

4/3/23 Monday

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Trump Arrives at Trump Tower on Eve of Indictment

Trump is expected to surrender himself to court authorities on Tuesday. The former president is facing criminal charges over a 2016 hush money scandal, in which a former porn star was paid on his behalf to keep quiet about an affair she alleged she had with the former president in 2006.

Donald Trump arrived at his Trump Tower in midtown Manhattan just before 4:15 PM on Monday where he is expected to spend the night before his arraignment on Tuesday. The 76-year-old former president was seen briefly waving as he left his motorcade and approached the multi-use skyscraper which is the location for the headquarters of the Trump Organization. On Sunday Trump announced plans to return to his Florida estate of Mar-a-Lago to give public remarks following the indictment.

New York Mayor Eric Adams warned supporters of Trump to behave themselves during protests and rallies. The New York Police Department (NYPD) has increased security at the Manhattan Criminal Court in preparation for Trump's expected arraignment on Tuesday.

Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) has said that she plans to organize a demonstration on Tuesday with Jack Posobiec, an internet conspiracy fanatic, and alongside the right-wing commentator Graham Allen, in support of Trump.

"Although we have no specific threats, people like Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is known to spread misinformation and hate speech, she stated she's coming to town. When you're in town, be on your best behavior," [Adams](#) warned.

"While there may be some rabble-rousers thinking of coming to our city tomorrow, our message is clear and simple: Control yourselves," he added. "New York is our home and not a place for your misplaced anger."

On Monday President Joe Biden said that he has faith in the New York City Police Department (NYPD), when asked whether he has concerns about potential unrest after the indictment of former President Donald Trump.

"No, I have faith in the New York Police Department," Biden said.

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Sick of Self-Service Scooters, Parisians Vote to Ban Them

As furious Parisians continue taking to the streets every night following President Macron's controversial attempt to ram through a retirement age hike without a vote, local officials had just the solution – a referendum to ban electric scooters.

Voters in Paris have overwhelmingly [decided](#) to ban the use of rented electric scooters in city limits, official figures indicate.

Paris reportedly has the highest rate of e-scooter usage of any European city, with each device logging an average of 3.5 uses per day.

But between the increased congestion and the hundreds of pedestrian injuries caused by the scooters each year, it seems most of the city is sick of them. Nearly 90% of Parisians who participated in Sunday's referendum supported the measure to rid the roads of the battery-powered personal scooters.

One woman, who was reportedly injured for several weeks after being struck by a rental scooter, [told](#) French media this week that the doctor who treated her was "really tired of it – I could see it in his face."

"He said he was dealing with [scooter] accidents nearly every day," she added.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo was responsible for calling the referendum which allowed voters to decide for themselves whether or not to retain the free-floating e-scooters. Privately-owned vehicles are not included in the ban, which applies [exclusively](#) to rented scooters owned by the the companies authorized to operate in city limits including Lime, Dott and Tier.

The three companies waged a serious public relations battle in the weeks leading up to the vote, advertising heavily on social media and offering free rides in an effort to entice younger voters who might not otherwise be inclined to head to the polls.

But in the end, it wasn't enough. Of the approximately 103,084 Parisians who cast their ballot, 89.03% of them [voted](#) to end self-service scooters in Paris.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, who called the election in January, told reporters while voting Sunday that she is "committed to respecting the choice of voters, purely and simply," but made her feelings on the matter clear.

"It's very expensive - five euros for 10 minutes - it's not very sustainable, and above all, it's the cause of a lot of accidents," she added.

But cast against a backdrop of massive daily protests which continue to simmer throughout the city after a controversial retirement age reform, the vote struck a number of Parisians as completely out of touch.

As Popular Republican Union party founder Francois Asselineau [pointed out](#) on Twitter, "France is a country where the capital organizes a referendum for or against scooters, but where we stubbornly refuse referendums for or against retirement at age 64, the sanctions against Russia, [and] sex education at school."

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Switzerland to Investigate Buyout of Credit Suisse by Main Rival UBS

With reverberations from the ongoing banking crisis continuing to be felt across the Western financial system, Swiss officials say they need to double-check the paperwork as their country's biggest bank attempts a takeover of its struggling rival.

Switzerland has opened an investigation into the takeover of the beleaguered Credit Suisse bank by its rival UBS Group, authorities [announced](#) Sunday.

The nation's Federal Prosecutor said in a statement that the office is looking into whether executives at either Credit Suisse and UBS committed crimes, but didn't elaborate about the direction of the investigation.

"The Office of the Attorney General wants to proactively fulfill its mandate and responsibility to contribute to a clean Swiss financial center and has set up a monitoring system so that it can take action immediately on any issues that fall within its area of responsibility," the prosecutor's office stated.

The central bank said that if the investigation turned up any serious irregularities, investors' deposits would be guaranteed.

UBS, which reappointed former CEO Sergio Ermotti ahead of the mergers, reportedly insists that its "number one priority is to stabilize the situation".

The chairman of the board of directors of the new super-bank described the merger as not only "the biggest transaction" since the 2008 financial crisis, but "the first time" that banks of global significance will combine forces.

Credit Suisse agreed to a merger with UBS in March just one week after getting a \$54 billion bailout by the Swiss government which failed to stem a massive drop in share prices – a bailout which indicated that the bank had been deemed "too big to fail." Though it'd been on a steady slide for years, Credit Suisse's shares have plummeted in value by four times in as many months since December.

With the walls closing in, the embattled company's investors decided in March to be absorbed by their rival UBS for \$3.25 billion in a government-supervised deal.

UBS, the country's largest bank, has declared that it could end up laying off up to 30% of its workforce in the wake of the buyout. In a worst-case scenario, that could [mean](#) that as many as 36,000 people lose their jobs.

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German MP Calls to Expel US Troops – 'They Don't Actually Want Allies, Just Loyal Vassals'

It's time for US troops in Germany to go home, says one of the few remaining voices campaigning for the country to maintain its neutrality amid the conflict between Russian forces and the Zelensky regime.

An influential German legislator has called for the removal of US service members from the country's borders in a rousing address commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Marshall Plan.

In a March 31 address, Left Party parliamentarian Sevim Dagdelen acknowledged that while "the main burden in the fight against German fascism was shouldered by the Soviet Union... 400,000 US soldiers lost their lives" in the fight as well.

And although "we humbly bow before them" now, Dagdelen explained, "friendship with each other also means breaking with the existing relationship of extreme subservience by Germany on matters of US foreign policy" – a relationship which she noted is "marked by war, breaches of international law, and support of coups."

"And that is why," continued Dagdelen, "we also say: after 78 years, it is now time for US soldiers to go home," adding: "all other allies left Germany a long time ago."

To this day, Dagdelen noted, "the US military bases behave like extraterritorial areas in which the [German] constitution does not apply."

US troops have committed a number of gruesome crimes on Germany soil – many of which have never been formally adjudicated. Just five weeks ago, a former US soldier was charged with the murder of Private Amanda Gonzales at an Army base in Hanau, Germany in November 2001.

But beyond the domestic criminality in Germany, she pointed out that Germany's relationship with the American government means "assistance is provided in US wars – lethal drone strikes and torture flights in breach of international law."

Recalling the decision in 2010 for the US nuclear weapons to be withdrawn" from the country – a measure which she pointed out "has not been implemented" to this day – Dagdelen said "there was once a time when the Bundestag had more courage."

