

**11/15/22 Tuesday**

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48,000 University of California Workers Demand Better Pay in Biggest Higher Ed Strike in US History  
By - Fantine Gardinier

Tens of thousands of employees of the University of California's 10 college campuses have walked out on strike, demanding higher pay and better benefits in one of the most expensive US states to live.

The United Auto Workers (UAW) labor union, which represents the UC workers, said on Monday night that the strike would continue on Tuesday. The strike has seen 48,000 college employees walk out on strike - the largest such strike at any academic institution in US history, according to the union.

Strikers marching the picket lines carried signs that read: "UAW on strike. Unfair labor practice." Chants of "48,000 strong, we can fight all day long" were also heard.

The [workers have demanded](#) better pay; more benefits, especially for parents; and coverage of their public transit costs, accusing UC of bad-faith bargaining and effective wage cuts by refusing to increase wages as fast as inflation is rising.

UC Workers make an average of \$24,000 a year - almost half of [the cost of living](#) in California, which has the third-highest cost of living of any US state. The striking workers have demanded their pay be increased to \$54,000 per year.

"We are overworked and underpaid, and we are fed up," Jamie Mondello, a 27-year-old psychology graduate student worker at UCLA and member of UAW Local 2865 and Student Researchers United, told the [Los Angeles Times](#). "Our proposals bring everyone into a livable wage. We're, as a whole, just asking to be treated with dignity. We really keep the UC running." Labor actions have [increased in frequency](#) and militancy in recent years in the US as a mixture of rising costs of living and other burdens such as student loan debt combined with safety issues like COVID-19 mitigation measures to push workers into bolder collective action. Labor unions [representing service workers](#) at coffee houses and grocery stores, as well as in warehousing operations like at Amazon, have grown rapidly.

In June, Bank of America executives [gloated in an internal memo](#) about the prospect of a recession, saying that "By the end of next year, we hope the ratio of job openings to unemployed is down to the more normal highs of the last business cycle." That process has already begun, with the unemployment rate [rising to 3.7% last month](#).

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Israel Swears In New Knesset Led by Netanyahu's Right-Wing Coalition

By - Fantine Gardinier

For 18 months, a diverse coalition of parties held power in Israel with the singular goal of keeping Benjamin Netanyahu out of the prime minister's office. However, in the latest election earlier this month, voters put Likud back in power, forcing Yair Lapid out of office and into the opposition once more.

The 120 lawmakers in the Knesset, Israel's unicameral parliament, were sworn in on Tuesday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new coalition takes power, composed of an array of right-wing parties.

The November 3 election was the fifth in four years in Israel, the result of political deadlock that tore [Lapid's cross-spectrum](#) political alliance apart.

In his outgoing speech on Tuesday, Lapid told the new lawmakers that it was necessary to drop their acerbic dispositions and come together civilly.

"We need the 25th Knesset to be a place of debate about opinions and thoughts, not a place whose whole essence is an exchange of insults," Lapid said. "We need it to be the place that the citizens of Israel look up to, not the place where the citizens of Israel are ashamed and ashamed of its representatives."

Left-wing parties lost big in the November vote, and the [right-wing coalition](#) formed by Netanyahu includes Otzma Yehudit (Strength for Israel) and its leader, Itamar Ben-Gvir, widely described as [adhering to the ideology](#) of the anti-Arab ideologue Meir Kahane. Ben-Gvir has been given the Public Security Ministry portfolio in the new government, and pledged on Tuesday to "teach our enemies a lesson."

"If we enter into the Public Security Ministry, we will, with God's help, do everything to fight terror attacks, we'll do everything to return deterrence to the State of Israel, we'll do everything to back up police officers and soldiers, we'll do everything to teach our enemies a lesson, that it's not possible to mess with Israel," he said.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog also spoke, condemning violence in the West Bank town of Ariel that killed three Israelis that morning and injured several others. However, he also called on the newly empowered right-wing coalition not to let its zeal for security undermine the rights of minority groups, including Palestinians and the LGBTQ community, which have both [been targets of parties](#) in Netanyahu's coalition.

"There are also communities, and especially minorities, who are fearful that their needs will not be on the agenda," he said. "You, the public's elected representatives, must give this your consideration and keep them in your sights, too."

Roughly 1.9 million Palestinian Arabs live inside Israel's borders, and another 2.1 million Arabs in the West Bank and 1.8 million who live in the Gaza Strip, meaning some 5.8 million Arabs live under some form of Israeli rule. Israel's military control over the West Bank and blockade of Gaza have both been denounced by the United Nations [as illegal and harmful](#) to the rights of Palestinians.

Ahamad Tibi, leader of the Palestinian Ta'al party and one of just 10 Arab delegates to the Knesset, denounced the anti-Arab politics of Ben-Gvir and his running mate, Religious Zionism leader Bezalel Smotrich, saying that with their entry into the ruling coalition, "Kahanism and fascism have become official."

“We’ll get over the fascism of Smotrich and Ben Gvir, it’s not just an Arab problem, it’s mostly a Jewish problem,” Tibi said. However, he added that “Any attempt to harm or change the status quo in the mosque or any meter of the plaza will ignite” the Middle East.

Ben-Gvir has [publicly called for destroying](#) the Muslim shrines atop the Temple Mount, which include Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Previous Jewish incursions at the site have triggered widespread violence, including [an 11-day war](#) between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza.

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Georgia Judge Strikes Down State’s ‘Unequivocally Unconstitutional’ Six-Week Abortion Ban  
By - Fantine Gardinier

On Tuesday, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney struck down a 2019 law that banned abortions at six weeks after conception, when a so-called “fetal heartbeat” can be detected.

[In his ruling](#), Judge McBurney said that “everywhere in America, including Georgia, it was unequivocally unconstitutional for governments - federal, state, or local - to ban abortions before viability ... It did not become the law of Georgia when it was enacted and it is not the law of Georgia now.”

However, he noted that following the US Supreme Court’s June decision in Dobbs vs. Jackson to overturn its previous abortion-legalizing ruling in the Roe vs. Wade case, “it may someday become the law of Georgia, but only after our Legislature determines in the sharp glare of public attention that will undoubtedly and properly attend such an important and consequential debate whether the rights of unborn children justify such a restriction on women’s right to bodily autonomy and privacy.”

The state of Georgia, led by recently reelected Republican Governor Brian Kemp, has said it will appeal the decision.

Removal of the 2019 law means that until Judge McBurney’s ruling is overturned on appeal or Georgia passes a new law, abortions in the state remain legal until the 22nd week of pregnancy. The decision is a big victory for abortion defense activists, who had considered the state to be [at risk of a near-complete](#) abortion ban in the wake of the Dobbs ruling, [as numerous other](#) conservative-dominated states have done.

So-called “heartbeat” laws have proliferated in recent years, but [women’s health experts](#) say the laws are based on faulty science, since what they inaccurately define as a “heartbeat” is electrical signals in a cluster of cells that will one day grow into a heart. Moreover, it’s not even called a fetus at the time that it becomes detectable - roughly six weeks after conception - but is still an embryo. According to abortion providers, that would ban 85% of abortions, since most people do not even know they are pregnant yet at six weeks after conception.

As a consequence of Georgia’s law, the state’s Department of Revenue made it possible for taxpayers to [claim as a dependent](#) an embryo or fetus that has reached the stage where such signals are detectable.

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Trump-Backed Kari Lake Calls 'BS' After US Media Declares Katie Hobbs Winner in AZ Governor's Race  
By - Fantine Gardinier

With the ballot count incomplete on Monday evening, US media began declaring Democratic candidate Katie Hobbs the victor over Republican Kari Lake in the race for Governor of Arizona. According to local media, the call was made after Maricopa County, which includes the state's central metropolis of Phoenix, finally submitted the results of its 94,000 outstanding ballots. While 56.8% of them went for Lake, it wasn't enough for the Republican candidate to make up the gap between her and Hobbs.

However, some 27,000 ballots have not yet been counted, with at least 10,000 of them from the border counties in which Lake has performed well. The gap between Lake and Hobbs is roughly 20,000 votes.

After media informally called the race for Hobbs, who is presently Arizona's Secretary of State, she [tweeted out a statement](#) saying that "democracy was worth the wait." The race is among the last from the November 8 election to remain undecided.

However, Lake has so far refused to concede the race, and tweeted "Arizonans know BS when they see it" on Monday night. She did not provide evidence or context for the claim.

Arizona doesn't have a unified Board of Elections, but rather [a decentralized network](#) of election boards for each of its 15 counties. The Secretary of State - Hobbs - is responsible for the final certification of the state's ballot counts. Prior to the election, Lake demanded Hobbs recuse herself from this position.

Lake, a former TV news anchor in Phoenix, won an endorsement from former US President Donald Trump in the gubernatorial race. Her politics closely mirror his, including pushing COVID-19 misinformation and denying the results of the 2020 US presidential election, which Trump lost to Joe Biden.

The Grand Canyon State played a prominent role in Trump's rejection of the 2020 election results, with Trump claiming that Biden's victory there was the result of fraud, and numerous [Republican politicians](#) in and from Arizona openly challenging the legitimacy of the results.

Trump afterward sued Hobbs, the Arizona Secretary of State, claiming that some incorrectly-filled-out ballots had been wrongly discarded, but withdrew the suit a few days later, when it became apparent that the ballots in question could not give him a majority.

In the 2022 campaign, Hobbs ran on a ticket of continuity and stability, casting Lake as an agent of chaos. Lake [ran on a campaign](#) of challenging federal government authority and a defender of election legitimacy.

Lake's apparent defeat is the latest in a string of losses by Trump-backed candidates in last week's election. Democrats have celebrated the "red trickle" that manifested instead of [the "red wave"](#) of conservative victories predicted by much of the press, but with other close races still

undecided, it's not clear if the Democrats will retain control over the US House of Representatives.

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Video: Massive Blaze Breaks Out in Istanbul Days After Terror Attack  
By - Mary Manley

A massive fire has erupted across Istanbul, Turkey just days after a bombing, now deemed a terrorist attack by government officials, in the country's capital. The bombing left at least people dead and another 81 injured. A Syrian woman named Ahlam Albashir admitted to the attack, and did so under the orders of Syria's Democratic Union Party (PYD).

A massive fire erupted in Istanbul, Turkey, late Tuesday and consumed four cars parked in the area, days after the city was rattled by a terror attack over the weekend. The blaze has since been extinguished by first responders.

The blaze occurred in the Fatih district of Istanbul, which is located just 8 kilometers (5 miles) from Taksim Square.

Video footage of the incident documented the flames and showed a growing crowd standing in awe of the developments.

