and dangerous legitimacy to the Nicolas Maduro regime, which are detrimental to the prospects for free and fair elections, the release of all political prisoners in Venezuela, and the return of imprisoned Americans being used as political pawns," the senators wrote in the letter.

The senators also urged the president to refrain from allowing Chevron to restart oil operations with Maduro's oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA), which is currently under US sanctions.

In October, the White House announced it freed two family members of Maduro who were convicted and jailed in the US for drug trafficking. In June, the US Treasury announced an easing of economic sanctions on Venezuela, which allowed Chevron to negotiate its license with the state-owned oil company PDVSA. Though the US company was not yet allowed to drill or export any petroleum of Venezuelan origin, media reports suggested that the administration was considering this option.

A source familiar with the matter told Sputnik in late October that Chevron had not been approached by the Biden administration about potential plans to ease sanctions.

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UNSC Fails to Adopt Russian Resolution to Probe Military Bio-laboratories in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - UN Security Council did not adopt a resolution of the Russian Federation on establishing a commission to investigate military biological activities in Ukraine.

Russia did not receive nine votes out of the 15-member body needed for the resolution to be adopted on Wednesday.

Earlier, the Russian Federation submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council for consideration. According to the document, the Security Council would decide "to form a commission consisting of all members of the Security Council to investigate the claims presented in the complaint of the Russian Federation against the United States and Ukraine regarding their compliance with obligations under the Convention in the context of the activities of biological laboratories on Ukrainian territory."

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US Stocks Tumble Hardest in 3 Weeks as Fed Plays Down Odds of Rate Pivot

NEW YORK, November 3 (Sputnik) - Wall Street experienced its worst tumble in three weeks after the Federal Reserve played down the odds of a pivot for its aggressive rate hikes, sending airline to high-flying technology stocks nosediving as the central bank remained vigilant in its fight against inflation.

The S&P 500 Index, which represents the top 500 US stocks, closed down 96 points, or 2.5%, at 3,760 on Wednesday. Its previous sharpest decline was 2.4% on October 14.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which serves as Wall Street's broadest equities indicator with stocks of 30 large US corporations and known simply as the "Dow", fell 505 points, or 1.6%, to finish at 32,148. Its previous biggest drop was 1.3% on October 14.

The outlier of the day was, however, the Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises marquee names in technology such as Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Netflix and Google. This index settled down 366 points, or 3.4%, at 10,525. The Nasdaq's biggest tumble prior to this was a 3.1% slump on October 14.

"Stocks initially popped after the Fed provided enough hints that the end of the Fed tightening cycle is nearing" on rates, said Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA.

But Wall Street couldn't retain its upside as Powell went on to remind markets that "inflation has been high for 18 months, and that it is too early [to] think about pausing rate hikes", Moya added.

The Fed on Wednesday raised rates by 75 basis points for a fourth straight time in November. The sixth rate hike of the year effectively brought rates to a peak of 400 basis points from just 25 in March.

The central bank said rates had to be "sufficiently restrictive" to bring inflation down to its 2% objective over the medium term. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, is about four times higher than the Fed's target now — standing at 8.2% during the year to September, after a 40-year peak of 9.1% in the 12 months to June.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell also told reporters he was neither sure about a soft landing or recession for the US economy as the nation weathers its worst inflation in four decades. But the central bank was certain that it would be premature to pause its aggressive rate hikes, he said.

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Russia Still Demands US, Kiev Explain Military Bio-Labs on Ukraine Territory - Polyanskiy

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - Russia will still require clarifications from the United States and Ukraine regarding their military bio-laboratories across the Ukrainian territory, the Russian Deputy Representative to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy told the UN Security Council members.

"Regardless of the outcome of the vote today, the questions to the United States and Ukraine is something that we do retain and the evidence which accompanied our complaints still require clarifications," Polyanskiy said on Wednesday.

Earlier, the Russian Federation submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council for consideration. According to the document, the Security Council would decide "to form a commission consisting of all members of the Security Council to investigate the claims presented in the complaint of the Russian Federation against the United States and Ukraine regarding their compliance with obligations under the Convention in the context of the activities of biological laboratories on Ukrainian territory." The resolution was not adopted due to lack of votes.

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US Approves Possible \$535M In Sale of Guided Rocket Launch Systems to Finland - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration approved a potential \$535 million sale of Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMLRS) to Finland, the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Finland of Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$535 million," DSCA said in a statement on Wednesday.

The proposed sale would support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by improving the security of Finland, a trusted partner and important force for stability and progress in Europe, the statement said. Finland intends to use the defense items to increase its national stock, bolstering the land and air defense capabilities of Europe's northern flank, the statement said.

In May, Finland and Sweden submitted applications to the NATO alliance following the launch of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. Their accession has been ratified by all NATO members except Hungary and Turkey.

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US Approves Potential \$6.35Bln Sale of C-130J-30 Aircraft to Australia - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United States approved a possible \$6.35 billion sale of 24 C-130J-30 Aircraft and other related equipment to Australia, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a press release.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Australia of C-130J-30 aircraft and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$6.35 billion," the agency said on Wednesday. "The Government of Australia has requested to buy twenty-four (24) C-130J-30 aircraft with four (4) each Rolls Royce AE-2100D turboprop engines installed."

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) -

GRAIN EXPORTS AGREEMENT

\* Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that instructions were given to the Russia's Defense Ministry to resume participation in the grain agreement, but Moscow reserves the right to withdraw from the deal if Kiev breaches the guarantees,

\* Russia will not hinder grain supplies from Ukraine to Turkey in the future due to Ankara's neutrality and the capabilities of its grain processing industry, Putin said.

\* Russia has received clear guarantees from Ukraine that attacks in the Black Sea using the corridors associated with the export of grain will not be repeated, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko said.

\* The United States is happy to see Russia resume its participation in the grain agreement, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said.

GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

\* Gas futures in Europe are rising 13.6% to above \$1,350 per thousand cubic meters, according to the London-based ICE exchange.

\* Nord Stream AG said that it completed the initial data collection from the site of damage at the first line of the Nord Stream pipeline in Swedish exclusive economic zone, having found man-made craters and a completely destroyed section of pipeline at the site.