And while those times are "long gone," the German parliamentarian said she "stands by [her] position [that] the US nuclear weapons must go."

It's a position that she seemed to acknowledge puts her at odds with the mainstream sentiments in German politics.

"Now, Germany's federal government allows itself to be pushed directly into the line of fire by the US with supplies of Leopard tanks," Dagdelen stated.

"Now, the federal government is refusing to support the international investigative commission" proposed by countries like China and Brazil which would look into "the terror attacks on the Nord Stream pipelines," she continued.

A recent bombshell report by Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh implicated top Biden functionaries in last September's bombing of the main artery providing Germans with cheap Russian gas. But the American government has appeared to stubbornly resist any efforts to investigate the cause of the blast, including a recent UN motion to probe the attack which was supported by Security Council members Russia, China and Brazil but ignored by the US and Germany.

"The US administration gives the impression that they don't actually want allies, just loyal vassals," observed Dagdelen.

But the West's my-way-or-the-highway approach has come at a cost, the legislator noted, and now "fewer and fewer countries around the world are prepared to accept" this arrangement.

"And that is good news," she added, because "the foundation for a shared friendship should be respect for human rights and international law."

"Why is the federal government refusing, even after 20 years, to condemn the US war of aggression in Iraq as a violation of international law?" Dagdelen asked.

"Why are you, [German Foreign Minister Annalena] Baerbock, not lobbying for the release of Julian Assange," the parliamentarian continued, noting that the jailed Wikileaks publisher "faces 175 years in prison in the USA for making US war crimes public."

"Why did you not offer asylum to the dissident Edward Snowden?" she concluded.

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45% of Americans Support Trump Indictment, New Poll Finds

A new poll by the American news outlet ABC News and Ipsos suggested that while 45% of Americans approve of Trump's indictment, a higher percentage believe the Manhattan District Attorney's indictment of the former president is politically motivated.

Just 45% of Americans believe former US President Donald Trump should have been indicted by a Manhattan grand jury over an alleged hush money payment made to adult actress Stormy Daniels, a survey has revealed.

A new poll by ABC News and Ipsos [found](#) that a minority of Americans agree that Trump should have been "charged with a crime in this case." According to the pollsters, 32% of the US population responded that they disagreed with the indictment and 23% of those surveyed said they were unsure.

Meanwhile, a full 47% say the charges against Trump are "politically motivated," Ipsos [wrote](#), noting that just "32% disagreed" with the premise that Democrats are using the Daniels case to advance their own agenda.

Indeed, the results proved to be predictably partisan.

As ABC News noted, "almost nine in 10 Democrats (88%) think Trump should have been charged in the investigation" by Manhattan's District Attorney, but only 40% of Independents and 16% of Republicans agreed.

Crucially, the pollster noted that many independent-leaning Americans "remain undecided on whether Trump should be charged with a crime," a prospect which would leave the 2024 presidential election to the whims of swing voters.

Americans were evenly split on the question of whether charges were very or somewhat serious, with 50% agreeing and 36% responding that the former president's supposed crimes were either "not too serious" or "not serious at all."

Those results, too, reflected a political bias: 87% of Democrats said the charges were very serious or somewhat serious, whereas 60% out of 10 GOP-leaning voters suggested the charges were overblown.

As ABC noted, the results seem to indicate that a significant number of Americans "may be waiting to see what precisely the indictment is connected to or what specific charges Trump will face" before they make up their minds.

The study, which was conducted between March 31 and April 1, 2023, reportedly included feedback from 593 adult Americans.

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Risks to Banks, Financial Sector May Intensify Amid Global Monetary Tightening - IMF

(Updates with details in paras 3-9)

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned about potential intensified risks to banks and the financial sector in the coming months amid continued tightening of monetary policy globally.

"Recent strains at some banks in the United States and Europe are a powerful reminder of pockets of elevated financial vulnerabilities built over the years of low rates, compressed volatility and ample liquidity. Such risks could intensify in coming months amid the continued tightening of monetary policy globally, making it especially important to understand and safeguard this broad swath of the financial sector that comprises an array of institutions beyond banks," the IMF said in a blog regarding its latest Global Financial Stability Report.

The report highlighted that nonbank and market-based finance had significant growth since the last global financial crisis. Global financial assets held by nonbank financial intermediaries (NBFIs) has grown from about 40 to nearly 50 percent, it added.

Such a development in part was a consequence of regulatory and supervisory initiatives that have made the banking system more resilient and have effectively pushed activities to other segments of the financial system, the report added.

The IMF also said the sector's vulnerabilities increased in the past decade.

"NBFIs stress tends to emerge alongside elevated leverage, for example borrowing money to finance their investments or boost returns, or using financial instruments, like derivatives," the fund said.

The IMF called on policymakers to get appropriate tools to tackle turmoil in this sector, adding that problems there may adversely affect financial stability.

"Robust surveillance, regulation, and supervision are essential pre-requisites. Policymakers must also narrow or eliminate gaps in regulatory reporting of key data, including how much risk firms are taking with their borrowing or use of derivatives," the report said.

The fund advocated for international cooperation on the issue, adding that it will help to better identify risks and manage possible crises.

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Blinken Welcomes Finland's Accession Into NATO

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken welcomed Finland's official accession into NATO on Tuesday.

"We're really thrilled to have Finland as the 31st member of this alliance. So this is an important day, on an important day already in NATO's history," Blinken said at a joint press briefing with Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in Brussels.

Stoltenberg had noted that the North Atlantic Treaty, the founding act of the alliance, was signed 74 years ago on April 4, 1949.

Referring to Finland's entry, Blinken stated that he was "tempted to say" this is maybe the one thing NATO can "thank" Russian President Vladimir Putin for.

Blinken added that NATO members would continue to reaffirm political and practical support for Ukraine at the upcoming summit in Vilnius in July.

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RPT: PREVIEW - Trump Set to Appear in Manhattan Criminal Court for Arraignment Amid Heightened Security

NEW YORK, April 4 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump will make a historic appearance at a Manhattan criminal court on Tuesday afternoon for an arraignment with the city on high alert.

Last week, a Manhattan grand jury comprised of 23 people voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged role in a hush money payment and cover-up involving adult film star Stormy Daniels during the lead-up to the 2016 election. Trump denies the allegations and the affair and has characterized the case as a "witch hunt" rooted in political persecution.

Trump's arraignment is scheduled for 2:15 p.m. EST (6:15 p.m. GMT) on Tuesday, where he will formally be read a list of charges that have been reported to consist of at least 30 counts of business-related fraud, though the indictment has remained sealed.

Since an arraignment is a criminal defendant's first court appearance, Trump may be expected to appear for fingerprints and legal paperwork during a process that takes place behind closed doors and usually takes a few hours.

Trump, who is entitled to the same due process as ordinary citizens despite his elevated status

and secret service detail, will appear before a judge afterward and is expected to plead not guilty to the charges. Trump's legal team said the president will likely not be in handcuffs but a mugshot is possible.

The New York Police Department bolstered security fencing around the premises of the Manhattan judicial buildings ahead of tomorrow's arraignment, which is expected to cause road closures and draw the attention of protesters gathering in support of the former president, who is still running in the 2024 presidential election.

Officers have also erected barricades around Trump Tower, where Trump is staying on Monday night ahead of his court appearance.

The NYPD has said that it is unconcerned about the arraignment causing threats to the city and has focused on coordinating security logistics with the secret service in addition to traffic closures and possible crowd control.