Sputnik Turkey [reported](#) the flames erupted moments after a driver had stopped their vehicle, noticing that smoke was being emitted from the car. At the time, the individual had called for help.

Aside from the four vehicles, the blaze also damaged a building and an ATM located near the scene.

With first responders having extinguished the flames, an official investigation into the incident has been launched by officials. The vehicle has been towed out of the area.

The Tuesday blaze comes just a day after Turkish authorities announced the identity of the [bomber](#) who attacked shoppers in broad daylight on Istiklal Avenue, in Taksim Square over the weekend.

A Syrian woman named Ahlam [Albashir](#), said she was responsible for Sunday's bombing after she was given orders to do so by the PYD, which Turkey views as a Syrian affiliate of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), a Marxist-Leninist rebel group that Turkey has been fighting since 1984.

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Those Who Smoke Cannabis Are More Likely to Develop Emphysema Than Cigarette Users - Study  
By - Mary Manley

Emphysema is a condition in which the inner walls of the lungs' air sacs (alveoli) are damaged and stretched before eventually rupturing, reducing the amount of oxygen that reaches a person's bloodstream. A person with emphysema can experience shortness of breath and will most likely develop chronic bronchitis.

A new study published in the journal [Radiology](#) shows that those who smoke cannabis, which is the second most smoked substance after tobacco, are more likely to develop emphysema than those who smoke tobacco. Cannabis smokers, according to the study, were also more likely to have higher rates of airway inflammation.

Mucus buildup in the airways, bronchial wall thickening, and irreversible enlargement of the airways were also seen as symptoms in cannabis smokers. And though it's already known, men who smoke marijuana also have higher rates of gynecomastia (increased breast tissue growth). In a case-control study, scientists looked at chest CT scans from October 2005 to July 2020 in marijuana smokers, nonsmoker control patients, and tobacco-only smokers. They then compared rates of emphysema, airway changes, gynecomastia, and coronary artery calcification.

In the study, 146 participants were observed, 56 of whom smoked cannabis, 57 were nonsmoker control patients, and 33 were tobacco-only smokers. The researchers found that those who smoke cannabis had higher rates of airway changes than those who smoke cigarettes, or those who don't smoke at all.

"93% of the marijuana smokers had emphysema rather than 67% of the tobacco-only smokers," said Doctor Giselle [Revah](#), the lead author of the study and a cardiothoracic radiologist at Ottawa Hospital in Canada, as well as an assistant professor in the department of radiology, radiation oncology and medical physics at the University of Ottawa.

"This can lead to more congestive symptoms and predisposition to infections," Revah noted. "Ultimately, we need more robust research before we can make sweeping conclusions." Researchers suggest that because marijuana is unfiltered, this may be contributing to lung damage.

"When marijuana is inhaled, more particulates reach the airways and are deposited," Revah explained. These particulates are likely airway irritants. The way marijuana is inhaled compared to tobacco with longer breath hold [and] higher puff volume may lead to microtrauma to the airspaces causing little holes (emphysema)."

Revah adds that other forms of cannabis, such as edibles, lotions or oils, will most likely not have the same effect on users as inhaling smoke.

"The problems that we identified in our study were airway problems (from smoke inhalation)," the lead author said. "It would suggest that vaping, smoking, and pipes may cause these problems. Other forms of [cannabis]: eating, lotions are unlikely to affect the airways — but ultimately, more research is still needed."

Since its legalization, the use of marijuana has increased across the United [States](#). Maine was one of nine states to legalize marijuana since Colorado and Washington first approved the initiative to legalize the drug in 2012. After Maine legalized marijuana in 2016, use grew from about 12% between 2003 and 2009 to almost 24% in 2018.

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Watch Out! Fire Ants Are Invading Hawaii & Stinging People in Their Sleep, Officials Say

By - Mary Manley

The invasive species, which the government is saying will “rain” down on residents and tourists, first affected the tropical state in 1999. The infestation in Hawaii’s fourth-largest island poses a risk to pets, agriculture, and the health of residents.

Little fire ants are “raining down” on people in Kauai, Hawaii, where millions of the insects were discovered on a private property, says the Kauai Invasive Species Committee, which is tasked with containing the spread.

The ants' sting causes welts that swell, burn and itch, and can last for weeks. The ants can also cause pets to go blind.

The committee is launching a media campaign to inform residents of the [ants](#), and are alerting residents of free-at-home test kits to detect their presence. The ants are only 1.5 millimeters in length (half the size of a sesame seed) and do not build mounded dirt nests but instead nest in trees, potted plants, irrigation lines, and even electrical boxes, or the like.

The infestations are “often discovered when ants fall on people from above,” government officials say.

"They're changing the way of life for our residents here in Hawaii," said Heather [Forester](#), who works for Hawaii Ant Lab. "You used to be able to go out hiking and go to the beach. They can rain down on people and sting them."

Hawaii, Maui, and Oahu, have also experienced varying degrees of infestation, added Forester, who says the Hawaii Ant Lab has been getting a “lot of reports” of ants stinging people while they sleep in their beds.

The ants, which originated on a private property, had spread over a cliffside into a valley near the Wailua River, said Haylin Chock, the committee’s general outreach specialist. If the infestation has reached the water, the insects will be able to float down and create multiple colonies.

Officials are urging residents to contact them if they find the fire ants on any island, and to survey their property and to test materials, mulch, plants, agricultural products, and construction materials.

"Our team is really good at what they do," said Chock. "I'm going to say that we're hopeful that it hasn't spread that far. I'm confident that we can keep it contained."

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‘America’s Comeback Starts Right Now’: Trump Officially Announces Bid for 2024 Presidential Election

By - Mary Manley

For months, the former US president raised the idea of running in the 2024 presidential election, but steered to mostly toying with supporters on whether or not he would actually make his bid official.

Former US President Donald Trump officially submitted paperwork with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) late [Tuesday](#), formally filing paperwork for his 2024 presidential campaign. Trump's filing with the FEC came minutes before he addressed supporters at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Palm Beach, Florida, and publicly declared himself as a candidate for the 2024 race.

"My fellow citizens, America's comeback starts right now," Trump began in his opening remarks to supporters, later going on to refer to what he called a "movement" but failing to expand on his meaning. "There's never been anything to compete with what we have all done."

"Together we built the greatest economy in the history of the world, when the [COVID-19] virus hit our shores I took decisive action and saved lives and the US economy, and by October of the same year, America was roaring back with the number one fastest economic recovery ever recorded, how about that?" said Trump in a calm and steady voice, an unfamiliar articulation for the president who ran on a platform of "telling it like it is."

"China was paying billions and billions of dollars in taxes and tariffs," he continued. "No president had ever sought or received one dollar from China until I came along and we were getting hundreds of billions of dollars, many people think that because of this China played a pretty active role in the 2020 election, just saying, just saying."

"The world was at peace, America was prospering and our country was on track for an amazing future, because I made big promises to the American people, and unlike other presidents I kept my promises," claimed the former president.

"For million of Americans, the past two years under Joe Biden have been a time of pain, hardship, anxiety, and despair, as we speak inflation is the highest in over 50 years, gas prices have reached the highest levels in history, and expect them to go much higher, now that the strategic national reserves - which I filled up - have been virtually drained in order to keep gasoline prices lower just prior to the election."

Trump then took the opportunity to blame Biden's "open borders" at the US-Mexico border for the increase in [fentanyl](#) in the US, as well as throwing out accusations against lawmakers of not caring about nuclear weapons because they perceive climate change to be a greater threat.

"We are here tonight to declare that it does not have to be this way," Trump said to a room of applause. "Two years ago we were a great nation, and soon we will be a great nation again. The decline of America is being forced upon us by Biden and the radical left lunatics running our government right into the ground. This decline is not a fate we must accept."

Trump then gave his endorsement to Herschel [Walker](#), the controversial Republican candidate who is running for a US Senate seat in Georgia.

"A fabulous human being who loves our country and will be a great United States senator, Herschel Walker, get out and vote for Herschel Walker," Trump said, calling Walker an "America first leader", in reference to candidates he has [backed](#) who have supported his lie that the 2020 election was stolen.

"In order to make America great and glorious again, I am tonight announcing my candidacy for president of the United States," Trump announced. "This will not be my campaign, this will be

our campaign, all together. Because the only force strong enough to defeat the mass corruption we're up against is you, the American people."

Jaime Harrison, an attorney and politician and chairman of the Democratic National Committee responded to Trump's announcement, saying that it was just the "kickoff" to what will be a "messy Republican primary."

Trump's bid for presidency comes a day after the chairman of the House committee (tasked with investigating the January 6 attack on the Capitol) said that Trump may be held in contempt of Congress for failing to appear for a scheduled deposition. Trump also filed a lawsuit against the panel on Friday, in an effort to block their subpoena requesting him to testify and hand over documents related to the insurrection.

"That could be an option. And we'll have to wait and see," said Rep. Bennie [Thompson](#) (D-MS). "The first thing we'll do is see how we address the lawsuit. At some point after that, we'll decide the path forward."

Trump's bid for presidency may not hold much weight at the moment. His former running mate, former Vice President Mike [Pence](#), earlier said voters will have "better choices" than Trump when voting for their GOP candidate in 2024.

A recent [poll](#) also determined that 65% of voters said Trump should not run for president, while the former president has also received criticism from members of his own party for backing candidates with extreme policies because of their loyalty to him, despite their weak favorability among voters.

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FBI Chief Claims China Has Stolen More US Data Than 'Every Other Nation Combined'  
By - Mary Manley

The FBI head's statement on Tuesday comes just a day after President Joe Biden met with China's leader Xi Jinping in an effort to repair a damaged relationship between the two nations. The meeting was warm but blunt, and covered Russia's military operation in Ukraine, tension in the Taiwan Strait, and North Korea's missile tests.

Christopher [Wray](#), the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, told the House Homeland Security Committee on Tuesday that China has stolen more data from American businesses and private persons than any other nation.

One of the main security concerns that worries Wray is the social media app [TikTok](#), which is owned by Beijing-based Bytedance, and is subject to fall under China's 2017 National Intelligence Law that requires citizens and businesses to assist in intelligence gathering, and to share collected intelligence.

"China's vast hacking program is the world's largest and they have stolen more Americans personal and business data than every other nation combined," said Wray, who served as an assistant attorney general under former President George W. Bush.

"We do have national security concerns at least from the FBI's end about TikTok," Wray said. "They include the possibility that the Chinese government could use it to control data collection

on millions of users. Or control the recommendation algorithm, which could be used for influence operations if they so chose. Or to control software on millions of devices, which gives it the opportunity to potentially technically compromise personal devices.”