### RUSSIA'S ECONOMY

\* The decline in Russia's GDP accelerated in September to 5% year-on-year after 4% fall in August. the Ministry of Economic Development said in its report.

### FED RAISES INTEREST RATE

\* The Federal Reserve announced on Wednesday a 75-basis point, or a three-quarter percentage point, increase for the sixth US interest rate hike since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic two years ago.

\* The Biden administration respects the independence of the Federal Reserve and believes the Fed's latest interest rate increase will help bring down housing inflation, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said.

\* The Federal Reserve thinks the time is approaching for it to slow down the pace of interest rate hikes in the United States and that could come as early as its December or February meetings, Chairman Jerome Powell said.

### IRAN-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

\* Western countries are deliberately fomenting the atmosphere against Iran, saying that Tehran is allegedly preparing to strike at Saudi Arabia, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on Wednesday.

\* The United States will work with its partners to have Iran expelled from the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Vice President Kamala Harris said.

### NORTH KOREA MISSILE TEST LAUNCHES

\* North Korea on Wednesday test launched six surface-to-air missiles toward the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea, the Yonhap news agency reported, citing South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

\* The United States denounces North Korea's latest missile launches, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said.

\* The United States would welcome China using its influence to press North Korea toward denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, but is not seeing this happen, Kirby said.

\* All parties to the conflict on the Korean Peninsula should avoid steps that could provoke a further increase in tensions, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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UPDATE - No Certainty on US 'Soft Landing' or Recession, But Rate Hike Pause Premature - Powell

(Updates to add details, comments and context, paragraphs 4-13)

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve is not sure whether the US economy will see either a soft landing or a recession as the nation weathers its worst inflation in

four decades, but the central bank is certain that it would be premature to pause its aggressive rate hikes, Chairman Jerome Powell said on Wednesday.

“No one knows if there's going to be a recession or not. If so, how bad that recession would be,” Powell told a news conference after the Fed's sixth rate hike of the year that raised rates by a cumulative 375 basis points from just 25 in March. “We have to have policy be more restrictive, and that narrows the path of a soft landing. I would say. It's very premature in my view to be thinking about or talking about pausing our rate hikes. We have a ways to go.”

Earlier, Powell said US rate hikes might ultimately come in higher than thought as the Fed stays vigilant in its bid to defeat inflation hovering near four-decade highs.

“Incoming data since our last meeting suggests that the ultimate level of interest rates will be higher than previously expected,” Powell said, after the Fed raised rates by 75 basis points for a fourth straight time in November.

Asked where rates will likely rest, he replied: “Our decisions will depend on the totality of incoming data and implications for the outlook of activity and inflation. We will continue to make our decisions meeting by meeting and communicate clearly as possible.”

To another question, Powell said that he thought the time was approaching for the central bank to slow down — not pause — the pace of its rate hikes, and that could come as early as its December or February meetings.

But equally important, he stressed, was the “need to bring our policy stance down to a level that's sufficiently restrictive to bring inflation down to the 2% objective over the medium term”. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, is about four times higher than the Fed's target — standing at 8.2% during the year to September, after a 40-year peak of 9.1% in the 12 months to June. Wages have, meanwhile, grown non-stop for 18 months.

Powell, however, suggested that the tricky part of defeating inflation would be to forcibly cool jobs and wage growth — something the Fed wished it did not have to do.

While the labor market has been one the greatest redeeming qualities of the US economy over the past two years — almost single-handedly steering its recovery from the coronavirus pandemic — it has also been an anathema of sorts for the Fed as runaway jobs and earnings growth have only added to inflation. The Labor Department's Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, or JOLTS, report for September, released on Tuesday showed nearly two open positions for every job-seeker.

The JOLTS data came ahead of Friday's more important non-farm payrolls report for October, which the Fed uses as a key benchmark for rate decisions. Economists expect the Labor Department to report that the United States added 200,000 non-farm jobs last month, versus September's growth of 263,000.

Fighting inflation isn't the Fed's only agenda. It is also mandated to ensure “maximum employment” for Americans, adding to the central bank's headache in ensuring a balance between the two priorities even as it tries to cool employment in order to get price pressures down.

Under the Fed's definition, maximum employment is achieved when the monthly jobless rate is at 4% or below. The central bank has scored full points on this task since the start of this year, as unemployment hit 4% in January and has stayed below that level.

Investors, economists and business leaders have, meanwhile, warned that the Fed's aggressive rate hikes could land the world's largest economy in a recession — just 2.5 years after the last slowdown that broke out with the coronavirus pandemic in mid-2020.

The economy did sputter in the first two quarters of the year, with back-to-back negative growths of 1.6% and 0.6% in Gross Domestic Product that technically placed the nation in a recession. Third-quarter GDP, however, came in at a resilient 2.6%, raising questions of whether another slowdown was likely or a soft-landing was possible instead.

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Blinken, Cavusoglu Discuss Grain Deal, NATO Unity Amid Ukraine Conflict - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu have discussed the resumption of the Black Sea grain deal as well as NATO unity amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday.

"Secretary Blinken thanked the Foreign Minister for his country's efforts to secure a resumption of the Black Sea Grain Initiative by encouraging Russia's return and reminding Moscow of the importance of continued adherence to UN-brokered agreements and its commitments to support global food security," Price said in a readout. "Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Cavusoglu also discussed ways to continue advancing coordination and NATO unity in response to Russia's war against Ukraine."

Earlier in the day, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Ukraine had provided guarantees that it would not use the grain deal humanitarian corridors for military purposes. Russia resumes its participation in the deal which was put on hold over the weekend after a drone attack on Sevastopol, but reserves the right to withdraw if Kiev violates the guarantees, he said.

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Biden Says Will Keep US Troops Stationed in NATO Countries 'For a Long Time'

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that US troops will be stationed in NATO countries throughout Europe for a long time to come amid heightened tensions on the continent due to the conflict in Ukraine.

"They'll be there for a long time," Biden said when asked how long he expects US soldiers would be present in Poland and other NATO countries.