The police told Sputnik there is increased uniformed presence throughout the five boroughs amid possible Trump protests, but there are currently no credible threats to the city.

Trump is expected to be back in Florida by Tuesday night. Trump's office said the former president will deliver a speech at 8:15 p.m. EST at his resort in Mar-a-Lago.

Trump has said he will be appealing the indictment, claiming that the officials involved in the case are biased.

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Trump's Lawyer Says Using Prosecutors as 'Political Weapons' Sets Dangerous Precedent

NEW YORK, April 4 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Using prosecutors as political weapons against former President Donald Trump sets a dangerous precedent, his leading attorney Joe Tacopina told Sputnik.

"It's a dangerous new trend in this country, that we're now using prosecutors' offices as political weapons, but that's what's happening. And that's what this is. There's no question about that," Tacopina said ahead of Trump's arraignment hearing in New York on Tuesday.

Now it's Donald Trump but tomorrow it could be a Democrat, he added.

Tacopina believes that this whole case is based on the hatred and fear rivals have for the former president.

Earlier, the lawyer told Sputnik he hopes the court hearing lasts 30 minutes and will be conducted in a standard and efficient manner. He also said no handcuffs will be involved but a mugshot will probably be taken. They plan on pleading not guilty then will evaluate the indictment, he added.

He also said the defense team is not yet aware of the exact number of counts, but it is of no concern because they all emanate from the same allegation.

Last week, a grand jury in Manhattan voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged involvement in a hush money payment and subsequent cover-up involving a purported affair with adult star Stormy Daniels. US media reported that he may face over 30 charges when he is arraigned on Tuesday.

Trump denies the allegations against him as well as having an affair with Daniels, characterizing the case as a "political witch hunt" amid his bid in the 2024 presidential election.

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RPT - Trump to Tell Court 'Not Guilty,' Will Take Time to Evaluate Indictment - Attorney

NEW YORK, April 4 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Former US President Donald Trump will confine himself to declaring his innocence during an appearance in a New York court tomorrow, while his legal team will take time to evaluate his indictment in a hush money payment case, his attorney Joe Tacopina told Sputnik.

"The only thing we'll reply immediately with is not guilty. That's what we'll say tomorrow and we'll go from there. Obviously, we'll take time to evaluate the indictment and see what motions we want to file once we get all the discovery, so it takes some time," Tacopina said.

Apart from saying "not guilty," the former president "won't say a word," the lawyer stated.

"And then, you know, what he does afterwards, that's up to him," Tacopina added.

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RPT - Trump's Lawyer Says No Handcuffs Expected During Arraignment But Mugshot Possible

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"No handcuffs are going to be involved, the Secret Service is guarding him and what not," Tacopina said on Monday. "Everything else, pictures [mugshot] and stuff, regular operating procedures, that'll probably happen. I'm sure the District Attorney's Office is going to try and make a big show out of this to get more publicity out of it."

Last week, a grand jury in Manhattan voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged involvement in a hush money payment and subsequent cover-up involving a purported affair with pornography actress Stormy Daniels. US media reported that Trump may face over 30 charges when he is arraigned on Tuesday.

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Ukraine Conflict Revealed Key Weaknesses in US Readiness for Big Wars - Marine General

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) - The past year of hostilities in the Ukraine conflict have revealed major structural weaknesses in the capability of the United States to fight and sustain armaments, industrial support and logistics for any extended war against a near peer adversary, Marine Corps Combatant Development Command Chief Brigadier General Mark Clingan told a Washington conference.

"Some key weaknesses [were] identified in the military industrial complex," Clingan told a conference at the Atlantic Council on Monday.

Chinese shipbuilding capacity is vastly larger than that of the United States and the US armed forces needed to invest far more heavily in building a new advanced technology 21st century infrastructure focusing on Artificial Intelligence (AI), 3D printing and proliferating vast numbers of cheap, easily manufactured unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones, the general said.

Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) Distinguished Research Fellow Thomas X. Hammes added that it would be a mistake to try and rebuild and recreate the kind of massive broad industrial base the United States enjoyed in the decades after World War II. Instead, weapons designs and replacements should be streamlined so that far fewer parts should be needed for replacement and maintenance in conflict situations, he said.

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US Expects 'Fast' Missile War With China Across Taiwan Strait - Former Army Secretary

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) - US military planners believe that any future war with China over Taiwan would start, escalate and be concluded very quickly and that it would focus on an intense exchange of missiles across the 100 mile wide Taiwan Strait, former Acting Secretary of the Army John Whitley told a Washington conference.

"The next war is likely to be very fast [with] missile exchanges over the Taiwan Strait," Whitley told an Atlantic Council conference on the military lessons to be learned from the first year of the Ukraine conflict on Monday.

The United States needed to work with Taiwan to prepare in advance the kind of training, familiarity with light tactical weapons and operational expertise it succeeded in developing in Ukraine in the years building up to the conflict that began in February 2022, Whitley said.

"How do you get an ally or friend to hang on until we can get there? How do you build in Taiwan that [capability] we have seen in Ukraine: that we are not seeing there [in Taiwan] yet?" he said.

Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) Distinguished Research Fellow Thomas X. Hammes told the conference that in the event of a conflict with China over Taiwan the US armed forces would have to "break the back" of Chinese People's Liberation Army air, sea and rocket forces.

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Trump's Lawyer Says Manhattan Indictment Case Legally Easy, Politically Difficult

NEW YORK, April 4 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Joe Tacopina, lead attorney representing former US President Donald Trump, told Sputnik the case involving Trump's indictment in Manhattan is the easiest legal case of his career but made more challenging by politics.

"I've had a lot of high-profile cases, as you know. Factually, legally, this is the least challenging one. If you just look at the law and the facts, this should be the least challenging one of my career," Tacopina said on Monday. "Unfortunately, that's not what's at play here. There's many more things aside from that at stake, like the politics."

Trump is expected to appear in court on Tuesday for arraignment after a grand jury voted last week to indict him on charges related to alleged hush money payments to pornography actress Stormy Daniels. Trump denies the allegations against him.

On Friday, Trump said he plans to appeal the indictment, claiming that Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg is biased against him. Trump has frequently characterized the case against him as a "witch hunt."

Law enforcement in New York City has bolstered security ahead of the arraignment in preparation for potential protests. Earlier on Monday, US President Joe Biden said he has faith in the city's police, when asked whether he is concerned about the possibility of unrest.

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Trump Case Entering Dangerous Area Where Politics Influences US Justice System - Lawyer

NEW YORK, April 4 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Former US President Donald Trump's case involving an alleged hush money payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels is entering dangerous territory where politics has an influence over the US justice system, Trump attorney Joe Tacopina told Sputnik.

"We're entering a dangerous area where politics have influence over the justice system, and politics are being used to weaponize the prosecutors' offices," Tacopina said. "As I said, you know, it's a Democratic prosecutor supported by Democratic financiers, his campaign, going after the right-wing candidate, the Republican candidate."

Tacopina pointed out the fact that Trump's case was rejected by federal prosecutors and is now being taken up by left-wing state prosecutor Alvin Bragg, the Manhattan Attorney General, in order to go after the former US president.

The former US president accuses Bragg of being biased.

Last week, a grand jury in Manhattan voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged involvement in a hush money payment and subsequent cover-up involving a purported affair with Daniels. US media reported that he may face over 30 charges when he is arraigned on Tuesday.