Wray added that “there’s a number of concerns there as to what is actually happening and actually being done” in relation to whether or not TikTok is sharing data information with the Chinese government, the details of which remain unknown.

The official's concerns have previously been touched on by former US President Donald Trump and Sens. Marco [Rubio](#) (R-FL) and Mark Warner (D-VA), as well as Brendan Carr, the Republican Federal Communications commissioner who earlier called for Google and Apple to ban the app from their stores.

In fact, both Rubio and Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) recently called for an all-out ban against TikTok in an opinion piece that cited allegations of China's perceived abuses of the app, which can be used to track a mobile phone's location and collect Internet-browsing data.

Meanwhile, certain branches of the government including the military have already banned their workers from having the app on their phones.

TikTok, one of the most popular apps in the world, has more than 1 billion users (as of September 2021), and has Silicon Valley CEOs trying to figure out how they can compete with the Beijing-based company.

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US Has Nothing to Contradict Claims That Ukrainian Missile Struck Poland - White House

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The United States has no reason to contradict Warsaw's assessment that a Ukrainian missile struck Polish territory, National Security Council Spokesperson Adrienne Watson said on Wednesday.

"We have seen nothing that contradicts President [Andrzej] Duda's preliminary assessment that this explosion was most likely the result of a Ukrainian air defense missile that unfortunately landed in Poland," Watson said in a statement.

However, Watson added, the US believes Russia is "ultimately responsible" for the incident due to its special military operation in Ukraine. The US will remain in close touch with Polish counterparts as information about the incident continues to be gathered, she said.

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Trump Jr. Says US Should Stop Sending Billions to Kiev After Ukraine Missile Hits Poland

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Donald Trump Jr., the son of former US president Donald Trump, said on Wednesday the United States should stop sending billions of dollars in security and economic assistance to Kiev after an Ukrainian missile hit Poland earlier this week.

"Since it was Ukraine's missile that hit our NATO ally Poland, can we at least stop spending billions to arm them now?" Trump Jr. said via Twitter.

Media reported on Tuesday, citing a US official, that a Russian missile fell in a Polish region bordering Ukraine and killed two people. Russia rejected the accusations, describing them as a deliberate effort to escalate the situation in Ukraine.

Earlier on Wednesday, Poland confirmed that Ukrainian forces had fired the missile as they attempted to intercept a barrage of Russian missiles targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure the day before.

US President Joe Biden said it was unlikely that the missile was fired from Russia.

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Majority of Americans Say Trump Should Not Run for President in 2024 - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - A majority of likely US voters say that former President Donald Trump should not run for office again in 2024, a new Rasmussen Reports poll revealed on Wednesday.

Thirty-two percent of respondents said that they believe Trump should run for president again in 2024, while 60 percent said he should not, the poll found.

The poll surveyed 2,000 likely US voters on November 10, 13-15.

On Tuesday evening, Trump announced his intent to run for president again after losing his 2020 reelection bid. During his campaign announcement speech, Trump proposed policies such as term limits on members of Congress, restrictions on lobbying by former US government officials and election reform.

Trump is now set to square off in party primaries against other Republican contenders for the 2024 nomination. Earlier this month, US President Joe Biden said he will decide next year whether to run for reelection.

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US Sanctions 6 Senior Employees of Iran's State Broadcaster IRIB - Treasury

(Updates with more details in paras 3-6; modifies headline, lede)

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The United States has sanctioned six senior employees of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) service, the US Department of the Treasury said in a press release on Wednesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating six senior employees of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the Iranian state-run media corporation that has broadcast hundreds of forced confessions of Iranian, dual national, and international detainees in Iran," the release said.

The broadcaster and its subsidiaries hold a monopoly on television and radio services in Iran and act not as objective media outlets but rather as a critical tool in the Iranian government's mass suppression and censorship campaign against its own people, the release said.

The Treasury Department said in the release that it designated Ali Rezvani and Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour, whom it described as "interrogator-journalists" for cooperating with the the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) and the IRGC Intelligence Organization in extracting and airing forced confessions in the style of documentaries.

IRIB has produced and broadcast televised interviews of individuals being forced to confess that their relatives were not killed by the Iranian authorities during the recent nationwide protests, but died from unrelated causes.

The Treasury Department said it has also sanctioned four senior IRIB officials: Peyman Jebelli, the director of IRIB; Mohsen Bormahani, deputy director of IRIB; Ahmad Noroozi, head of the IRIB World Service; and Yousef Pournavari, director of programs and scheduling at IRIB World Service.

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US Lawmaker Suggests Ukraine Provided White Phosphorus Reportedly Used by Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - White phosphorus weapons reportedly used by Azerbaijan in its conflict with Armenia were provided by Ukraine, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez said on Wednesday.

The topic was raised by Menendez while questioning Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried, as well as Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations Philip Reeker, during a committee hearing on US policy in the Caucasus region.

"Are you familiar with reports of Azerbaijan's reported use of illegal weapons, including white phosphorus and cluster bombs, both of which are internationally prohibited munitions?"

Menendez asked the officials, who responded that they are unfamiliar with the reports. "The white phosphorus is very well reported, unfortunately provided by Ukraine."

In 2020, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denied claims that Kiev provided the weapons to Baku after reports of their involvement emerged.

At the time, Zelenskyy said Ukraine "does not support supplying any weapons to anyone," and called the accusations Russian propaganda.

Earlier on Wednesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a phone call with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, during which he urged the leader to maintain the ceasefire with Armenia and limit any provocations.

Initial negotiations towards peace talks between Yerevan and Baku were disrupted by the breakout of hostilities in September, leading to a ceasefire agreement. Blinken underscored US support for the peace process and urged further talks between the parties.

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Canada Imposes Iran Sanctions Over Alleged Drones Provision to Russia - Foreign Ministry  
(Updates with more details, background in paras 3-7)

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government has imposed a new set of sanctions on six individuals and two entities in Iran over their alleged provision of drones to Russia and human rights abuses, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Wednesday.

"Today's sanctions list six individuals and two entities. These sanctions target senior officials, prominent regime supporters, and entities that have participated in gross and systematic human rights violations in Iran, including brutal crackdowns on protesters and in the regime's malign activities abroad," GAC said in a press release. "The two listed entities are key to the regime's ongoing activities aimed at destabilizing international peace and security, including the sale of weapons and the provision of Iranian military personnel to train and assist Russian forces on the use of Iranian weapons."

The list of sanctioned entities includes Shahed Aviation Industries and Qods Aviation Industries, the release said. Both companies have been allegedly involved in the development and manufacturing of combat drones that are allegedly exported to Russia amid its special military operation in Ukraine.

GAC has also imposed sanctions on several Iranian military officials related to the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), including former chief commander of the IRGC Seyyed Yahya Safavi, and brigadier generals Seyyed Hojatollah Qureishi and Saeed Aghajani, the release said.

Canada has also designated the commander of Iran's Kurdistan law enforcement forces Ali Azadi, the release added.

Russia and Iran have repeatedly denied that drone trade is still going on between them after Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian admitted this month that Tehran sold drones to Russia before the latter launched the special military operation in Ukraine.

On Monday, the Canadian government banned senior Iranian officials from entering Canada. Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said that former and current senior Iranian officials living in Canada may be investigated and removed from the country and Ottawa will invest an extra C\$76 million (\$57 million) in the enforcement agencies to help them enforce the existing sanctions.

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US 'Cautiously Optimistic' About Extension of Black Sea Grain Deal - State Dept.

(Update: adds details, background in paras 3-5)

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is cautiously optimistic about the prospect of continuing the Black Sea Grain Deal, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried said on Wednesday.

“We are deeply engaged in the ongoing negotiations to extend the grain agreement. We are cautiously optimistic, but we will see how this plays out in the end,” Donfried said during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing.

The agreement, which was temporarily suspended by Russia after attacks on civilian vessels in the Black Sea, is slated to expire on November 19. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who helped broker the initial deal in July, said on Wednesday that he is counting on the agreement’s extension.

Russian Deputy Permanent UN Representative told Sputnik on Wednesday that the possible resumption of Russian ammonia exports through Ukraine is being discussed as part of the grain deal extension talks.

Donfried also reiterated US objections to Russian claims that their sanctions are inhibiting the export of grain and other agricultural goods.

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US Sanctions Six Senior Employees of Iranian State Broadcaster – Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – The United States sanctioned six senior employees of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the Treasury Department said in a press release on Wednesday.

“Today, the US Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating six senior employees of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the Iranian state-run media corporation that has broadcast hundreds of forced confessions of Iranian, dual national, and international detainees in Iran,” the release stated.

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## Trudeau, Duda Discuss Need For Investigation of Explosions in Poland – Statement

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a phone call with Poland’s President Andrzej Duda discussed the need for a thorough investigation of the recent explosions on Polish territory near the Ukrainian border, Trudeau's office said in a readout on Wednesday.

“The prime minister and the president discussed the need for a thorough investigation to determine the cause of the explosions,” the readout said.

Both Trudeau and Duda agreed on the need to work in partnership with NATO allies and other partners on the matter. They also blamed Russia for the violence, it added.

“The two leaders agreed to stay in touch and to continue working alongside other members of the international community, including NATO, to promote security and stability in the region, while also holding Russia to account for its unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine,” the readout said. Media reported on Tuesday that a missile fell in a Polish region bordering Ukraine, killing two people. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday that preliminary analysis suggests that the missile incident in Poland was caused by a Ukrainian air defense missile. The Russian Ministry of Defense said Russian troops had not carried out any strikes near the Polish border and that the photos circulated in the media had nothing to do with Russian weapons.

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## Canada Imposes Iran Sanctions Over Alleged Provision of UAVs to Russia – Foreign Ministry

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government has imposed a new set of sanctions on six individuals and two entities in Iran over their alleged provision of drones to Russia and human rights abuses, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Wednesday.

“Today’s sanctions list six individuals and two entities. These sanctions target senior officials, prominent regime supporters, and entities that have participated in gross and systematic human rights violations in Iran, including brutal crackdowns on protesters and in the regime’s malign activities abroad,” GAC said in a press release.

“The 2 listed entities are key to the regime’s ongoing activities aimed at destabilizing international peace and security, including the sale of weapons and the provision of Iranian military personnel to train and assist Russian forces on the use of Iranian weapons,” the press release added.

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## Chinese President Appears to Reprimand Canadian Prime Minister for Leaking G20 Talks

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – Chinese President Xi Jinping appeared to reprimand Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Wednesday for disclosing private discussions to the news media, in an informal exchange of words partially captured in a video recording in a busy lobby area of the G20 summit in Bali.