The United States increased the number of troops in Europe from roughly 60,000 to 100,000 in November after Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine on February 24.

The Biden administration said it expects that number to remain consistent for the foreseeable future, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said last week.

However, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said last week that the US government maintains the ability to rapidly deploy military capabilities to Europe in case of a need to do so.

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Risk of Climate Catastrophe Today Greater Than in 2015 – US Envoy Kerry

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The world today is closer to a climate catastrophe than it was in 2015 when the Paris Agreement was signed, US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry said on Wednesday.

"The looming possibility of climate catastrophe is greater today [than in 2015]," Kerry said during a press briefing.

At the same time, Kerry pointed out, much more efforts are being made now than at any time in human history.

The Paris Agreement was adopted in December 2015 following the 21st Conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris. With 194 signatories to date, it marks the first global effort in history to coordinate the fight against climate change. Kerry was making his remarks ahead of the 27th UN climate change conference, also known as COP27, that will take place in Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh from November 6-18.

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PREVIEW - Blinken Embarks on Trip to Germany for G7 Ministerial, US-German Futures Forum

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Secretary of State Antony Blinken is heading to Germany to participate in the G7 foreign ministers ministerial and the US-German Futures Forum on November 3-4.

After his arrival to Germany on Wednesday, Secretary Blinken will join German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock at the first-ever 2022 US-German Futures Forum in Munster for a discussion entitled "The future of democracy in a digital world" on Thursday, according to the State Department.

The forum is expected to bring together American and German experts, as well as leaders from civil society, academia, and the private sector for two days to discuss the interplay of Democracy and Technology.

On the same day, Blinken will take part in the G7 ministerial meeting at the invitation of Germany, which holds the rotating presidency of the group this year. The meeting will focus mainly on the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine.

Additionally, Blinken's agenda for the day includes meetings on strategic challenges and engagement in Africa, partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, Iran, and Central Asia.

The first day of Blinken's trip to Europe will conclude with a reception for G7 ministers and a working dinner that includes a discussion of the G7 shared interest in a free and open Indo-Pacific, the State Department said on Tuesday.

On Friday, Blinken will hold meetings with a focus on the ongoing protests in Iran and regional stability, infrastructure, energy, and climate issues in Central Asia.

Later in the day, the US Secretary of State will have a working lunch with senior African officials from Ghana, Kenya, and the African Union focused on the region, including Sahel, northern Ethiopia, and the Great Lakes, according to the State Department.

In the afternoon, Blinken will attend another meeting on strategic challenges for the G7 and Africa. The attendees will discuss the global consequences of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, including with respect to food and energy security.

G7 foreign ministers are expected to conclude the ministerial by releasing the chair's statement on the topics discussed and a joint statement with African representatives.

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US Government Will Take Action To Ensure Iran's Removal From UN Women's Commission – WH

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The White House is committed to removing Iran from the UN body on women's rights, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said at a briefing on Wednesday.

"We welcome civil society's call for the expulsion of the Iranian government from the UN Commission on the Status of Women," said Jean-Pierre. "The United States Government will take action to ensure Iran is removed. Women and men in Iran must have the right to freedom of expression and assembly. Iran must end its use of violence against its own citizens. Until Iran changes its behavior the US will continue to impose costs and hold accountable Iranian officials and entities that are responsible for employing violence to suppress protest, civil society, and women's rights."

Earlier on Wednesday, US Vice President Kamala Harris announced that the United States would work with other nations to remove Iran from the 45-member U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) amid ongoing protests in Iran.

Mass protests began in Iran in mid-September after 22-year-old Mahsa Amini passed away while in police custody after being detained for wearing an "improper" hijab, which triggered a wave of anti-Iranian sanctions by US, European, and Canadian officials.

Iranian authorities have accused Western countries of supporting the protesters.

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No Certainty on US 'Soft Landing' or Recession, But Rate Hike Pause Premature - Powell

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve is neither sure about a soft landing or recession for the US economy as the nation weathers its worst inflation in four decades, although the central bank is certain that it would be premature to pause its aggressive rate hikes, Chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"No one knows if there's going to be a recession or not. If so, how bad that recession would be," Powell told a news conference after the Fed's sixth rate hike of the year. "We have to have policy be more restrictive, and that narrows the path of a soft landing. I would say. It's very premature in my view to be thinking about or talking about pausing our rate hike. We have a ways to go."

Earlier, Powell said US rate hikes might ultimately come in higher than thought as the Fed stays vigilant in its bid to defeat inflation hovering near four-decade highs. He also said that he thought the time was approaching for the central bank to slow down — not pause — the pace of its rate hikes, and that could come as early as its December or February meetings.

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US Hopes to Resume Climate Talks With China - Kerry

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States is hopeful of reviving its talks on climate issues with China, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry told reporters on Wednesday.

"We stand ready to sit down with China on climate issues and work together to solve what is not a bilateral issue but what is a universal, global, existential issue," Kerry said. "We are hopeful ... that we can renew the important conversation that we were having."

Kerry noted that his meetings with his Chinese counterpart were constructive and clear on where they were going to go on climate issues.

"I remain hopeful that at some point in the near term we can resume that," he stressed.

In August, Beijing suspended the dialogue on climate as well as regular communication channels with the US military in response to a visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that China's move could have long-term consequences for the entire planet.

Pelosi visited Taipei while on an Asia tour, despite warnings from China, which considers Taiwan a part of its territory and opposes any direct official foreign contacts with the island. She was the first high-ranking US official to visit Taiwan in 25 years.

The visit triggered a new round of tension in the Taiwan Strait. In addition to the launch of military exercises in the region, Beijing has since imposed sanctions against two Taiwanese foundations for separatist activities, suspended the export of natural sand to the island and the import of citrus fruits, as well as the import of some types of fish products from Taiwan. The Chinese Foreign Ministry said that Washington and Taipei were yet to face all the negative consequences of the visit, which Beijing had opposed for several months.

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Blinken to Discuss North Korea Threat During Trip to Region Later This Month - State Dept.  
WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will discuss the issue of the threat posed by North Korea during his visit to the region later this month, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday.