Trump denies the allegations against him as well as having an affair with Daniels,

characterizing the case as a political witch hunt amid his bid in the 2024 presidential election.

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Trump's Attorney Not Yet Aware of Exact Number of Counts in Hush Money Case

NEW YORK, April 4 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Trump's attorney Joe Tacopina told Sputnik he is not yet aware of the exact number of counts the former US president has been charged with in a hush money payment case, but is not very concerned since all of them stem from the same allegation.

Last week, a grand jury in Manhattan voted to indict Donald Trump on charges related to his alleged involvement in a hush money payment and subsequent cover-up involving a purported affair with adult film star Stormy Daniels. Trump denies the allegations and the affair with Daniels.

"As far as the amount of charges or the counts, we don't know yet, but it's all going to be around the same thing [hush money payments]. And you know, they could extrapolate and make one check, one count, another check, another count. So there's different ways to do it. But I'm not that concerned about the number of charges: all emanate from the same allegation," Tacopina said.

The attorney believes the case is "ridiculous, in a lot of ways."

"It's not really a case, there's no crime. But this is a political persecution," he added.

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Trump's Attorney Hopes Court Appearance Done in Efficient, Standard Way

NEW YORK, April 4 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Trump's legal team hopes that his appearance at a New York court is done in an efficient and standard way and will conclude within half an hour, his attorney Joe Tacopina told Sputnik.

Last week, a grand jury in Manhattan voted to indict Donald Trump on charges related to his alleged involvement in a hush money payment and subsequent cover-up involving a purported affair with adult film star Stormy Daniels. The former US president denies the allegations and the affair with Daniels. He has characterized the case as a "witch hunt."

"In some ways, it should just be a normal arraignment at 100 Center Street, which is, you know, we go there, we get processed, we meet the judge, we say not guilty, we set a schedule and we leave. That's how it should be. Obviously it's gonna be different tomorrow. We have the Secret Service involved and, you know, the security issues that are not normally present," Tacopina said.

The attorney said he doesn't know what it's going to be like, "except a circus-like atmosphere."

"But hopefully the court part is done in an efficient and standard way, and I hope we're just gonna end there, you know, within a half hour," Tacopina added ahead of Tuesday's arraignment.

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PREVIEW - Trump Set to Appear in Manhattan Criminal Court for Arraignment Amid Heightened Security

NEW YORK, April 4 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump will make a historic appearance at a Manhattan criminal court on Tuesday afternoon for an arraignment with the city on high alert.

Last week, a Manhattan grand jury comprised of 23 people voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged role in a hush money payment and cover-up involving adult film star Stormy Daniels during the lead-up to the 2016 election. Trump denies the allegations and the affair and has characterized the case as a "witch hunt" rooted in political persecution.

Trump's arraignment is scheduled for 2:15 p.m. EST (6:15 p.m. GMT) on Tuesday, where he will formally be read a list of charges that have been reported to consist of at least 30 counts of business-related fraud, though the indictment has remained sealed.

Since an arraignment is a criminal defendant's first court appearance, Trump may be expected to appear for fingerprints and legal paperwork during a process that takes place behind closed doors and usually takes a few hours.

Trump, who is entitled to the same due process as ordinary citizens despite his elevated status and secret service detail, will appear before a judge afterward and is expected to plead not guilty to the charges. Trump's legal team said the president will likely not be in handcuffs but a mugshot is possible.

The New York Police Department bolstered security fencing around the premises of the Manhattan judicial buildings ahead of tomorrow's arraignment, which is expected to cause road closures and draw the attention of protesters gathering in support of the former president, who is still running in the 2024 presidential election.

Officers have also erected barricades around Trump Tower, where Trump is staying on Monday night ahead of his court appearance.

The NYPD has said that it is unconcerned about the arraignment causing threats to the city and has focused on coordinating security logistics with the secret service in addition to traffic closures and possible crowd control.

The police told Sputnik there is increased uniformed presence throughout the five boroughs amid possible Trump protests, but there are currently no credible threats to the city.

Trump is expected to be back in Florida by Tuesday night. Trump's office said the former president will deliver a speech at 8:15 p.m. EST at his resort in Mar-a-Lago.

Trump has said he will be appealing the indictment, claiming that the officials involved in the case are biased.

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US Must Face Total War Threat as 'Back to the Future' Possible Reality - General

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) - The unexpected length and intensity of the continuing conflict in Ukraine should teach US Defense Department planners that total war between superpowers

and other major industrialized nations should not be regarded as inconceivable in the coming decades, Marine Corps Combatant Development Command Chief Brig. Gen. Mark Clingan said. "Total war could be a reality as we go back into the future," Clingan told a conference at the Atlantic Council on the military lessons to be learned from the first year of the Ukraine conflict on Monday.

US war planners will be forced to take seriously the need to defend the homeland, including civilian centers as well as major airfields and ports from major attacks in the event of such a conflict, Clingan said.

"Force protection will be key to protecting ports, airfields and [the] civilian population," Clingan said.

All of Europe was now within the weapon-contested zone opened up by the Ukraine conflict, Clingan added.

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Ukraine Successfully Integrated Modern Command, Control Where US JADC2 Failed - Expert

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) - Ukraine has shown the unanticipated capability to integrate new targeting, communications and command systems in the kind of integrated network operating successfully in real time that the far vaster and better funded US armed forces have failed to come close to over the past decade, Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) Distinguished Research Fellow Thomas Hammes said.

"Starlink established an entirely new network for command and control: All information could come down on cell phones. ... [Then] Artificial Intelligence (AI) became involved. ... I don't think the United States can duplicate it," Hammes told the conference on lessons to be learned for the first year of the Ukraine conflict at the Atlantic Council on Monday.

Hammes said the Ukrainian armed forces using commercial Starlink satellite constellations, cell phones and other commercially available, inexpensive and adaptable off-the-shelf technology had achieved integrated command and control coordinating capabilities that the ambitious Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) program had promised but failed to achieve over the past decade.

JADC2 is an enormous system but the US Army, Navy and Air Force all have totally different ideas about what is to come out of it, Hammes added.

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Plans to Return Heavy Tanks Into US Land Combat Forces Could Backfire - Marine General

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) - Efforts to reintroduce heavy US armored tank forces into land battles could backfire because of advances in missile, artillery, drones and targeting technology and increase the risk of mission failure and defeat instead, US Marine Corps Combatant Development Command Chief Brigadier General Mark Clingan told a Washington conference.

"We may be reaccepting risk as we try to reintroduce tanks into the battlefield," Clingan told a conference at the Atlantic Council on Monday about the lessons to be learned from the first year of combat hostilities in Ukraine.

The Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) Distinguished Research Fellow Thomas X. Hammes agreed that a new generation of far more accurate, targeted easily deployable weapons and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones had made traditional armored columns and concentrations far more vulnerable to destruction in combat and that the Ukraine conflict so far had demonstrated these developments.

"Everyone is building new systems to kill armored [formations] at a distance," Hammes said.

The M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) supplied by the United States to Ukraine had demonstrated its ability to hit key Russian command and logistics bases or nodes in Ukraine and thus reduce the quantities of ammunition reaching front line fighting troops by 50% to 70%, Hammes said.