“Everything we discussed is leaked to the paper. That’s not appropriate,” Xi’s interpreter says in English near the start of the clip, adding, “That’s not the way the conversation was conducted.” Trudeau is heard responding that “In Canada, we believe in free and open and frank dialogue,” adding that they would “work constructively together but there will be things we will disagree on.”

Xi responds that they will need to create the conditions first before the exchange abruptly ends.

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Blinken in Call With Aliyev Urges Adherence to Armenia-Azerbaijan Ceasefire - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a phone call with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev urged him to maintain the ceasefire with Armenia and limit any provocations, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday.

“He urged President Aliyev to maintain the ceasefire and limit provocations, while exploring confidence building measures with Armenia to set the stage for peace,” Price said in a readout of the call.

Blinken underscored US support for the peace process and urged the two sides to schedule further talks, as agreed in Washington, Price added.

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US Will Continue to Work With Allies to Gather More Info on Explosion in Poland - Austin

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – The United States will continue to work with Poland and other allies to gather additional information on the explosion that occurred in Polish territory near the border with Ukraine, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Wednesday.

“Once again, Russia has been launching missiles against Ukraine’s cities and Ukraine’s civilians, and yesterday we saw reports of deadly explosions in Poland - one explosion in Poland, near its border with Ukraine. And we will continue to work closely with our allies, Poland and others, to gather more information,” Austin said at the start of a virtual meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group.

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## RPT - Ex-US Senate Candidate 'Not Optimistic' Republicans Can Block Ukraine Aid in Next Congress

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - House Republicans may not be able to block US security assistance to Ukraine in the next Congress because they won only a slim majority, while the Democrats will still control the upper chamber, former Senate candidate Diane Sare told Sputnik.

House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy, whose party is projected to seize control of the lower chamber as a result of last week's midterms, ahead of the election vowed to cease writing "blank checks" to Kiev if Republicans get the majority.

US lawmakers reportedly want to try to approve an additional \$50 billion assistance package for Ukraine before the end of the year.

"I frankly am not optimistic about it. One, because the Republican Party was not unified to begin with. Two, they have a slim majority, not a big majority," Sare, who ran as LaRouche independent candidate in the New York senate race, said. "[And] it looks like the Democrats are going to control the Senate."

Moreover, she added, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is in the pocket of financial interests that want the war.

"He is still going to be the Senate Majority Leader and therefore, at least as far as I can tell, so I don't think that we're going to see much of a change in that direction," she added.

Sare expressed hope that there will be a bit more openness.

"There are a couple of Republicans in the House who have been clamoring for ending the aid, negotiating," she said. "There's been some people a little bit outspoken like [Congressman] Paul Gosar in Arizona, [Congresswoman] Marjorie Taylor Greene."

Sare believes that it is going to depend on people figuring out how to make their voice heard.

"I think the big factors that may cause people to change are the collapse of the economy, which is looming, and the result of our sanctions. I think this is going to have an unpredictable effect," she said. "Also, I worry very much about peculiar ways in which the military action is spreading the involvement of Americans now on the ground. I think it's very ominous... with a rough winter ahead."

Sare said these things may be drivers of major change.

"I think that's why I'm going to continue to be organizing and announcing shortly another campaign because someone has to keep putting the solutions on the table for when the population is ready to move in that direction," Sare said.

On Saturday evening, projections from NBC news showed that Democratic Senator Catherine Cortez Masto is winning re-election in Nevada, which allows the Democrats to keep control of the Senate with at least 50 seats.

An anticipated strong wave of support for the Republicans never materialized on Tuesday. NBC projects the Republicans will take 220 seats and the Democrats will control 215, representing a 15-seat net gain. However, many pundits expected the Republicans to end up with a 25 to 30-seat gain.

President Joe Biden recently expressed concern that Republicans could jeopardize future aid for Ukraine. However, Biden administration officials have also repeatedly said they expect bipartisan support on sending military assistance to Kiev to continue.

In total, the US has committed over \$18.5 billion in military assistance to the country since January 2021.

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RPT: PREVIEW - VP Harris Heads to Thailand, Philippines to Reaffirm US Commitment to Region

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Vice President Kamala Harris on Wednesday departs for a visit to Thailand and the Philippines to discuss the US commitment to the Southeast Asia region including the South China Sea, especially on matters related to security and trade, in a trip that could draw the ire of Beijing.

"The Vice President will make clear that the United States has an enduring commitment to Southeast Asia," a senior US administration official said during a conference call with reporters on Tuesday.

Harris will attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' conference in Bangkok on Friday and Saturday, where she will reaffirm US economic leadership in the region and lay out the key principles the Biden administration thinks should guide APEC economies and rally other economies around its rules-based international economic order, the official said. On Friday, Harris will deliver remarks about the Biden administration's comprehensive economic agenda for the Indo-Pacific region. The central message of her remarks will be that the United States has an enduring economic commitment to the region, the US official added.

On Saturday, following the conclusion of the APEC leaders' meetings, Harris will have a bilateral meeting with the prime minister of Thailand, the US official said.

"We do anticipate some deliverables and outcomes for this meeting in terms of new initiatives and funding that will deepen our work together... we also anticipate they will discuss the situation in Burma [Myanmar], as well as other regional and global development," the US official said.

The US official said Harris will have the opportunity to meet with other APEC leaders on the margins of the conference but did not have any meetings to preview at the moment.

On Monday, the US official said, Harris will have a meeting with Philippines President Bongbong Marcos to discuss strengthening the bilateral security alliance and economic relationship.

Harris will reaffirm US defense commitments to the Philippines and the importance of the alliance to peace and stability in the South China Sea, the US official said, adding that the Vice President will also commit to work more closely with the Philippines to strengthen the bilateral economic partnership and investment ties.

"We anticipate there will be deliverables and new initiatives on this front as well related to the digital economy and upscaling and accelerating the transition to clean energy," the US official said.

Harris will conclude her trip with a visit the Philippine Islands of Palawan near the South China Sea on November 22, where she will meet with residents, civil society leaders and representatives of the Philippine Coast Guard, according to the US official.

Harris' visit to Palawan will demonstrate the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to its Philippine ally in upholding the rules based international maritime order in the South China Sea, supporting maritime livelihoods and countering illegal unregulated and unreported fishing, the US official said.

Harris will be the highest ranking US official to ever visit the island of Palawan, the US official noted.

The visit could draw some concern from Beijing due to its close proximity to the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

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#### Trump Says Russia 'Probably' Sent Missile Into Poland

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump during his Mar-a-Lago speech to announce his presidential bid blamed Russia for the missile that fell into Poland. Russia has denied the accusations it fired the missile that landed in Poland and described it as a deliberate effort to escalate the situation in Ukraine.

"Just today, a missile was sent in probably by Russia to Poland, 50 miles into Poland, and people are going absolutely wild and crazy," Trump said Tuesday night.

US President Joe Biden in earlier remarks said it is unlikely based on trajectory that the missile that fell in Poland was fired from Russia, but that the United States and allies will support Poland's investigation into the incident. Biden added that he will make sure they figure out exactly what happened and to determine the appropriate next steps.

Biden made his remarks following a meeting in Bali with leaders from France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, Canada, and the European Union. Polish President Andrzej Duda said in earlier remarks that Poland does not have any conclusive evidence at the moment as to who launched the missiles, but added that they were most likely Russian-made. He added that there is no indication that there will be a similar repeat of the incident.

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#### Trump Announces His Candidacy for US President in 2024

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said that he will make the United States great again as he announced his candidacy in the next presidential elections set for 2024.

"Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests and my fellow citizens, America's comeback starts right now," Trump said on Tuesday. "In order to make America great and glorious again I am tonight announcing my candidacy for President of the United States."

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Biden Says 'Unlikely' Missile That Fell in Poland Was Fired From Russia  
(Updates with details in para 5, background in paras 6,7)

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said it is unlikely based on trajectory that the missile that fell in Poland was fired from Russia.

"There is preliminary information that contests that, i don't want to say that until we completely investigate, but it's unlikely in the minds of the trajectory that it was fired from Russia," Biden said Tuesday night when asked if it is too early to tell if the missile was fired from Russia. Biden said following his meeting with several Group of Seven and NATO leaders that there was total agreement among everyone to support Poland's investigation into the incident. He added that he will make sure they figure out exactly what happened and to determine the appropriate next steps.

Russia has denied the accusations it fired the missile that landed in Poland and described it as a deliberate effort to escalate the situation in Ukraine.

Biden added that NATO ambassador will soon meet to further discuss the matter.

Biden met with leaders from France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, Canada, and the European Union.

Polish President Andrzej Duda said in earlier remarks that Poland does not have any conclusive evidence at the moment as to who launched the missiles, but added that they were most likely Russian-made. He added that there is no indication that there will be a similar repeat of the incident.

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Blinken Says Spoke to Polish, Ukrainian Counterparts About Reported Explosion in Poland

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he spoke to Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba about the reported explosion in Poland and vowed to coordinate closely as a probe proceeds.

"I spoke this morning from Bali with Polish Foreign Minister Rau and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba regarding the explosion in eastern Poland. We pledged to remain closely coordinated in the days ahead as the investigation proceeds and we determine appropriate next steps," Blinken said in a tweet on Tuesday.

Polish media reported on November 15 in the evening that two missiles had allegedly fallen on the territory of Poland - in the Lublin Voivodeship on the border with Ukraine, and two people were killed.

Polish President Andrzej Duda said Warsaw does not have any conclusive evidence at the moment as to who launched the missiles, but added that they were most likely Russian-made. He added that there is no indication that there will be a similar repeat of the incident.

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, no strikes were made on targets near the Ukrainian-Polish state border, while the published photos of some debris have nothing to do with Russian weapons, All statements by Polish media about the alleged landing of "Russian" missiles are a deliberate provocation in order to escalate the situation, the ministry added.

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Biden Holds Emergency Roundtable Meeting With World Leaders - White House  
(Updates with changes, details throughout)

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden held an emergency roundtable meeting with world leaders on the margins of the G20 summit in Bali, according to the White House.

The meeting took place Tuesday night following reports about alleged Russian-made missiles landing in Poland earlier in the day, which Russia has denied and described as an effort to escalate the situation in Ukraine.

According to the White House press pool, Biden declined to give reporters an update on what information he has received on Poland.

The White House broadcast a brief video clip of Biden at a table with several world leaders including his counterparts from France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, among a few others.

Biden not deliver any remarks about the meeting or overall situation with respect to the missiles that hit Poland.

Polish President Andrzej Duda said in earlier remarks that Poland does not have any conclusive evidence at the moment as to who launched the missiles, but added that they were most likely Russian-made. He added that there is no indication that there will be a similar repeat of the incident.