"The Secretary we expect will have an opportunity to travel to the region later this month... And he'll have an opportunity to discuss the threat that the DPRK poses," Price said.

North Korea has launched 23 missiles of different types toward the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan in the past 24 hours. Pyongyang said it was in retaliation for a South Korean "provocation," including its recent joint drills with the United States.

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Musk's Takeover of Twitter Has Not Made It to Biden's Desk - White House

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The takeover of Twitter by US billionaire Elon Musk has not yet made it to the desk of US President Joe Biden, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.

When asked what impact Musk's purchase of the social media network is having on the political discourse in the country and whether the White House is ready to pay \$8 per month for its verified account, Jean-Pierre said, "I don't believe that it's an issue that's made it to the President's desk yet."

Musk last week closed a \$44 billion deal to purchase Twitter after months of negotiations and legal disputes between himself and the company about the number of fake accounts on the social media platform, which the entrepreneur alleged was much higher than the company reported.

Musk suggested on Tuesday that Twitter could soon charge users \$8 per month for the platform's blue checkmark badge indicating their account has been verified, with the price to be adjusted by country.

Twitter currently charges users \$4.99 per month for its so-called "Blue" subscription service that includes additional features such as access to free articles and the ability to "undo" tweets.

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US Applauds Cessation of Hostilities in Ethiopia, Committed to Peace Process - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States applauds the signing of an agreement to cease hostilities in northern Ethiopia and remains committed to the ongoing peace process, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the Ethiopian government and local Tigray region forces announced a deal to permanently cease hostilities, setting up a prospective end to a conflict that has left tens of thousands dead and millions more displaced.

"The African Union's announcement of the signing of a cessation of hostilities between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front [TPLF] represents an important step towards peace. We applaud the parties for their commitment to peace and reaching this agreement," Price said during a press briefing.

Price also commended the African Union panel responsible for facilitating the peace process. The US remains committed to supporting the AU-led process and advancing peace in northern Ethiopia, Price said.

Ethiopian forces and the TPLF have engaged in an internal conflict since November 2020, when the government accused the TPLF of attacking a military base in the Tigray region.

In June 2021, the TPLF seized the Tigray region's administrative center, Mekelle. The group later took control of large portions of Tigray, as well as parts of the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions.

US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Mike Hammer, participated in and observed talks toward the ceasefire over the past several days, Price said. The US role has not been at the front of the process, but its efforts have been consistent and constructive, according to Price.

The UN welcomes the agreement to cease hostilities, spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Wednesday.

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US Rate Hikes May Be Ultimately Higher Than Thought as Fed Vigilant on Inflation - Powell

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US rate hikes might ultimately come in higher than thought as the Federal Reserve stays vigilant in its bid to defeat inflation hovering near four-decade highs, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"Incoming data since our last meeting suggests that the ultimate level of interest rates will be higher than previously expected," Powell told a news conference after the Fed's sixth rate hike of the year. "Our decisions will depend on the totality of incoming data and implications for the outlook of activity and inflation. We will continue to make our decisions meeting by meeting and communicate clearly as possible."

Powell also said the Fed believed the time was approaching for it to slow down the pace of its rate hikes and that could come as early as its December or February meetings. But he added that restoring price stability — which means defeating inflation — will be a priority and will likely require maintaining a restrictive policy stance for some time.

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, stood at 8.2% for the year to September, not too far from the 40-year peak of 9.1% during the 12 months to June. The Fed's target for inflation is just 2% per year.

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Fed's Powell Says Time to Slow Pace of Rate Increases Could Come as Soon as Next Meeting

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve thinks the time is approaching for it to slow down the pace of interest rate hikes in the United States and that could come as early as its December or February meetings, Chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"I've said it's appropriate to slow the pace of increases; so that time is coming," Powell told a news conference after the Fed's sixth rate hike of the year. "It may come as soon as the next meeting or the one after that. No decision has been made."

The Fed raised rates by 75 basis points at its November policy meeting that concluded Wednesday. Its next meetings are on December 15 and February 1.

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US State Department Welcomes Russia Resuming Participation in Black Sea Grain Deal

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States commends the revival of the Black Sea grain deal after Russia resumes its participation in the agreement, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday.

"We welcome the fact that through dint of efforts by the UN Secretary General, by our Turkish allies as well, that the Black Sea grain initiative will resume," Price told a briefing.

Earlier in the day, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Ukraine has provided guarantees that it will not use the grain deal humanitarian corridors for military purposes. Russia resumes its participation in the deal, but reserves the right to withdraw if Kiev violates the guarantees, he said.

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Americans Desire Neither Trump Nor Biden as 2024 US Presidential Candidates - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - A majority of Americans oppose current President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump to run as candidates in the 2024 US presidential election, a new YouGov and The Economist poll revealed on Wednesday.

Fifty-nine percent of Americans say they oppose Trump running in the 2024 election while 28% of respondents said they support him, a release on the poll said.

Similarly, 54% of respondents said they oppose Biden running for re-election in 2024 while 27% said they support him, the release said.

Less than half of people who voted for Joe Biden in 2020, 43%, said they support him to run again, the release said.

However, a majority of 2020 Trump voters, 55%, support the former president to run for the highest office again.

A Wall Street Journal poll results also released on Wednesday found that support for Trump and Biden would be dead even in a hypothetical 2024 matchup, with each of them garnering 46% support.

On Tuesday, US media reported that Biden has been holding private meetings with a small group of senior advisers in preparation for a potential re-election bid. Biden, who would turn 86 before completing a second term as president, has yet to make a formal campaign announcement despite expressing intent to run.

Trump has likewise hinted at his readiness to run for president in 2024, saying in September that he will make a decision in the near future.

The YouGov/Economist poll surveyed 1500 US adults, including 1,330 registered voters, between October 29 and November 1.

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UN Welcomes Agreement to Permanently Cease Hostilities in Ethiopia - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United Nations welcomes the recently signed agreement by the parties to the conflict in Ethiopia to permanently cease hostilities, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the Ethiopian government and local forces from the Tigray region agreed to cease hostilities.