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One Chinese Shipyard Now Out Produces Entire US Shipbuilding Industry - General

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) - China has so much more industrial shipbuilding capacity than the United States that a single one of its large shipyards already produces more ships in a year than every active shipyard in the United States combined, US Marine Corps Combatant Development Command Chief Brig. Gen. Mark Clingan said.

"One Chinese shipyard can produce more shipyards in a year than all of our shipyards combined," Clingan told a conference at the Atlantic Council.

The unexpected, protracted nature of the Ukraine war over the past year had revealed key weaknesses in the US military industrial complex, whose base and production capacity needed to be significantly expanded, Clingan said.

In identifying future zones of conflict around the world, it was important to preposition as much equipment as possible well in advance in allied nations as the ability to resupply US and allied forward units once hostilities began could not be assured and there would be "a fight to get to the fight," Clingan added.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, April 4 (Sputnik) -

TRUMP COURT CASE

* The White House is watching closely the situation concerning former US President Donald

Trump ahead of his initial court appearance, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday.

* New York City Mayor Eric Adams said that there are no specific credible security threats ahead of Trump's arrival to the Manhattan court for his arraignment on Tuesday.

* The New York Police Department has stepped up security at the Manhattan Criminal Court ahead of Trump's expected arraignment on Tuesday, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene.

RUSSIA'S PRESIDENCY OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will chair a debate at the United Nations on international peace and security later this month, Russian Ambassador to the world body Vasily Nebenzia said on Monday.

* Russia will host on Wednesday an Arria-formula meeting on children in armed conflicts with a focus on Ukraine and evacuating children from conflict zones, Nebenzia said.

* Russia to hold its first event as the president of the UN Security Council on threats to international peace and security risks stemming from violations of the agreements regulating the export of weapons and military equipment on April 10, Nebenzia said.

* The United States has not yet decided on its "attendance levels" during Russia's presidency of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in April, but intends to carry out the business of the UNSC during this time, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The United States will announce a new security assistance package for Ukraine sometime this week, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Monday.

* Five wounded Ukrainian servicemen have been repatriated to their homeland, Russian Commissioner for Human Rights Tatiana Moskalkova said.

* Ukraine has lost up to 285 soldiers and foreign mercenaries in the Donetsk area over the 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* NATO foreign ministers will discuss a multi-year support program for Ukraine at a meeting from April 4-5, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

FINLAND ACCESSION TO NATO

* Finland will officially become member of the NATO alliance on April 4, the Office of Finnish President said on Monday.

* Russia will strengthen its military potential in the western and northwestern direction in response to Finland's accession to NATO, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko told Sputnik.

TERRORIST ATTACK IN ST. PETERSBURG

* The terrorist attack against the famous Russian military reporter Vladlen Tatarsky was planned by the special services of Ukraine and the supporters of the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK, designated extremist organization and foreign agent, banned in Russia), the National Anti-Terrorism Committee said on Monday.

* Ukraine supports the use of terrorist attacks and may be responsible for the murder of Tatarsky in the blast at a cafe in St. Petersburg, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

* Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on awarding the Order of Courage to Tatarsky posthumously.

OPEC+ DECISION TO CUT OIL PRODUCTION

* The OPEC+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) reaffirmed on Monday its commitment to the current terms of the deal and indicated that an additional voluntary reduction in the production of a number of alliance countries together with Russia will amount to 1.66 million barrels per day by the end of 2023, according to the alliance's communique.

* Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said the OPEC+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee's decision to approve the voluntary reduction of the oil production by several member states is an important step.

* The United States does not think that OPEC+ oil cuts are advisable at present given an alleged market uncertainty, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said.

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OPEC Cuts Add Uncertainty to Global Growth, Consumer Burden Amid High Inflation - Yellen

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - A major production cut announced over the weekend by oil producing nations in the OPEC+ alliance will add uncertainty to the global economy and burden consumers amid already high inflation, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was reported saying Monday.

"I think it's a regrettable action that OPEC decided to take," Yellen was quoted as saying by Reuters, adding that the production cut was an "unconstructive act" that will add uncertainty to the global growth outlook and stress consumers with even pricier goods and services.

OPEC+ groups the 13-member Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC, with 10 independent oil producing nations steered by Russia. Oil prices jumped 6% Monday, a day after the alliance announced a production cut of 1.7 million barrels daily that would add to its earlier reduction of 2.0 million barrels per day since November. The combined 3.7 million barrels per day would remove about 3% of world oil supply and send fuel prices soaring across most of the world, analysts said.

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Merrill Lynch to Pay Over \$9.5Mln for Failing to Disclose Foreign Exchange Fees - SEC

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - Merrill Lynch has agreed to pay more than \$9.5 million for failing to disclose foreign exchange fees to its clients, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said in a statement on Monday.

"The Securities and Exchange Commission today charged Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated for charging advisory clients more than \$4 million in undisclosed foreign exchange fees for transfers to or from their accounts. To settle the charges, Merrill Lynch has agreed to pay disgorgement, prejudgment interest, and a civil penalty totaling more than \$9.5 million," the statement said.

Merrill Lynch has also agreed to distribute funds to the clients that suffered harm for its practice, the statement said,

In the period between May 2016 and July 2020, Merrill Lynch offered programs to advisory clients in which they paid the company a fee in exchange for a range of investment advisory services, including foreign currency exchanges. However, the company did not disclose to its clients that it was charging a major fee related to transactions, the statement said.

"Merrill Lynch paid a percentage of these production credits to its financial advisers and referred to this charge as a commission in internal documents," the statement added.

The SEC's order also finds that Merrill Lynch failed to adopt and implement policies and procedures reasonably designed to prevent its disclosures from being misleading about the fees it charged on foreign currency exchanges, according to the statement.

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Biden Says Has Faith in New York Police Regarding Possible Trump Indictment Unrest

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Monday that he has faith in the New York City Police Department (NYPD), when asked whether he has concerns about potential unrest after the indictment of former President Donald Trump.

"No, I have faith in the New York Police Department," Biden said.

On Monday, Trump landed in New York ahead of his indictment in a Manhattan court on charges linked to alleged hush money payments to pornography actress Stormy Daniels.

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US Mulling Sanctions Relief for Iran in Exchange for Halting Some Nuke Activity - Reports

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is exploring an interim agreement with Iran that would allow for some sanctions relief in exchange for Tehran freezing parts of its nuclear program, Axios reported on Monday.

The proposal discussions, which started in January, involve Iran halting its uranium enrichment at 60%, which is well below the 90% enrichment required of weapons-grade uranium necessary

for nuclear weapons, the report said. Iran has currently stockpiled over 87 kilograms of 60% enriched uranium, which, if enriched, would be enough to produce at least one nuclear bomb.

The proposed deal is similar to one created by the Obama administration when Iran signed the 2013 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which included a short-term freeze on some of Iran's nuclear program in exchange for partial sanctions relief, according to the report.

Iranian officials have so far rejected the new approach, citing the 2015 fall nuclear deal, which nearly returned to last September before Iran backed out after Western countries rejected the country's demand to cease investigations into undeclared nuclear sites, the report said.

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Nebenzia Says Russia's UNSC Seat 'Fully Legitimate' After Taking Over Council Presidency

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) – Russia's seat at the UN Security Council is fully legitimate, and the country has no intention of "abusing the prerogative" of its presidency of the body, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday after the West and Ukraine fumed at the country for assuming the presidency.