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Biden Holds Emergency Roundtable Meeting With G20 World Leaders - White House

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will participate in a roundtable meeting with world leaders in the Group of 20, according to the White House. The meeting will take place following reports about alleged Russian-made missiles landing in Poland earlier in the day, which Russia has denied and described as an effort to escalate the situation in Ukraine.

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PREVIEW - VP Harris Heads to Thailand, Philippines to Reaffirm US Commitment to Region

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Vice President Kamala Harris on Wednesday departs for a visit to Thailand and the Philippines to discuss the US commitment to the Southeast Asia region including the South China Sea, especially on matters related to security and trade, in a trip that could draw the ire of Beijing.

"The Vice President will make clear that the United States has an enduring commitment to Southeast Asia," a senior US administration official said during a conference call with reporters on Tuesday.

Harris will attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' conference in Bangkok on Friday and Saturday, where she will reaffirm US economic leadership in the region and lay out the key principles the Biden administration thinks should guide APEC economies and rally other economies around its rules-based international economic order, the official said. On Friday, Harris will deliver remarks about the Biden administration's comprehensive economic agenda for the Indo-Pacific region. The central message of her remarks will be that the United States has an enduring economic commitment to the region, the US official added.

On Saturday, following the conclusion of the APEC leaders' meetings, Harris will have a bilateral meeting with the prime minister of Thailand, the US official said.

"We do anticipate some deliverables and outcomes for this meeting in terms of new initiatives and funding that will deepen our work together... we also anticipate they will discuss the situation in Burma [Myanmar], as well as other regional and global development," the US official said.

The US official said Harris will have the opportunity to meet with other APEC leaders on the margins of the conference but did not have any meetings to preview at the moment. On Monday, the US official said, Harris will have a meeting with Philippines President Bongbong Marcos to discuss strengthening the bilateral security alliance and economic relationship. Harris will reaffirm US defense commitments to the Philippines and the importance of the alliance to peace and stability in the South China Sea, the US official said, adding that the Vice President will also commit to work more closely with the Philippines to strengthen the bilateral economic partnership and investment ties.

"We anticipate there will be deliverables and new initiatives on this front as well related to the digital economy and upscaling and accelerating the transition to clean energy," the US official said.

Harris will conclude her trip with a visit the Philippine Islands of Palawan near the South China Sea on November 22, where she will meet with residents, civil society leaders and representatives of the Philippine Coast Guard, according to the US official.

Harris' visit to Palawan will demonstrate the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to its Philippine ally in upholding the rules based international maritime order in the South China Sea, supporting maritime livelihoods and countering illegal unregulated and unreported fishing, the US official said.

Harris will be the highest ranking US official to ever visit the island of Palawan, the US official noted.

The visit could draw some concern from Beijing due to its close proximity to the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

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#### Pentagon Falls Short by \$1.4Bln of Funds to Buy Next Tranche of F-35 Jets - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The Defense Department is \$1.4 billion short in its current budgetary allocations of sufficient funding to complete its planned next order of F-35 multi-purpose fighter jets from Lockheed Martin, so that its eventual fleet will fall significantly short of the 375 aircraft currently expected, Bloomberg reported.

The shortfall was revealed in a new list of unfunded priorities sent to Congress, the report said on Tuesday.

If the \$1.4 billion is not additionally provided, the anticipated new three-year contract worth up to \$30 billion will go ahead, but it will purchase fewer aircraft for the expensive program, whose total cost is now estimated at \$412 billion, the report said.

The Defense Department and Lockheed Martin are reportedly in the final stages of negotiating a contract for 375 aircraft in the F-35's 15th through 17th production lots but because of the shortfall, less aircraft are likely to be ordered, the report said.

The current figure was already 110 aircraft short of the 485 F-35 jets originally anticipated in February 2019, the report added.

This latest shortfall has been caused by higher per-aircraft costs due to COVID-19 pandemic measures, supply chain disruptions, inflation and a reduction in procurement quantities compared to the previous F-35 contract, according to Defense Department F-35 Office spokesperson Russell Goemaere.

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White House Says Biden Spoke With NATO Chief Amid Reports on Missiles Incident in Poland

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg amid reports of an explosion in Poland near the Ukraine border, allegedly caused by Russian missiles.

The call comes after Biden and his Polish counterpart Andrzej Duda spoke about the explosion during which the US president offered support in the investigation into the incident.

Earlier on Tuesday, media reported that an explosion was caused by Russian missiles in Poland near the border with Ukraine. The Russian Ministry of Defense denied a connection to the incident and claimed it was a provocation to escalate tensions.

The NATO Council will reportedly meet on Wednesday to discuss the situation and the alliance's possible response.

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Harris to Visit Philippine Island of Palawan Near South China Sea Next Week - White House

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris will visit the Philippine island of Palawan near the South China Sea early next week, a senior Biden administration official said during a conference call.

"On Tuesday, November 22, the Vice President will travel to... the island of Palawan where she will meet with residents, civil society leaders and representatives of the Philippine Coast Guard," the official said on Tuesday.

Harris will be the highest ranking US official to ever visit the island of Palawan, the official also said.

The visit will demonstrate the Biden administration's commitment to its Philippine ally in upholding the so-called rules based international maritime order in the South China Sea, supporting maritime livelihoods and countering illegal unregulated and unreported fishing, the official added.

The visit could draw some concern from Beijing due to its close proximity to the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, according to reports.

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Biden Offers Duda US Support for Probe Into Missiles Incident in Poland - White House

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke with Polish President Andrzej Duda about reports of two Russian missiles purportedly landing in Poland near the border with Ukraine and offered assistance in the ongoing probe into the incident, the White House said in a statement.

"President Duda described Poland's ongoing assessment of the explosion that took place in the eastern part of the country near the border with Ukraine. President Biden offered full US support for and assistance with Poland's investigation," the White House said on Tuesday.

Biden also reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the NATO alliance and agreed to have US and Polish officials remain engaged to determine next steps as the investigation proceeds, the White House said.

Earlier on Tuesday, US Defense Department spokesperson Pat Ryder said the United States has no information to corroborate reports of the missiles' origin at this time but is monitoring the situation.

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US Federal Judge Vacates Title 42 Border Control Policy, Says Health Measure 'Arbitrary'

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - A US federal judge vacated use of the Title 42 border control policy used to deny entry to persons posing a health risk, calling the measure arbitrary and in violation of federal law.

"The Court vacates and sets aside the the Title 42 policy... and all orders and decision memos issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the US Department of Health and Human Services suspending the right to introduce certain persons into the United States," US District Judge Emmet Sullivan said on Tuesday in a court order.

Sullivan called the Title 42 policy arbitrary and capricious in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act, which governs the federal regulatory process.

Former US President Donald Trump used Title 42 to block entry to migrants seeking to enter the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Title 42 cases are considered expulsions not deportations, meaning there is no hearing before an immigration judge prior to departure from the US.

The lawsuit was brought by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of asylum-seeking families against the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees immigration and border control.

The order enjoins the department and its agencies from applying the Title 42 policy.

The court ruling comes following a decision by Texas Governor Greg Abbott earlier on Tuesday to invoke a constitutional clause to address a record-breaking influx of illegal immigration on the US-Mexico border.

The directive deploys National Guardsmen and state police officers to the border with the authority to arrest illegal migrants.

According to US Customs and Border Protection, Border Patrol agents made 230,678 arrests of illegal migrants on the US southern border in October, which marks the start of fiscal year 2023. During the same period last year, nearly 165,000 arrests were made on the southern border.

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UPDATE - Russian UN Mission Confirms Ammonia Exports Negotiated as Part of Grain Deal Extension

(introduces rewrites throughout the text, adds background in last para)

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - Russian Mission to the United Nations confirmed that possible resumption of Russian ammonia exports through Ukraine is being discussed as part of the grain deal extension talks, however, the final decision has not yet been taken, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik on Wednesday. "There was a number of contacts at different levels, the final decision on possible extension isn't taken yet" Polyanskiy told Sputnik.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Financial Times reported that Russia and Ukraine are close to negotiating an extension to the grain deal before it expires on November 19. According to the reports, the extension is being negotiated by the UN, including through a series of meetings between Antonio Guterres and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on the sidelines of the G20 in Bali. As part of the revised deal, Russia would resume ammonia exports through Ukrainian-controlled territory to a port near Odessa.

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US Defense Chief Embarks on Trip to Canada, Indonesia, Cambodia – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin this week will embark on a trip to Canada, Indonesia, and Cambodia to participate in a number of security-related events, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"Secretary Austin will depart Friday for a trip to Canada, Indonesia, and Cambodia," Ryder said during a press briefing.

In Nova Scotia, Canada, Austin will deliver keynote remarks at the 2022 Halifax International Security Forum centered on efforts to build a "more resilient security architecture," and will also meet with Canadian Minister of National Defense Anita Anand to discuss the close defense

relationship between the United State and Canada and the importance of strategic investments in defense capabilities, Ryder said.

From Canada, the secretary will head to Jakarta, Indonesia to meet with senior government and military leaders, Ryder added.

In Cambodia, Austin will participate in the ninth ASEAN defense ministers meeting, also known as ADMM-Plus alongside the ten ASEAN member states and eight dialogue partners, Ryder also said.

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McConnell Says Issue of Raising US Debt Ceiling Not to Come Up Until 'Sometime Next Year'

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said he does not think the issue of raising the US debt ceiling will come up until sometime next year.

"I don't think the issue is until sometime next year," McConnell said on Tuesday.

McConnell's remark comes after Democratic Congressional leaders - House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer - said on Sunday that they were planning to act in the next several weeks to raise the debt ceiling.

In October, President Joe Biden said he would not support a permanent repeal of the debt ceiling.

The United States national debt reached a new historic milestone as it topped \$31 trillion for the first time in history, according to Treasury Department data in October.

The record-high debt level comes after it increased above \$30 trillion for the first time in February 2022, slightly exceeding \$30 trillion.

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UN Security Council to Discuss Ukraine on Wednesday

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council will discuss the situation in Ukraine during a meeting on Wednesday.

The meeting, entitled "maintenance of peace and security in Ukraine," will begin at 3:00 p.m. EST (20:00 GMT), according to the UNSC's calendar of activities.

Ukraine has been on the Council's agenda regularly since the start of Russia's special military operation. Wednesday's meeting comes amid reports that Russian missiles landed in Poland near Ukraine's border.

NATO's is reportedly planning to hold a meeting on Wednesday in light of the reports.

The Russian Defense Ministry denied reports of launching missiles inside Polish territory, and described the allegations as a deliberate provocation to escalate tensions.