"This is a welcome first step that would bring some solace to millions of Ethiopian civilians who suffered during the conflict," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

Ethiopia has experienced a violent internal conflict since November 2020, when the central government accused the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) of attacking its military base and launched an anti-terrorist operation in the region.

In June 2021, the TPLF seized the city of Mekelle - Tigray's administrative regional center - after fighting the government and the latter declared an unconditional ceasefire. However, the TPLF soon launched a new offensive and took control of the southern part of Tigray and the neighboring Amhara region.

The ongoing conflict in Ethiopia has claimed tens of thousands of lives, displaced millions of people and caused a dire humanitarian crisis across the country.

A new peace deal was reached in March, when the Ethiopian authorities announced the introduction of an indefinite humanitarian truce for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Tigray. In

June, the Ethiopian government announced the establishing of a committee for negotiations with the TPLF.

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White House Says Fed's Latest Interest Rate Hike Should Help Bring Housing Inflation Down

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration respects the independence of the Federal Reserve and believes the Fed's latest interest rate increase will help bring down housing inflation, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.

"Our view is that the Fed is a independent agency and we respect their independence. The Fed actions helped bring inflation down. And as mortgage rates increase, demand in the housing market, should continue to cool and inventory should increase, which should have the effect of lowering housing inflation," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing. "This is part of our transition to stable and more stable and steady growth."

Earlier on Wednesday, the Federal Reserve raised US interest rates by 75 basis points in the 6th rate hike of the year.

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US Sees No Solution to Climate Change Without China, Russia, India - Kerry

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States believes that the problem of climate change can only be solved if all large countries, including China, Russia and India, are at the table, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry told reporters on Wednesday.

"There is no solution to the problem of climate change without China, without Russia, without India, without large countries, large economies being at the table," Kerry said.

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Federal Reserve Raises US Interest Rates by 75 Basis Points

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve announced on Wednesday a 75-basis point, or a three-quarter percentage point, increase for the sixth US interest rate hike since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic two years ago.

"The Committee decided to raise the target range for the federal funds rate to 3-3/4 to 4 percent," the US central bank's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) said in a statement. The FOMC also said it believed that "ongoing interest rate increases will be necessary to achieve a sufficiently restrictive policy stance that will eventually return inflation to 2%."

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, stood at 8.2% for the year to September, not too far from the 40-year peak of 9.1% during the 12 months to June.

While it was prepared to keep to a tough rate regime to beat inflation, the FOMC said it was "prepared to adjust the stance of monetary policy as appropriate if risks emerge that could impede the attainment of the Committee's goals."

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Rising Number of Americans Say Inflation Most Important Issue Ahead of US Elections - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - More voters than in previous months are considering inflation to be the most important issue facing the United States ahead of midterm elections next week, a new Quinnipiac University poll revealed on Wednesday.

A plurality of respondents, 36%, chose inflation as the most urgent issue facing the United States, up 9 percentage points since late August, a report on the poll said. Abortion ranked as second issue in terms of importance by 10% of respondents, the report said.

Republicans rank inflation as the issue of highest priority more than Democrats, with 57% and 15% choosing inflation, respectively, the report said. Democrats rank abortion as being a more urgent issue than inflation with 19% saying abortion is a priority, the report said. Republicans' second-highest ranked issue was illegal immigration, at 15%.

Inflation also ranked as the highest priority among independents, with 41% placing it first and no other issue reaching double digits, the report.

Poll results from the Wall Street Journal released on Wednesday similarly found that inflation was the number one issue for a plurality of white suburban women - a key voting group in the United States. Over one-third, 34%, called rising prices their top voting issue while 16% listed abortion, according to the poll.

The poll placed Republicans 4 percentage points ahead of Democrats as favorites to win the US House of Representatives in midterm elections and 3 percentage points ahead as favorites to win the Senate.

The US midterm elections are scheduled to take place on November 8, with all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 35 Senate seats up for grabs.

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CBC To Close Office in China After Failing to Get Employee Visa for Two Years – Statement

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) –The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) said on Wednesday it will close its office in Beijing after failing for two consecutive years to secure visas for its journalists.

"There is no point keeping an empty bureau when we could easily set up elsewhere in a different country that welcomes journalists and respects journalistic scrutiny," CBC News editor-in-chief Brodie Fenlon said in a blog post.

According to Fenlon, the decision comes after "numerous exchanges and requests for meetings with the Chinese Consulate in Montreal" to secure a visa for Philippe Leblanc, a journalist with Radio-Canada.

The CBC's last Beijing correspondent, Saša Petricic, returned to Canada after lockdown in China amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"While there was no dramatic expulsion or pointed public statements, the effect is the same. We can't get visas for our journalists to work there as permanent correspondents," Fenlon wrote.

The closure of the CBC's bureau in Beijing will effectively be putting an end to over forty years of presence in China.

Earlier this year, the CBC also had to close its office in Moscow as a result of the Canadian government banning the broadcast of Russia Today (RT) and various other Russian state affiliated media in the country.

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UN Not Aware of Any Conditions Under Which Russia Would Rejoin Grain Agreement - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is not aware of any conditions under which Russia would re-join the grain exports agreement, formally known as the Black Sea Grain Initiative, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Wednesday.

"No," Dujarric told journalists asked if he was aware of any conditions under which Russia would re-join the grain exports agreement.

On Saturday, Russia suspended its participation in the United Nations-brokered grain agreement after its military and civilian ships were attacked by Ukraine in the bay of Sevastopol. Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the incident with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday. Shortly after the talks, Erdogan announced that Russia was returning to the grain agreement.

Putin confirmed that instructions were given to the Russian Defense Ministry to resume participation in the grain agreement, but added that Russia reserves the right to withdraw from it if Ukraine breaches its guarantees.

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White Suburban Women Favor Republicans by 15 Percentage Points Ahead of US Elections -Poll

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - White women who live in suburban areas in the United States favor Republican candidates by 15 percentage points over Democrats ahead of US midterm elections on November 8, a new Wall Street Journal poll revealed on Wednesday. White women living in suburban areas, considered a key electoral demographic who makes up 20% of the electorate, favor Republican congressional candidates by 15 points, a report on the poll said.