"The seat of the Russian Federation in the Security Council is fully legitimate. We received it after we were recognized as continuators of the Soviet Union, with all the legal name and obligations that come after it. There was an agreement by all the former members of the Soviet Union, including Ukraine, for that," Nebenzia said in response to a question from a Ukrainian reporter.

Russia does not abuse the prerogative of its presidency, the diplomat stressed.

"We do not abuse the prerogatives of the presidency. One thing is the national position. Another thing is the role of the President of the Security Council which we value and cherish and will always try to maintain," Nebenzia said.

In response to the criticism, the ambassador said that some countries pretend they can decide who can or cannot preside over the Security Council.

When addressing allegations that Russia will use its presidency to spread "misinformation," Nebenzia pointed to the Western disinformation around the purported kidnapping of children evacuated from the conflict zone in Ukraine to Russia.

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Kirby Says Can't Confirm Reports That Chinese Balloon Intercepted Sensitive Communications

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Monday that he cannot confirm reports that the alleged Chinese spy balloon shot down by the United States intercepted sensitive communications.

"Nope, I cannot confirm those reports," Kirby said during a press briefing.

In February, the US shot down an alleged Chinese surveillance balloon over the Atlantic Ocean after it crossed the mainland. Earlier on Monday, US media reported that the balloon collected intelligence from several military sites.

The Defense Department is confident in the mitigation measures it took to protect military sites from potential surveillance activities, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh also said on Monday.

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Police Cordon Off Trump Tower Ahead of Ex-President's Arrival for Arraignment

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) – Police have cordoned off Trump Tower, located in the heart of New York on prestigious Fifth Avenue, ahead of the arrival of former US President Donald Trump later today for his court arraignment, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the ground. Police officers allow entry only to those who are living or working nearby.

Dozens, if not hundreds, of journalists have flocked to the site.

A small group of protesters is holding a banner that says: "Trump '24. Finish the Wall. Save America."

"It's a political prosecution! Wake up and see it for what it is! Read between the lines! If the man declared, if Donald Trump declared I'm not running for president yesterday, this whole media circus wouldn't be here today," NYC resident David Ram told Sputnik.

Last week, a Manhattan grand jury voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged role in a hush money payment and cover-up involving adult film star Stormy Daniels during the lead-up to the 2016 election. Trump denies the allegations, as well as the affair, and has characterized the case as a "witch hunt" and political persecution.

Trump said on Friday that he will be appealing the indictment, claiming that the officials involved in the case are biased.

The former president is set to arrive in New York later on Monday ahead of an arraignment hearing on Tuesday afternoon, during which he intends to declare his innocence.

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New York Police Steps Up Security at Manhattan Court Ahead of Trump Arraignment

NEW YORK, April 3 (Sputnik) - The New York Police Department (NYPD) has stepped up security at the Manhattan Criminal Court ahead of former President Donald Trump's expected arraignment on Tuesday, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene.

Last week, a grand jury in Manhattan voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged involvement in a hush money payment and subsequent cover-up of a purported affair with

pornography actress Stormy Daniels. Trump denies the allegations against him as well as having an affair with Daniels, characterizing the case as a political witch hunt amid his bid in the 2024 presidential election.

The NYPD has erected metal fences around the court building and adjacent judicial buildings as well as increased the number of officers in the area, the correspondent said.

It is likely that a number of streets around the court buildings will be blocked off ahead of Trump's arraignment, the correspondent added.

On Friday, Trump said he would appeal the indictment against him by the Manhattan grand jury by arguing that the officials involved in the case, including Manhattan Attorney General Alvin Bragg, are biased.

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Trump Says On Way to New York City For Arraignment Hearing Schedule Tuesday

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said on Monday that he is en route to New York City for an arraignment hearing set for the following day in a non-disclosure settlement case involving pornography actress Stormy Daniels.

"Heading to New York. Make America Great Again!!!" Trump wrote on Telegram.

Last week, a grand jury in Manhattan voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged involvement in a hush money payment and subsequent cover-up involving a purported affair with Daniels.

Trump denies the allegations against him as well as having an affair with Daniels, characterizing the case as a political witch hunt amid his bid in the 2024 presidential election.

On Friday, Trump said he would appeal the indictment against him by the Manhattan grand jury by arguing that the officials involved in the case, including Manhattan Attorney General Alvin Bragg, are biased.

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Russian Envoy to UN Says Not Ruling Out Blinken-Lavrov Meeting if One Requested

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzia said on Monday that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is open to meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in New York if the latter requests it.

"I think that depends on two factors: the first, where Blinken will be at that time; and on his ability and willingness to meet with our foreign minister," Nebenzia said during a press briefing, when asked about the potential for such a meeting. "If Secretary Blinken would like to have a meeting, of course the space will be provided."

Russia never runs away from meetings with those who request them, Nebenzia added.

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Lockheed Martin Orders \$491Mln Electronic Warfare Systems for Future F-35 Jets - BAE

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin has ordered a new electronic warfare system costing more than \$490 million for future marks of its F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the most expensive military program in history, BAE announced in a press release on Monday.

"BAE Systems has received \$491 million in contracts from Lockheed Martin to produce state-of-the-art Block 4 electronic warfare (EW) systems for future Lot 17 F-35 Lightning II fighter jets, adding to the 1,200 F-35 EW systems it has delivered to date," the release said.

The more advanced Block 4 systems will accelerate the delivery of advanced electronic warfare capabilities to warfighters by combining adaptable hardware and incremental software updates, the release said.

"The Block 4 EW system will offer greater situational awareness, enhanced survivability and increased capabilities to counter modern threats, and is upgradable to address evolving threats," the release said.

The system will provide F-35 jets with fully integrated offensive and defense electronic warfare capabilities, including long-range threat warning, self-protection and targeting support, the release added.

The system will also provide a 360-degree, full-spectrum situational awareness and rapid-response capabilities allowing the F-35 to evade, engage, counter, and jam threats, and reach well-defended targets, according to the release.

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Russia's Presidency at UNSC Based on UN Charter Guiding Principles - UNSG Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) – Russia's presidency at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is based on the guiding principles of the UN Charter, UN Secretary-General Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"There is a charter, which is our guiding principles, and that's the way we work as you know, and as I've said repeatedly, the secretary general has no authority on the way the Security Council does its work,' Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The spokesman was responding to criticism of Russia's presidency at the UNSC in light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

On April 1, Russia assumed its rotational presidency of the Security Council for the month of April 2023.

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New York City Mayor Says No Credible Security Threats Ahead of Trump Arraignment Tuesday

NEW YORK, April 3 (Sputnik) - New York City Mayor Eric Adams said on Monday that there are no specific credible security threats ahead of former President Donald Trump's arrival to a court in Manhattan for his arraignment the following day.

Last week, a grand jury in Manhattan voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged involvement in a hush money payment and subsequent cover-up involving a purported affair with pornography actress Stormy Daniels. Trump denies the allegations against him as well as having an affair with Daniels, characterizing the case as a political witch hunt ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

"There has been no specific credible threats to our city at this time," Adams said during a press conference. "While there may be some rebel rousers thinking about coming to our city tomorrow, our message is clear and simple: control yourselves."

Adams urged residents to use public transportation because the authorities expect some disruptions and a great deal of additional traffic, including street closures near the courts and throughout the city.

Adams also had a message for US Congresswoman and Trump ally, Marjorie Taylor Greene, who he expects will visit New York City on Tuesday.