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Duda Holding Talks With Biden Amid Reports of Missile Strike- Polish Nat'l Security Bureau

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Polish President Andrzej Duda and US President Joe Biden are holding a conversation amid reports that two Russian missiles possibly landed in Poland near the border with Ukraine, National Security Bureau chief Jacek Siewiera said.

"The conversation between the President Andrzej Duda and POTUS [president of the United States] is in progress," Siewiera said via Twitter on Tuesday.

Duda also confirmed via Twitter that an ongoing "urgent conversation" is taking place with Biden.

The Russian Defense Ministry denied on Wednesday reports that it has launched missiles inside Polish territory. The statements about a missile strike on Poland are a deliberate provocation to escalate tensions, it said.

US State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel refuted claims that Washington is trying to escalate the situation. Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder also said the United States has no information to corroborate the reports about a missile strike inside Poland at present.

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Nat'l Security Council Says Sullivan, Polish Official Discussed Missile Strike - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with Polish national security chief Jacek Siewiera after media reported that two Russian missiles allegedly landed in Poland near the border with Ukraine, National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in a statement.

"We've seen the reports out of Poland and are working with the Polish government to gather more information," Watson said on Tuesday. "Shortly after receiving these reports, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with Chief of the National Security Bureau of Poland Jacek Siewiera."

The US government cannot confirm the reports or provide any additional details at this time, Watson added.

Earlier on Tuesday, US Defense Department spokesperson Pat Ryder said that the United States does not have any information to corroborate the reports and urged all parties to gather the facts before jumping to any conclusions.

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### Russian UN Mission Confirms Russia, Ukraine Contacts on Ukraine Deal, Ammonia Exports

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - Russian Mission to the United Nations confirmed that talks between Russia and Ukraine on the Grain Deal extension are being held and that the parties are discussing the export of Russian ammonia through the Ukrainian territory, however, the final decision has not yet been taken, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik on Wednesday.

"There was a number of contacts at different levels, the final decision on possible extension isn't taken yet" Polyanskiy told Sputnik. "There was a number of contacts at different levels, the final decision on possible extension isn't taken yet" Polyanskiy told Sputnik.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Financial Times reported that Russia and Ukraine are close to negotiating an extension to the grain deal before it expires on November 19. The conditions discussed between the sides include a possibility to reopen a pipeline carrying Russian ammonia through the territory of Ukraine.

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### US Senator Schumer Says Will 'Enthusiastically' Support Biden Reelection Bid in 2024

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US Senator Chuck Schumer said that he would "enthusiastically" support President Joe Biden should he decides to run for reelection in 2024. "If Biden decides to run, I will enthusiastically support him," Schumer said during a news conference by Senate Democrats on Tuesday.

Schumer's commented when asked by a reporter about the potential for Biden to run for reelection in the US election for president in 2024.

Biden said last week that he will decide next year on whether to run in the 2024 presidential race.

Former President Donald Trump is expected to announce later on Tuesday that he will run for president in 2024.

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### US Says Important to Determine if Reported Missiles Intentionally Fired on Poland

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The United States considers that it is important to determine whether the reported missile strikes inside Polish territory were intentional or accidental, US State Department principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said.

"Of course, that is something that would be of importance," Patel said on Tuesday when asked if the issue of whether the reported missile strikes were intentional or accidental will be considered in talks with the allies.

Earlier on Tuesday, media reported that two Russian missiles had possibly landed inside Polish territory near the border with Ukraine.

US Defense Department spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday that it is incumbent upon countries to gather facts before jumping to any conclusions about reports of missiles possibly hitting Poland.

White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said on Tuesday that the Biden administration cannot confirm the media reports at present.

Poland issued a statement that Russia firing missiles inside Polish territory was a deliberate provocation to escalate the situation.

However, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Tuesday that it conducted no strikes near the Ukraine-Polish border.

The Russian Defense Ministry added that the fragments published in hot pursuit by the Polish media from the scene in the village of Przewodow have nothing to do with Russian weapons.

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US Says Russia Has Still Not Provided Official Notification of Griner's Relocation

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Russia has still not provided any official notification to the United States about the relocation of US citizen Brittney Griner, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said.

"We are aware of the reports of relocation and in frequent contact with Ms. Griner's legal team but the Russian Federation has still failed to provide any official notification for such a move of the US citizen," Patel said on Tuesday. "Our embassy in Russia has continued to press for more information about her transfer and her specific current location."

Media reported last week that Griner has been moved to a Russian prison more than eight months after being detained for possessing hashish oil in her luggage at an Moscow airport. Griner pleaded guilty to the charges against her and was sentenced to nine years in prison on August 4.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) -

MISSILES INCIDENT IN POLAND

\* Polish broadcaster ZET reported on Tuesday, citing unofficial sources, that two missiles had allegedly fallen on the territory of Poland.

\* The United States does not have information to corroborate reports of two Russian missiles reportedly landing within Polish territory near the border with Ukraine, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said.

\* It is incumbent upon countries to gather the facts of the situation before jumping to any conclusions about reports of missiles possibly hitting Poland, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said.

#### UKRAINE CONFLICT

\* Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that 85 missile strikes had been inflicted on the territory of Ukraine on Tuesday, mainly on energy infrastructure facilities, "about 20 more" are expected.

\* The Ukrainian military banned residents of Kherson from leaving the city, the military police blocked the river port, from where residents crossed to the left bank of the Dnipro River on vessels, the head of the administration of the Oleshky town in Kherson Region, Yuriy Zhuravko, said.

\* De facto and de jure, Ukraine cannot and does not want to hold negotiations with Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, adding that Moscow will continue the special operation.

\* More than 90 missiles were fired at Ukraine on Tuesday, 15 energy infrastructure facilities in different regions were damaged, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of Zelenskyy's office, said.

#### UN RESOLUTION ON REPARATIONS TO UKRAINE

\* The organizers of the resolution on the payment of reparations to Ukraine are trying to formalize a robbery using the United Nations platform, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday.

\* Russia is against the UN resolution on the payment of reparations to Ukraine and will treat it as a legally non-binding document, Peskov said.

\* Russia's allies that abstained from voting on the draft UN resolution on reparations to Ukraine, are sovereign states, Moscow is closely following their position, Peskov said.

#### US-CHINA RELATIONS

\* The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission released its annual report to Congress on Tuesday, in which it urged lawmakers to prepare legislation to impose retaliatory trade measures on Beijing in response to cases of economic coercion.

\* Congress should order the Pentagon to conduct a review of ways to bolster the defense of Taiwan in the event conflict emerges on the island, the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission said.

#### BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL

\* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has reiterated his promise to ensure the implementation of the Russia's part of the grain deal, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday.

\* US President Joe Biden and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed that the grain deal is crucial for food security and that it should be continued, the White House said.

\* Guterres held a lengthy and frank discussion with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, the UN said.

#### G20 MEETING

- \* Russia insisted that in the final declaration of the G20 summit there was a phrase that the positions on Ukraine differ, as the West included a condemnation of Moscow's actions on Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday.
- \* Lavrov said that he had met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali earlier in the day.
- \* Lavrov said that he had held short conversations with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the G20 summit.
- \* The work on drafting the G20 final declaration is almost finished, the document will be adopted on November 16, Lavrov said.
- \* Russia at the G20 also proposed to stop politicizing energy issues and open a free dialogue between energy suppliers and consumers, Lavrov said.

#### NEW IEA REPORT OF GLOBAL ENERGY

- \* OPEC+ has failed to ensure oil production growth necessary under the alliance's oil output cut deal in October, producing 3.2 million barrels per day less, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its fresh report on Tuesday.
- \* The production of crude oil and condensates in Russia decreased by 40,000 barrels per day in October and reached 11.07 million barrels per day, the IEA said.
- \* The IEA has kept its forecast for the global oil production growth in 2022 unchanged and expects it to rise by 4.6 million barrels per day to 99.9 million barrels per day, according to its fresh report.

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CIA Chief Meeting With Russian Official Reflects Need to Communicate - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - CIA Director Bill Burns' recent meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Naryshkin in Turkey reflects the need to keep open the channels of communication with Russia, especially when it comes to managing potential nuclear risks, US State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Tuesday.

"We have been very open about the fact that we have to communicate with Russia on managing risk, especially nuclear risks and risks to strategic stability, and as part of that the CIA Director Bill Burns went to Ankara to meet with his Russian intelligence counterpart," Patel said during a press briefing.

Patel also said that Burns conveyed a message to Naryshkin on the consequences of the potential use of nuclear weapons by Russia and the risks of escalation to strategic stability as well as raised the issue of US citizens detained in Russia.

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### Pelosi Attacker Pleads Not Guilty to Federal Charges - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - David DePape, who allegedly attacked Paul Pelosi with a hammer in Pelosi's home on October 28, pled not guilty to federal charges during his first federal court appearance on Tuesday, according to the San Francisco Standard.

According to a federal complaint filed after his arrest, DePape planned to find Paul's wife, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and question her about the "truth," saying that he would break her kneecaps if she lied to him, so that "she would then have to be wheeled into Congress, which would show other members of Congress there were consequences to actions."

DePape faces federal charges of assault of an immediate family member of a federal official and attempted kidnapping of a federal officer or employee. He has also been charged in state court with elder abuse, attempted murder, burglary, assault with a deadly weapon, and threatening a family member of an elected official.

If found guilty on state charges, DePape faces 13 years to life in prison, according to a statement by Brooke Jenkins, the San Francisco District Attorney.

DePape has pleaded not guilty to all charges and will next appear in federal court on the morning of November 30.

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### US Approves Possible \$700M In Sale of Patriot Missiles to Switzerland - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States approved a possible \$700 million sale of 72 Patriot missiles and related equipment to Switzerland, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Tuesday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Switzerland of PATRIOT Advanced Capability (PAC) 3 Missile Segment Enhanced (MSE) missiles and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$700 million," DSCA said in a press release.

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### US Working With China to Schedule Blinken's Visit Early Next Year - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US officials are currently working with their Chinese counterparts to schedule Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to China early next year, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Tuesday.

"Blinken will travel to China, at some point and currently we are working diligently with our counterparts in the PRC [China] to schedule a visit, which is tentatively planned for early next year," Patel said during a press briefing.

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State Dept. Says US Not Trying to Escalate Situation Over Reports Missiles Hit Poland

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States is not trying to escalate or incite the situation in Ukraine following US media reports claiming that two Russian missiles hit Poland earlier in the day, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Tuesday.

"The United States is certainly not trying to escalate or incite the situation at all," Vedant said when asked about his response to Russia's claims that the reports are a deliberate provocation aimed to escalate the situation in Ukraine.