The figure represents a 27-point shift away from Democrats since the organization's last poll in August, the report said.

The survey revealed greater concern among white suburban women about the US economy compared to issues such as abortion, the report said.

Over half of white suburban women, or 54%, said they believe the United States is already in a recession and nearly three-quarters, or 74%, said they think the economy is headed in the wrong direction.

In August, the figures were 43% and 59%, respectively, the report noted.

The poll found that rising prices were the number one priority issue for a plurality of the demographic, 34%. In comparison, 16% listed abortion as their top voting issue, the report said. White suburban women trust Republicans more than Democrats to handle the economy and rising inflation, the report also said. Moreover, 85% of the demographic said they are motivated to vote, placing them among the most-motivated electoral groups, the report added.

The poll was conducted from October 22-26 and surveyed 1,500 registered US voters.

US midterm elections are scheduled to take place on November 8, with all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 35 Senate seats up for grabs. Most analysts predict the Republicans will win a majority in the House while getting control of the Senate remains more competitive.

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UN Refugee Aid Programs Face Enormous Pressure Due to Luck of Funding - Commissioner

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United Nations faces serious problems with securign funding for humanitarian aid program for refugees, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said on Wednesday.

"We need more resources. Humanitarian aid is under enormous pressure," Grandi said during a UN Security Council meeting.

Grandi noted that his office faces a major funding gap this year for some of its crucial operations pertaining to refugees.

"Food aid for refugees has been cut in many operations despite the help of the United States and other states," he said.

Grandi also highlighted the importance of maintaining peacekeeping efforts that allow refugees and the displaced to safely return home.

"Peace building is crucial to resolving displacement," Grandi added.

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IMF Appoints Argentina, Ukraine Negotiator Julie Kozack as New Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund named on Wednesday Julie Kozack, a veteran economist in charge of negotiations with Ukraine, as its new director of strategic communications.

"Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), announced today her intention to appoint Julie Kozack as the IMF's Director of Strategic Communications (COM)," the press release said.

Kozack, a US national, is currently a deputy director in the European Department and is overseeing the IMF's work in Ukraine. She also served as deputy director in the Western Hemisphere Department, and lead negotiator for Argentina on its newest program. In addition, she was the mission chief for Iceland, Germany, Poland, and Lithuania, and served as deputy mission chief for Russia.

"Julie's stellar career at the Fund over more than two decades reflects not only her standing as a top-notch economist and institutional leader, including as mission chief and lead negotiator on high-profile crisis countries, but also her exceptional communication skills," Georgieva was quoted as saying in the release.

Kozack's predecessor, Gerry Rice, announced his retirement from the fund on July 22.

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High Inequality, Food Insecurity May Result in Social Unrest in Western Hemisphere - IMF

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is of the opinion that high inequality and food insecurity in the Western hemisphere may create conditions for social unrest, IMF Western Hemisphere Department Acting Director Nigel Chalk said on Wednesday.

"Elevated inequality with greater food insecurity with high energy and food prices create a potential for social unrest," Chalk told reporters.

The region is going to face additional challenges in 2023 as economic growth is projected to slow and the situation is expected to be worse than it currently is amid runaway inflation, Chalk said.

"Restoring price stability has to be a priority," Chalk added.

Earlier on Wednesday, the IMF said in its regional economic outlook that Latin America will face high inflation, which will reach 7.8% by the end of this year and 4.9% by the end of 2023.

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US to Work With Partners to Remove Iran From UN Commission on Status of Women - Harris

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States will work with its partners to have Iran expelled from the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Vice President Kamala Harris said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The United States believes that no nation that systematically abuses the rights of women and girls should play a role in any international or United Nations body charged with protecting these very same rights," Harris said. "Iran has demonstrated through its denial of women's rights and brutal crackdown on its own people that it is unfit to serve on this Commission; Iran's very presence discredits the integrity of its membership and the work to advance its mandate. This is why today the United States is announcing our intention to work with our partners to remove Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women."

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Twitter Flags White House Tweet Over Misinformation About Social Security Check Claims

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Twitter flagged a White House tweet earlier on Wednesday that inaccurately gave credit to President Joe Biden for an increase in funding Americans are receiving in their Social Security payments.

Twitter provided context to the tweet informing users that the increase in Social Security checks for seniors is actually due to inflation.

"The community notes feature is awesome. Our goal is to make Twitter the most accurate source of information on Earth, without regard to political affiliation," the company's new owner, billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, said.

Earlier on Wednesday, the original flagged tweet said seniors in the United States are getting the biggest increase in their Social Security checks in ten years because of Biden.

The White House has since deleted the tweet.

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US Oil Reserve Dips Below Key 400Mln Barrel Mark as Biden Administration Fights OPEC+

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) has fallen below the key 400 million-barrel mark as the Biden administration keeps drawing down crude from the SPR to keep fuel prices low in the United States even as global producers under the

OPEC+ alliance slash production to get higher revenues for their oil, government data showed on Wednesday.

As of the week that ended on October 28, the SPR's balance stood at 399.8 million barrels, the lowest level since May 1984. The Biden administration has drawn down some 240 million barrels from the SPR over the past year to alleviate a global deficit in crude supply that could send prices at the pump in the United States spiraling.

Prices at the pump did hit record highs of just above \$5 per gallon in mid-June as fuel consumption in the United States peaked at the height of summer, but they have since decreased, averaging below \$4 per gallon.

President Joe Biden has taken much heat from rival Republicans who have accused him of risking the nation's emergency oil reserves to try and appease voters and defend the Democrats' control of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The US midterm elections are on November 8 and polls so far indicate that the Democrats could lose control of either or both chambers of Congress.

"The SPR is likely to become an even hotter political potato now that the reserve has fallen below the 400 million-barrel mark," John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital, said.

Criticism against Biden's use of the SPR has also come from abroad. Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman has cautioned about the pitfalls of using national oil reserves to keep a lid on market prices of both crude and fuel.