"People from Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is known to spread misinformation and hate speech, she stated she's coming to town. While in town, be on your best behavior," Adams said.

On Friday, Trump said he would appeal the indictment against him by the Manhattan grand jury by arguing that the officials involved in the case are biased.

Trump said he will travel to New York on Monday ahead of the arraignment hearing on Tuesday afternoon, during which he intends to declare his innocence.

The case against Trump is especially sensitive due to the fact that he has already announced his campaign for the 2024 presidential election and thus far is the most popular candidate among registered Republicans.

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Russia to Host Open Debate on Threats to International Peace at UNSC – UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) – Russia to hold its first event as the president of the UN Security Council on threats to international peace and security risks stemming from violations of the agreements regulating the export of weapons and military equipment on April 10, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.

"We will resume our official work next week on Monday, April 10th straight away with our first signature event – Open debate on threats to international peace and security risks stemming

from violations of the agreements regulating the export of weapons and military equipment," Nebenzia said during a press briefing.

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Russia to Host Arria-Formula Meeting on Children in Armed Conflicts – UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) – Russia to host an Arria-formula meeting on children in armed conflicts with a focus on Ukraine and evacuating children from conflict zones on April 5, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.

“On the fifth of April at 10 a.m., we intend to host in our national capacity an Arria-formula meeting entitled ‘Children in armed conflicts. Ukrainian crisis: evacuating children from conflict zones,’ Nebenzia said during a press briefing.

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Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov to Chair UN Debate on Peace, Security - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will chair a debate at the UN on international peace and security later this month, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vasily Nebenzia said on Monday.

“As announced earlier, we expect Minister Lavrov to arrive in New York later in April. He will be chairing our second signature event on April 24, which is an open debate on the makings of international peace and security, and effective multilateralism through the defense of the principles of the UN Charter” Nebenzia said during a press briefing.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has confirmed his participation as a briefer, Nebenzia added.

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UN Learned ‘With Concern’ About Attack on Russian Reporter Tatarsky - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) - The UN learned with concern about the bomb attack that killed Russian military reporter Vladlen Tatarsky, UN Secretary-General Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

“We learned with concern about the explosion in St. Petersburg that killed the blogger and injured many other people,” Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The UN is waiting to learn more info from the ongoing investigation, Dujarric added.

Tatarsky was killed in a St. Petersburg cafe on Sunday by an explosive device, which also injured 32 others.

Earlier on Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Ukraine may be responsible for the attack. The regime in Kiev supports terrorist attacks, which is why Russia is carrying out its special military operation in Ukraine, Peskov added.

The Russian Investigative Committee told Sputnik that the incident is being investigated as an act of terrorism. The Investigative Committee also said the authorities detained Daria Trepova on suspicion of involvement in the attack.

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IMF Says Temporary Energy Subsidies More Appropriate Than General Measures

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) –Temporary energy subsidies for vulnerable people affected by inflation are more effective than general support, which allows individuals to waste resources, Paulo Mauro, director of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Fiscal Affairs Department, said on Monday.

“What we recommend in general terms is for support to be through cash transfers targeted to the most vulnerable groups to be temporary, so as energy prices come down some of these measures can be reduced,” Mauro said.

General subsidies are “less appropriate” because they are not pushing people to conserve energy and move towards renewable sources, he added.

Mauro called energy prices one of the major drivers causing inflation in the economy in recent years. “We saw a spike in electricity prices, in natural gas prices. Understandably, governments around the world took a plethora of measures, some of good quality, some of not so good quality,” he said.

He also noted that now is the time for governments to tighten deficits to reduce the need for central banks to jack up their interest rates as much.

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US Believes Ukraine Still Engaged in Battle for Bakhmut Amid ‘Vicious’ Fighting - Kirby

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - The United States believes that Ukraine is still engaged in "vicious" fighting to retain control of the city of Bakhmut, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Monday.

“It’s still a pretty vicious fight right now,” Kirby said during a press briefing. “The Ukrainians are still fighting hard for Bakhmut. They’re still in the battle. The city hasn’t fallen to the Russians.”

Kirby also said he could not confirm reports that Russian forces took control of the city’s administration building.

The United States assesses that control of Bakhmut will not impact battlefield dynamics from a strategic perspective, Kirby added.

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Kirby Says Aware of Russian Military Reporter's Assassination, Has No Further Information

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Monday that he has seen reports of the assassination of Russian military reporter Vladlen Tatarsky, but that the United States has no knowledge of the attack or of the its perpetrators.

"I don't have a lot of context here for you. We've seen the news, same as you, but we really don't have any deeper knowledge about what happened here or who was responsible," Kirby said during a press briefing.

It would be inappropriate for the United States to speculate about what happened, Kirby added. Tatarsky was killed in a St. Petersburg cafe on Sunday by an explosive device, which also injured 32 others.

Earlier on Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Ukraine may be responsible for the attack. The regime in Kiev supports terrorist attacks, which is why Russia is carrying out its special military operation in Ukraine, Peskov added.

The Russian Investigative Committee told Sputnik that the incident is being investigated as an act of terrorism. The Investigative Committee also said the authorities detained Daria Trepova on suspicion of involvement in the attack.

Last year, Russian journalist Daria Dugina, daughter of political philosopher Alexander Dugin, was killed in a car bombing that the Kremlin tied to Ukraine's special services.

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US Not Yet Decided on 'Attendance Levels' During Russia's Presidency of UNSC - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) - The United States has not yet decided on its "attendance levels" during Russia's presidency of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in April, but intends to carry out the business of the UNSC during this time, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Monday.

"We haven't decided yet on what our attendance levels will be, but we intend to carry out the business of the Security Council during this month," Thomas-Greenfield said during a stakeout.

The ambassador also said that she has no plans to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during his visit to New York in April to chair a meeting of the UN Security Council in April.

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NASA Officially Introduces Artemis II Crew for Mission to Return to Moon

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - NASA on Monday officially introduced the Artemis II crew set to return humans to the surface of the moon first the first time after some 50 years.

The Artemis mission crew consists of NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Hammock Koch, and Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen.

"Together we will usher in a new era of exploration for a new generation of star sailors and dreamers - the Artemis generation, together, we are going to the moon, to Mars and beyond," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said during the unveiling ceremony.

Wiseman will serve as the commander of the Artemis mission while Glover, who is expected to be the first colored-person to land on the moon, will serve as the pilot of the Orion spacecraft developed by Boeing.

Koch will also set a new milestone along with Glover as she is set to become the first woman to land on the moon.

The Artemis II mission will only conduct a flyby around the moon in late 2024 while the Artemis III mission will land the astronauts on the moon soon after.

All three NASA astronauts have previously made trips to the International Space Station, but this will be Hansen's first spaceflight.

NASA is planning for "regularly recurring" ongoing manned missions to the Moon after its first Artemis Program landing, which is scheduled for no earlier than 2025.

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Kirby Says US May Not Release Much Information on Alleged Chinese Spy Balloon to Public

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - The United States may not release much information to the public regarding what it learns about the alleged Chinese spy balloon shot down after flying over sensitive US military sites, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Monday.

"I don't think we have a sense right now about how much we're going to be able to talk about the specifics of this capability and what we're able to exploit off of it," Kirby said during a press briefing. "It's entirely likely that we will not be able to, for understandable reasons, share with you or with the public much of the detail of what we learned."

Analysis of the Chinese balloon is still ongoing, Kirby said.