Russia's defense ministry denied reports claiming Russian missiles hit Poland, describing them as a deliberate escalation.

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Canada Closely Monitoring Reports of Stranded Russian Missiles Striking Poland - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - Canada is closely monitoring the report by Polish media that two Russian missiles fell in Poland, killing two, Global News reported on Tuesday. According to the report, Canadian Defense Minister Anita Anand told reporters Ottawa was closely monitoring reports of Russian missiles crossing the border into Poland, a NATO member.

"I am aware of the reports," Anand said, adding that she would not be commenting on the situation judging it to be "imprudent" considering the little amount of available information. Polish media reported on Tuesday that strikes happened in the village of Przewodow, close the Ukrainian border.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki convened an urgent meeting of the Committee of National Security to assess the latest developments.

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US House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy Nominated to Be Next Speaker

(Updates with details, background in paras 3,4)

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US House of Representatives Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy has been nominated to be speaker in the next term of Congress given that Republicans are projected to hold the majority in the lower congressional chamber, House Republicans announced on Tuesday.

"House Republicans have elected Kevin McCarthy as our nominee for speaker for the 118th Congress," House Republicans said via Twitter.

Moreover, House Republicans nominated current House Minority Whip Steve Scalise to be the House Majority Leader in the next Congress.

McCarthy vowed ahead of the midterm election to cease writing "blank checks" to Kiev if Republicans get the majority.

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White House Requests \$37.7Bln in New Aid for Ukraine From US Congress - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is seeking another \$37.7 billion in new aid to Ukraine from Congress as part of the administration's efforts to prop up Kiev amid Russia's special military operation, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday.

The White House is asking Congress for \$37.7 billion in assistance for Ukraine, according to the report. In October, US media reported that a \$50 billion Ukraine aid package was under consideration for passage later in the year due to concerns that a Republican-controlled House could be less willing to provide assistance to Ukraine.

The US Congress has already approved tens of billions of dollars in security, economic and humanitarian aid to Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's special military operation in February.

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Canadian Government Struggles at Enforcing Surveillance in Arctic Waters - Watchdog

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government has failed to address long-standing issues related to the security and surveillance of its Arctic waters, the Auditor General said in a report on Tuesday.

"The federal government has not taken the required action to address long-standing gaps affecting its surveillance of Canada's Arctic waters. As a result, the federal organizations that are responsible for safety and security in the Arctic region do not have a full awareness of maritime activities in Arctic waters and are not ready to respond to increased surveillance requirements," the audit documents read.

The documents added that considering the climate warming and the rate at which the Arctic is melting, the surveillance and security requirements are only getting greater as new sailing routes become accessible to ships.

Multiple lacunae were identified by the audit. Amongst them, incomplete surveillance, insufficient information related to naval traffic and outdated equipment.

Concerns have been raised over the fact that the government is unable to follow the pace at which the equipment involved in the Arctic is becoming obsolete, the document says, adding that many icebreakers and patrolling aircraft are soon to fulfill their useful life, likely to be retrieved before having a replacement.

"The renewal of vessels, aircraft, satellites, and infrastructure that support monitoring maritime traffic and responding to safety and security incidents has fallen behind to the point where some will likely cease to operate before they can be replaced," the document continued.

Recommendation says "action is needed" to quickly close the gaps in Canada's surveillance of its Arctic waters, while following a sustainable path, the document adds.

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White House Cannot Confirm Reports Russian Missiles Hit Poland - NSC Spokesperson  
WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson on Tuesday said they cannot confirm at the moment reports claiming two Russian missiles hit Poland.

"We've seen these reports out of Poland and are working with the Polish government to gather more information," Watson wrote on Twitter. "We cannot confirm the reports or any of the details at this time. We will determine what happened and what the appropriate next steps would be."

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US Disappointed by 'Irresponsible' Turkish Comments After Istanbul Attack - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States is disappointed by "irresponsible" comments from Turkey after a terrorist attack in Istanbul over the weekend, a US State Department spokesperson told Sputnik on Tuesday.

Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soyly said on Monday that Ankara does not accept the US Embassy's condolences in connection with the deadly terrorist attack in central Istanbul, which claimed the lives of six people.

"The United States unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and stands in solidarity with Turkey, our valued NATO Ally. We reject and are deeply disappointed by any irresponsible comments to suggest that the United States had any role or responsibility in this despicable attack on Turkish citizens," the spokesperson said in a statement.

An explosion occurred on pedestrian, tourist hotspot Istiklal street in Istanbul on Sunday afternoon. According to Turkish authorities, the suspect had been detained. The White House said Washington strongly condemned the act of violence that took place in Istanbul and sent its deepest condolences to those who lost loved ones.

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Pentagon Says Has Variety of Means to Verify Info Regarding Polish Missile Reports

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States has a variety of means to verify media reports regarding two Russian missiles possibly landing in Polish territory near the border with Ukraine, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"Any time there's a situation, we have a variety of methods at our disposal in terms of verifying information, to include contacting allies and partners to gather information," Ryder said during a press briefing when asked about US monitoring of the matter.

The Pentagon does not have any info to corroborate the reports at this time, Ryder also said.

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Pentagon Says Important to Gather Facts Before Speculating on Poland Missile Reports

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - It is incumbent upon countries to gather the facts of the situation before jumping to any conclusions about reports of missiles possibly hitting Poland, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"We want to deal with facts," Ryder said during a press briefing. "I think it's incumbent on all of us to get the facts before we start speculating or jumping to conclusions."

Earlier on Tuesday, media reports emerged of two Russian missiles possibly landing within Polish territory near the border with Ukraine. Ryder said the Pentagon does not have any information to corroborate the reports at this time.

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Post-Musk Twitter Sill Looks Like 'Scam' - Russian Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - Post-Musk growth of Twitter subscribers has been reduced every day and it still looks like a scam, the Russian Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Tuesday.

"This can be seen in the sharp decline in the number of readers and those who read tweets.

This can be seen from the fact that there are regular delays in the growth of the number of subscribers, moreover, in the last two weeks, 15 people have been reduced every day. Well, I understand that Twitter is a private company, and [former President Donald] Trump was blocked at the time," Ulyanov told reporters during his visit to the United Nations in New York. "It still looks like a scam and it is unpleasant."

Ulyanov is an avid Twitter user, having over 30,000 subscribers on his account. Sometimes he tweets several times a day about the developments of his core tasks in Vienna.

Since Trump's removal from Twitter, the company was purchased by billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk who has vowed to protect freedom of speech on the social media platform. However, Trump has yet to confirm an attempted return to the platform, instead favoring his own social media site "Truth Social."

Musk closed a \$44 billion deal to purchase Twitter on October 28 after months of negotiations and legal disputes with the company about the number of fake accounts on the social media platform, which the entrepreneur believed was much higher than the company reported.

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Pentagon Says Not Going to Get Into Hypotheticals on Response to Poland Situation

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday that he is not going to speculate or get into hypotheticals on a possible response to the situation in Poland following multiple reports of two missiles crossing over the border with Ukraine and falling on the territory of the NATO member.

"I'm not going to get into hypotheticals or speculate," Ryder said during a press briefing when asked about a potential US response to the alleged strike. "We have no information right now to corroborate that there has been a missile strike."

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Biden Considering Forcing US Oil Firms to Add to Winter Fuel Stockpiles - Energy Secretary

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is planning to make US oil companies store more fuel inside the United States to avoid a price spike from weak energy supply during the seasonally-high winter demand period for heating, Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said on Tuesday.

While the United States has pledged to be a major diesel supplier to Europe in the coming months due to market disruptions related to the sanctions placed on Russian oil, "we also want to make sure there's enough fuel in the United States," Granholm said in an interview broadcast by Bloomberg News.

Speaking on the sidelines of the COP27 climate conference in Egypt, Granholm said dwindling diesel stockpiles in the US Northeast storage hub has stoked concerns about price spikes this winter.

"It may not be a business choice that they make, but we're asking, as the companies that are operating in America, to do what they are doing in other countries" where there are minimum fuel-storage requirements, Granholm said. "And that's why the president is looking at that."

The report said Granholm's statement marked the strongest sign yet that Biden was considering mandatory stockpile requirements in response to the lowest stockpile on record for this time of the year in US East Coast inventories of petroleum distillates, which include diesel and heating oil.

Heating oil is a vital winter commodity in US Northeast regions such as New England, where it is burned more than any other fuel during the winter months. Yet, heating oil stockpiles in New England are now less than a third of typical levels, the report said.

Biden will need a congressional mandate to turn mandatory fuel stockpiling into law.

Granholm said legislation to expand the government's 1 million-barrel Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve is already pending, adding that now could be the moment for an enactment as "it's on the table."

Oil industry representatives, however, have warned against such a move, saying it would increase holding costs and could boost prices in the short term. The potential loss of control by Biden and the Democrats of the House of Representative in the November 8 elections could also thwart the president's plan.

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US, Cuban Officials Met in Havana to Discuss Migration Accords - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US and Cuban officials met in Havana to address the matters related to implementation of the Migration Accords, the State Department said on Tuesday.

"On November 15, US and Cuban officials met in Havana to discuss the implementation of the US-Cuba Migration Accords," the department said in a press release. "These migration talks provide an opportunity for discussions on mutual implementation of the Migration Accords, comprised of a series of bilateral agreements between the United States and Cuba done in 1984, 1994, 1995, and 2017."

The meeting was the second session this year of these semiannual bilateral discussions on migration.

The US delegation was headed by Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Emily Mendrala, while the Cuban delegation was led by Vice Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio.

"The US delegation highlighted areas of successful cooperation on migration, while also identifying issues that have been obstacles to fulfilling the goals of the Accords," the release said. "Engaging in these talks underscores our commitment to pursuing constructive discussions with the Government of Cuba where appropriate to advance US interests. The United States also addressed consular services at US Embassy Havana, to include visa and American citizen services."

The officials of the two countries met previously in April for talks on the implementation of the US-Cuba Migration Accords. The discussions in April became the first Migration Accord talks between Washington and Havana since 2018.

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US House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy Nominated to Be Next Speaker

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US House of Representatives Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy has been nominated to be speaker in the next term of Congress given that Republicans are projected to hold the majority in the lower congressional chamber, House Republicans announced on Tuesday.

"House Republicans have elected Kevin McCarthy as our nominee for speaker for the 118th Congress," House Republicans said via Twitter.

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Pentagon Says Has No Info to Corroborate Reports of Russian Missiles Striking Poland

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States does not have information to corroborate reports of two Russian missiles reportedly landing within Polish territory near the border with Ukraine, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"We are aware of the press reports alleging that two Russian missiles have struck a location inside Poland near the Ukraine border. We don't have any information at this time to corroborate those reports and are looking into this further," Ryder said during a press briefing.