"It is my profound duty to make clear to the world that losing (releasing) emergency stocks may be painful in the months to come," the minister said at an industry conference in Riyadh last month.

Abdulaziz's remarks came after Biden announced in October an additional release of 15 million barrels from the SPR this month to coincide with the 2 million barrels per day cut in global oil supply announced by the OPEC+ alliance of global oil producers. Saudi Arabia and Russia are the main players in OPEC+.

Crude prices, as measured by global benchmark Brent, hit 14-year highs of almost \$140 per barrel in March, after early supply disruptions caused by the Ukraine conflict. Prices have since come down to below \$100 per barrel.

Biden has defended his administration's use of the SPR saying his priority is alleviating the hardship of Americans suffering from the worst inflation in 40 years, contributed significantly by high energy prices.

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Gen. Saltzman Takes Charge of US Space Force, Vows to Make Branch Combat-Ready

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - Gen. Bradley Chance Saltzman officially took charge of the US Space Force on Wednesday following the retirement of former chief Gen. John Raymond, promising to develop the fledgling military branch into a combat-ready force.

"The world is becoming an increasingly dangerous place and preserving US national security interests in space is growing harder every day," Saltzman said during remarks at a change of command ceremony. "If deterrence fails, the Space Force will be an indispensable component of our joint force at war ... You have my commitment that I will work relentlessly to make the Space Force the combat-ready force that our nation needs."

As Chief of Space Operations, Saltzman will lead the Space Force, serve as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and advise the National Security Council. Saltzman started work at the Space Force as deputy chief of space operations for operations, cyber, and nuclear.

On Tuesday, Russian deputy representative at the UN First Committee on Disarmament, Konstanin Vorontsov, said that Western countries are attempting to consolidate space as an arena for military activities and confrontation.

Earlier that day, the committee adopted three resolutions proposed by Russia calling on states to prevent an arms race in space and urging the development of a plan to address the possibility of warfare in space.

The US Space Force is the newest of the military's eight uniformed services, falling under the Department of the Air Force. The branch was founded in December 2019 under former US President Donald Trump.

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Federal Reserve May Need to Tighten Monetary Policy if Inflation Proves Persistent - IMF

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve may need to implement a tougher monetary policy if inflation in the United States becomes more persistent than anticipated, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its economic outlook for the Western hemisphere on Wednesday.

"If inflation proves more persistent than currently expected, the Federal Reserve would need to tighten monetary policy more and growth prospects would worsen," the report said.

The IMF noted that the increase of prices in the United States this year was accompanied by a rapid depletion of economic slack, persistent supply chain disruptions and labor shortages. In addition, comprehensive Western sanctions implemented against Russia in response to its special military operation in Ukraine have exacerbated price increases for energy and food.

"A pickup in wage growth, initially limited to lower-income workers, has become broad-based since late 2021, with the employment cost index of private sector wages and salaries growing by 5.7% year-over-year in the second quarter of 2022, but real wages have continued falling for most US workers," the report said.

The IMF also said in the report that Canada will face decreasing inflation for the remainder of this year and during the next year.

"Headline inflation is projected to moderate to 6.9% by the end of 2022 and 3.2% by the end of 2023 as the energy and food-price shock dissipates and excess demand responds to monetary tightening both domestically and abroad," the report said.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the IMF expects a deceleration of inflation at the end of 2022 and during the next year as output is reaching its near potential in most countries and external conditions turn less favorable.

The IMF said it projects inflation in the region to reach 7.8% by the end of 2022 and 4.9% by the end of 2023.

"The expected duration of this inflation episode (that is, until inflation returns to the tolerance bands) is commensurate to the observed inflation overshooting, in line with past episodes, although the large deviations from the target this time warrant a cautious interpretation of the historical relationships," the report said.

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Biden Informs US Congress He Will Terminate Burkina Faso's Designation as AGOA Beneficiary

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden on Wednesday sent a letter to US Senate President Kamala Harris and House Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi informing them that he intends to terminate the designation of Burkina Faso as a beneficiary under the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

"In accordance with section 506A(a)(3)(B) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (19 U.S.C. 2466a(a)(3)(B)), I am providing advance notification of my intent to terminate the designation of Burkina Faso as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)," Biden said in the letter published by the White House.

Biden said the termination was due to Burkina Faso not making continual progress toward establishing the rule of law and political pluralism as required by the AGOA.

The US president said the termination will be effective on January 1, 2023.

Biden added that he will continue to monitor the situation and assess whether the Burkina Faso is making progress toward meeting the AGOA eligibility requirements.

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White House Says North Korea Supplying Russia With Significant Number of Artillery Shells (Updates with more details in paras 3-8; completes quote in para 2)

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Tuesday that North Korea is providing Russia with a significant number of artillery shells to use in the special military operation in Ukraine.

"Our information indicates that the DPRK [North Korea] is covertly supplying Russia's war in Ukraine with a significant number of artillery shells, while obfuscating the shipments, by making it appear they are going to countries in the Middle East and North Africa," Kirby said.

At the same time, Kirby could not confirm whether Russia has received any shipments from North Korea.

The number of shells that North Korea is allegedly sending to Russia is "not insignificant," but the White House does not believe the supplies can tangibly change the direction of the conflict in Ukraine, Kirby said.

"We don't believe that the material he [Russian President Vladimir Putin] is currently getting or going to get is going to change the outcome on the battlefield in any appreciable way," Kirby said.

The United States will raise the issue during consultations with its allies and partners, and will also do so at the United Nations regarding undertaking any additional accountability measures against North Korea, Kirby added.

In September, the United States said it saw indications that Russia approached North Korea to purchase ammunition. In addition, US media reported, citing Biden administration officials, that Moscow is looking to buy artillery shells as well as missiles from Pyongyang.

Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia has since denied the claims.

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IMF Tentatively Agrees to Provide \$2.4Bln Loan to Serbia

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund said on Wednesday it has tentatively agreed to provide a \$2.4 billion loan to Serbia.