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IAEA Probe of Ukrainian Facilities for 'Dirty Bombs' Rather Superficial - Russian Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - The International Atomic Energy Agency investigation of Ukrainian facilities was rather superficial, lasted only several hours, and nobody expected "dirty bombs" to be in plain site in the middle of the plants, Russian Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Tuesday.

"Two agency inspectors visited three facilities, including the command facilities. The checks lasted several hours. I hope no one expected that the 'dirty bomb' would be waiting for the inspectors in the central square of the processing plant," Ulyanov told reporters during his visit to the United Nations in New York. "They assessed the situation visually, conducted the most general overview of the state of affairs, took samples of the environment, which will now be sent for analysis in the laboratory. Let's see, let's wait."

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Talks on Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant Safety Zone Moving in Right Direction - Russian Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - Discussions on potentially establishing a safety zone around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (NPP) are going in the right direction, although more clarity is needed, Russian Ambassador to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Tuesday.

"The initiative is moving in the right direction, but clarity is needed, including in terms of performance verification," Ulyanov told reporters during his visit to the United Nations in New York.

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Russia Expects to See Results From JCPOA Talks Before End of This Year - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - Russia expects concluding talks on Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) before the end of this year, the Russian Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Tuesday.

"I expect and hope that this will take place. I think there are chances," Ulyanov told reporters during his visit to the United Nations in New York when asked if agreements on the JCPOA could be reached by the end of the year.

Ulyanov also said that now that the US is done with midterm elections, the American partners can return to the final stages of talks.

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US Imposes Sanctions on Firms Producing, Transferring Iranian Drones to Russia - Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed new sanctions on firms that produce and facilitate the transfer of Iranian drones to Russia for use in the special military operation in Ukraine, the US Department of the Treasury said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is sanctioning firms involved in the production or ongoing transfer to Russia of Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which Russia has used in devastating attacks against civilian infrastructure in Ukraine," the statement said.

OFAC designated three entities - Shahed Aviation Industries Research Center, Success Aviation Services FZC and Jet Global DMCC - for their role in producing and facilitating the transfer of Iranian drones to Russia, the statement said.

OFAC also designated two individuals - Abbas Djuma and Tigran Khristoforovich Srabionov for their role in the transfer of drones, the statement added.

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Republican Candidate for Arizona Governor Yet to Concede Race One Week After Elections

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - Republican candidate for Governor of Arizona, Kari Lake, has yet to concede the race one week after Election Day amid concerns about potential election fraud.

US media called the race in favor of Democratic opponent Katie Hobbs, who holds 50.4% of votes with 98% of ballots reporting.

"Arizonans know BS when they see it," Lake said on Monday via Twitter.

Lake also used social media to encourage people to ensure their votes were counted and report problems experienced when voting on Election Day.

Former US President Donald Trump, who endorsed Lake, also shared reports of election mishaps in Arizona and called for a new election.

A Rasmussen Reports survey released Monday found that a majority of prospective US voters, 57%, believe that some of the US midterm elections this year were likely affected by cheating. Thirty percent said it was "very likely," the poll said.

However, the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said it saw no evidence of deleted or manipulated votes during the midterm elections. Officials from the Department of Homeland Security and Justice Department also monitored races around the country for potential violations of voters rights or electoral integrity.

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Midterm Turnout Low Because Americans 'Fed Up' With Both Parties - Ex-Senate Candidate

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US voters weary of both parties failed to show up in high numbers during the midterm elections, which is concerning given the current government is steering the country toward nuclear war, former Senate candidate Diane Sare told Sputnik.

Turnout in last week's midterm elections was lower than expected in many states, according to the US Elections Project. As of Monday, the group estimated turnout for 2022 to be 112.2 million versus 118.6 million in the 2018 midterms.

Although the Republicans are projected to take control of the House, their majority will be much narrower than anticipated, while the Democrats are expected to barely maintain control of the senate.

"I spoke with a friend in New York... she works the polls in Buffalo, and she said the voter turnout was very low," Sare, who ran as LaRouche independent candidate in the New York senate race, said. "I think that's because really both parties stink. People are fed up." Sare said Americans not having their voices heard is why the world is on the brink of thermonuclear war.

"We [the US] have an administration which is prepared to put us on a trajectory towards possible annihilation, and the American people have no say in it," she said. "I'm sure if we had a vote 'do you want to have a nuclear war with Russia or China,' the overwhelming majority of people would say 'no way.' But they're not being asked."

Sare also said the vote for her on election night changed in the county where she lives. The former candidate provided screenshots that show she had secured 60,000 votes, or 5.8% of the total on election night, but the following day the number fell to 55,000.

The former candidate said she is filing a Freedom of Information Act request with the state board of elections and will take action with regard to certain counties.

She believes that there can be two reasons for that.

"One is the other stupidity and incompetence of the bureaucrats at the various boards of election," she said. "Or that they were trying to send a message to me and my supporters, which is we're going to steal your vote in front of your face, and you can't do anything about."

Sare said people might wonder why she would care if the vote was 1% or 5% given she would still lose.

"I don't think I have anything to lose," she said. "I didn't enter this race for my ego or prestige... I'm doing this for mankind. I think the world is in trouble and we need somebody to stand up for what is right."

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Ex-US Senate Candidate 'Not Optimistic' Republicans Can Block Ukraine Aid in Next Congress

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - House Republicans may not be able to block US security assistance to Ukraine in the next Congress because they won only a slim majority, while the Democrats will still control the upper chamber, former Senate candidate Diane Sare told Sputnik.

House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy, whose party is projected to seize control of the lower chamber as a result of last week's midterms, ahead of the election vowed to cease writing "blank checks" to Kiev if Republicans get the majority.

US lawmakers reportedly want to try to approve an additional \$50 billion assistance package for Ukraine before the end of the year.

"I frankly am not optimistic about it. One, because the Republican Party was not unified to begin with. Two, they have a slim majority, not a big majority," Sare, who ran as LaRouche

independent candidate in the New York senate race, said. "[And] it looks like the Democrats are going to control the Senate."

Moreover, she added, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is in the pocket of financial interests that want the war.

"He is still going to be the Senate Majority Leader and therefore, at least as far as I can tell, so I don't think that we're going to see much of a change in that direction," she added.

Sare expressed hope that there will be a bit more openness.

"There are a couple of Republicans in the House who have been clamoring for ending the aid, negotiating," she said. "There's been some people a little bit outspoken like [Congressman] Paul Gosar in Arizona, [Congresswoman] Marjorie Taylor Greene."

Sare believes that it is going to depend on people figuring out how to make their voice heard.

"I think the big factors that may cause people to change are the collapse of the economy, which is looming, and the result of our sanctions. I think this is going to have an unpredictable effect," she said. "Also, I worry very much about peculiar ways in which the military action is spreading the involvement of Americans now on the ground. I think it's very ominous... with a rough winter ahead."

Sare said these things may be drivers of major change.

"I think that's why I'm going to continue to be organizing and announcing shortly another campaign because someone has to keep putting the solutions on the table for when the population is ready to move in that direction," Sare said.

On Saturday evening, projections from NBC news showed that Democratic Senator Catherine Cortez Masto is winning re-election in Nevada, which allows the Democrats to keep control of the Senate with at least 50 seats.

An anticipated strong wave of support for the Republicans never materialized on Tuesday. NBC projects the Republicans will take 220 seats and the Democrats will control 215, representing a 15-seat net gain. However, many pundits expected the Republicans to end up with a 25 to 30-seat gain.

President Joe Biden recently expressed concern that Republicans could jeopardize future aid for Ukraine. However, Biden administration officials have also repeatedly said they expect bipartisan support on sending military assistance to Kiev to continue.

In total, the US has committed over \$18.5 billion in military assistance to the country since January 2021.

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Democrats Say Hope US High-Level Contacts With China Will Continue After Biden-Xi Meeting

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Gregory Meeks and Asia Subcommittee head Ami Bera said on Tuesday that they hope high-level engagements between the United States and China will continue following President Joe Biden's meeting with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping at the G20 Summit in Indonesia.

"We welcome the summit meeting between Presidents Biden and Xi as there is no substitute for face-to-face diplomacy," the lawmakers said in a statement. "We hope these high-level engagements continue and look forward to working with the Biden administration to ensure the United States maintains strong guardrails to stabilize the US-PRC [People's Republic of China] relationship, while also continuing to hold the PRC accountable for its violations of accepted norms."

The lawmakers said in the statement that China should work with the United States to restore and strengthen bilateral crisis communication as well as management mechanisms.

In addition, the United States and China should also engage to pursue cooperation on global challenges, the statement added.

Biden and Xi discussed a range of issues during their meeting on Monday, including the situation on the Korean Peninsula, the conflict in Ukraine, human rights and the One China policy. The two leaders reached a mutual understanding with one another in the course of their talks, Biden said.

The statement comes alongside the release of an annual report to Congress by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission earlier on Tuesday. The commission recommended that Congress take such steps as preparing retaliatory trade measures against China and order a Defense Department assessment of how to bolster the United States' ability to help defend Taiwan.

Following his meeting with Xi, Biden said he does not believe an invasion of Taiwan by China is imminent and that there need not be a "new Cold War." Biden also said he reiterated to Xi that the One China policy has not changed and the United States opposes any unilateral changes to the status quo.

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Texas Governor Invokes 'Invasion Clauses' to Stem Influx of Illegal Migration - Statement  
(Updates with details in paras 3-5)

EL PASO, November 15 (Sputnik) - Texas Governor Greg Abbott said on Tuesday he invoked invasion clauses of the US and Texas constitutions to address the record-breaking influx of illegal immigration on the US-Mexico border under the Biden administration.

"I invoked the Invasion Clauses of the US and Texas Constitutions to fully authorize Texas to take unprecedented measures to defend our state against an invasion," Abbott wrote on Twitter. Although the directives in the order have already been underway for quite some time now, Abbott said his order deploys National Guardsmen and state police officers to the Texas-Mexico border with the authority to arrest illegal migrants.

Moreover, Abbott said, through the order, he can build additional border wall, deploy gun boats on the Rio Grande river, designate Mexican drug cartels as terrorist organizations, boost cooperation with other US states to address illegal migration, and enter into agreement with foreign countries such as Mexico to enhance border security.

According to US Customs and Border Protection, Border Patrol agents made 230,678 arrests of illegal migrants on the US southern border in October, which marks the start of fiscal year 2023. During the same period last year, nearly 165,000 arrests were made on the southern border.