"I am pleased to announce that the IMF team and the Serbian authorities have reached staff-level agreement on a 24-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with access amounting to SDR 1.9 billion, equivalent to about EUR 2.4 billion," IMF Head of Mission to Serbia Jan Kees Martijn said in a press release. "This arrangement would help address emerging external and fiscal financing needs given the challenging global economic environment and support the authorities' macroeconomic policies and structural reform efforts, with a focus on the energy sector."

Martijn noted that Serbia was facing the fallout from regional and global challenges, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict. GDP growth is predicted to slow to about 2.5% this year and 2.25% next year because of weaker demand from EU trading partners, higher energy prices, supply chain disruptions, and the recent drought. The current account deficit is also expected to increase to 9% of GDP both this year and the next.

The authorities intend to use the financing that will become available during the first part of the arrangement and to treat the remaining access as precautionary. The SBA is subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board, which is expected to consider it in December.

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## Former CIA Chief Pompeo Served With Lawsuit Alleging US Spied on Julian Assange Visitors

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - A group of US citizen journalists and lawyers who visited WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange while he lived under asylum at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London served former CIA Director Mike Pompeo with a lawsuit alleging the US government spied on them during their visits, a video shared by the Assange Defense Committee shows.

Assange, wanted by the US government on charges of disclosing classified information and violating the Espionage Act, took refuge at the Ecuadorian Embassy from June 2012 until his arrest in April 2019, after which hearings began to extradite him to the United States.

Plaintiffs in the lawsuit, which was filed in August, include attorneys and journalists who met with Assange while he lived in the embassy. The lawsuit alleges that the visitors were required to surrender their electronic devices to private security personnel before meeting with Assange. The private security personnel copied information from the devices and gave it to the CIA, then headed by Pompeo, without the plaintiffs' or the Ecuadorian government's knowledge, according to the lawsuit.

The group is suing Pompeo, CIA and the private security company and its CEO.

On Tuesday, the Assange Defense Committee shared a video on social media showing Pompeo getting served with the lawsuit, providing formal notice of the court case against him as is typically required in civil cases.

Last month, the CIA confirmed receipt of its summons to court, according to court filings.

The plaintiffs claim that the alleged surveillance amounts to a violation of the Fourth Amendment of the US Constitution, which guarantees a right to privacy. The lawsuit requests a jury assess the case and award damages. Additionally, it requests the CIA purge any files it may have related to the allegations.

The lawsuit was filed in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York.

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## Biden to Deliver Unscheduled Speech on Democracy on Wednesday - White House

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will deliver an unscheduled speech on democracy on Wednesday, with less than a week before the midterms, White House officials said.

"Biden has been speaking about democracy for the entire time he's been in office. You can expect to hear from him this evening, similar to what he's been saying over the course of the last several months, that there is a lot at stake, including democracy, and that everyone has a role in that," Deputy Chief of Staff Jen O'Malley Dillon said during an Axios event.

Biden will give the speech at a Democratic National Committee event in the Capitol Hill area, White House senior adviser Anita Dunn added.

On November 8, all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 35 seats in the Senate will be up for grabs as Democrats seek to keep their legislative majority and Republicans vie to take back the House.

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UN Chief Welcomes Russia Resuming Participation in Grain Deal

UNITED NATIONS, November 2 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomes that Russia resumed its participation in the Black Sea grain initiative and he remains committed to removing obstacles to exports of Russian food and fertilizer, a UN spokesperson said on Wednesday.

"The Secretary-General warmly welcomes the announcement from the Russian Federation on its resumed participation in the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative to facilitate the safe navigation for exports of grain, foodstuffs and fertilizer from Ukraine. He is grateful for the diplomatic efforts of Türkiye, and thanks the UN Coordinator, Amir Abdulla, and his team for their work to keep this vital food supply line open," the spokesperson said in a statement. Guterres continues his engagement with all actors toward the renewal and full implementation of the initiative, and he also "remains committed to removing the remaining obstacles to the exports of Russian food and fertilizer," the statement added.

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US Would Welcome China Pressing North Korea Toward Denuclearization – Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – The United States would welcome China using its influence to press Pyongyang toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but is not seeing this happen, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"We do know that Beijing has an influence on Pyongyang. It may not be an absolute influence, but they have influence and we've said many times that we would welcome Beijing using the influence that they have on Pyongyang to a positive effect when it comes to the denuclearization of the peninsula, but we're not seeing that sort of influence being exerted by Beijing," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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White House Says North Korea Supplying Russia With Significant Number of Artillery Shells

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"Our information indicates that the DPRK is covertly supplying Russia's war in Ukraine with a significant number of artillery shells," Kirby said.

In September, the United States said that it sees indications that Russia approached North Korea in order to purchase ammunition. US media also reported, citing Biden administration officials, that Moscow is looking to buy missiles and artillery shells from Pyongyang. Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia has since denied the claims.

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White House Condemns North Korea's Latest Missile Launches

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) - The United States denounces North Korea's latest missile launches, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"I know you've all seen reports pouring overnight with additional missile launches. We of course condemn these missile launches," Kirby told a briefing.

North Korea has launched 23 missiles of different types toward the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan in the past 24 hours. Pyongyang said it was in retaliation for a South Korean "provocation," including its recent joint drills with the United States.

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US Assistant Secretary of State Heads to Israel, Egypt for Climate Talks, COP27

WASHINGTON, November 2 (Sputnik) – US Assistant Secretary of State Monica Medina will visit Israel and Egypt this week to discuss climate change and biodiversity issues as well as attend the UN's COP27 conference, the State Department said on Wednesday.

"Medina will travel to Tel Aviv, Israel, from November 3-5 as part of US-Israel collaboration and knowledge-sharing on water reuse issues. While in Israel, she will meet with government officials and nongovernmental organizations and visit U.S.-supported water projects," the press release read.

On November 6, Medina will join the United States delegation to the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in the Egyptian city of Sharm El-Sheikh.

"While at COP27, Assistant Secretary Medina will focus on the intersections between the climate, biodiversity, and water scarcity crises," the release added.

Medina plans to work to advance climate ambition, strengthen climate resilience, and ensure a strong outcome from COP27, according to the State Department.