In February, an alleged Chinese surveillance balloon flew across the continental United States, including near sensitive military sites. Kirby declined to confirm reports that the balloon may have intercepted sensitive communications.

President Joe Biden authorized the military to shoot down the balloon over the Atlantic Ocean

and recover the wreckage for further analysis.

China maintains that the balloon was a civilian airship engaged in scientific research.

The incident prompted Secretary of State Antony Blinken to postpone a trip to China, which has yet to be rescheduled.

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US Envoy to UN Says Expects Security Council Meeting on Ukraine in April

UNITED NATIONS, April 3 (Sputnik) – US ambassador to the United Nations (UN) Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Monday that she expects a UN Security Council meeting to discuss the situation in Ukraine to take place in April.

“I suspect that there will be a meeting on Ukraine during Russia's presidency,”

Thomas-Greenfield said during a stakeout.

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US to Announce New Ukraine Security Assistance Package This Week - Kirby

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - The United States will announce a new security assistance package for Ukraine sometime this week, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Monday.

"You're going to see, I think, another one come this week," Kirby said during a press briefing.

"The next one's coming very, very soon."

The security assistance package will include items consistent with other packages announced in recent weeks, Kirby added.

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Kirby Says US Was Informed in Advance of OPEC+ Decision to Cut Production

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) – The White House was informed in advance of OPEC+'s decision to cut oil production over the weekend, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday.

“As for a heads up, yes, we were given a heads up,” Kirby said during a press briefing

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with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Kirby Says White House Watching Trump Situation Closely

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) – The White House is watching the situation around former US President Donald Trump "closely" ahead of his initial court appearance scheduled for Tuesday, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday.

"We are watching this closely, as you might expect that we would and should. We are in touch with the state and local authorities as we should be, and we are monitoring as closely as we can," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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White House Says Saudi Arabia Still Strategic Partner After OPEC+ Production Cuts

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) – Saudi Arabia remains a strategic partner of the United States after it and other major OPEC+ oil producers announced further output cuts, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday.

"Saudi Arabia is still a strategic partner as they have been for 80 years," Kirby said during a press briefing. "We are finding ways to work together including working towards an extension of the ceasefire in Yemen."

Kirby pointed out that the OPEC+ decision to cut oil production was not a unilateral decision by Saudi Arabia.

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US Does Not See OPEC Decision to Cut Production as 'Advisable' – White House

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) – The United States does not think that oil production cuts by OPEC+ are "advisable" at this moment given an alleged market uncertainty, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday.

"We don't think that production cuts are advisable at this moment given market uncertainty," Kirby said during a press briefing. "[P]rices at the pump have come down significantly since last year. We're also just in a different place in the market than we were last year."

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Trump's Lawyer Says Former President Should Not Need to Take Mugshot During Indictment

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - A mugshot is not necessary for former President Donald Trump during his expected indictment hearing on April 4, Trump's lawyer Alina Habba said on Monday.

"Mugshots are for people so that you recognize who they are. He's the most recognized face in the world, let alone the country, right now, so there's no need for that," Habba told CNN.

Habba also called on the authorities to avoid theatrics in this case.

On Thursday, the Manhattan Grand Jury voted to indict Trump on charges related to his alleged role in providing a "hush" payment to pornography actress Stormy Daniels in the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election.

Trump has repeatedly denied the allegations against him, including that he had an affair with Daniels, and characterized the case against him as a political witch hunt ahead of the 2024 presidential election and an example of gross government overreach for the purposes of persecuting political opponents.

On Friday, Trump said he would appeal the indictment against him by the Manhattan grand jury by arguing that the officials involved in the case are biased.

Trump will reportedly travel to New York on Monday ahead of an arraignment hearing on Tuesday afternoon, during which he intends to declare his innocence.

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US Nuclear Bomb Likely Damaged in Accident at Dutch Air Base – Think Tank

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - One of US B61 nuclear bombs might have been damaged at a base in the Netherlands in what could be the first such incident in years, think tank The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) said in a report on Monday.

FAS came to the conclusion after analyzing a photo showing US military personnel wearing Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit patches examining a visibly deformed B61 bomb, the body of which, for some unknown reason, is bent to the left, while a possible hole in the butt is sealed with pink tape, the report said.

The photo was included in a Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) student briefing from April 2022 without identification of where or when the photo was taken, according to the report.

After carefully analyzing the photo, Hans Kristensen, the author of the report, concluded that the photo was taken inside a Protective Aircraft Shelter (PAS) at Volkel Air Base in the Netherlands.

"It must be emphasized up front that there is no official confirmation that the image was taken at Volkel Air Base [in the Netherlands], that the bent B61 shape is a real weapon (versus a trainer), or that the damage was the result of an accident (versus a training simulation)," the report said. "If the image is indeed from a nuclear weapons accident, it would constitute the first publicly known case of a recent nuclear weapons accident at an airbase in Europe."

The Netherlands is one of six countries in Europe where the United States currently deploys an

estimated 100 B61 nuclear bombs in total, the report added.

In October, Politico reported that the United States had accelerated the deployment of a modernized B61-12 nuclear bomb to NATO bases in Europe. The delivery of the upgraded version of the bomb was originally planned for the spring of 2023. However, according to a diplomatic cable, US officials told NATO allies during a closed-door meeting in Brussels in October that the deployment is now planned for December this year.

The B61-12 is a modernized version of the B61 family of air-launched nuclear bombs.

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Biden Not Expected to Announce Intention to Run for Second Term 'Any Time Soon' - Reports

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is not expected to announce his intention to run for re-election in the 2024 race "any time soon," Axios reported on Monday.

Biden has no immediate plans to announce that he would run for a second term and his decision may be delayed until late July or even the fall, the report said, citing advisers to the president and other close political allies.

There are no signs that Biden will change his mind about entering the 2024 presidential race, but Vice-President Kamala Harris would be left with an advantage in the event he opts out of him and thus foreclose options for other potential Democratic candidates, the report said.

Biden's decision to wait before officially launching a campaign is influenced by having no real electoral challenges as opposed to the situation in the Republican party, the report said.

Actual or potential Republican presidential candidates will not affect Biden's timing, the report cited a Biden adviser as saying.

In addition, July and August are considered months during which it is more difficult to fundraise and Biden advisers may want to push the potential official announcement in the fall, the report added.

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Blinken Heads to Brussels for NATO Ministerial, US-EU Energy Meeting - Statement

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday confirmed his departure for Brussels to attend a NATO ministerial and US-EU Energy Council meeting, during which officials are expected to discuss issues including a potential Ukrainian counteroffensive and European energy security.

"Headed to Brussels for the NATO Ministerial and to engage with EU Counterparts at the US-EU Energy Council. Together, we will work to overcome challenges to the European security architecture and to protect the values we hold dear – democracy and freedom," Blinken said in a statement via social media.

During the NATO ministerial, Blinken and his alliance counterparts will discuss Ukraine's needs for a potential counteroffensive against Russia, the State Department said last week.

Earlier this month, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine is unable to launch a counteroffensive at this time due to a shortage of weapons.

The NATO ministerial will also include discussions on China's "malign behavior" and ways to cooperate with Indo-Pacific partners on global threats and challenges, the State Department also said.

Blinken and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell will discuss European energy security and the transition to clean energy during the US-EU Energy Council meeting, the EU Diplomatic Service said on Monday.

Participants in the meeting will discuss energy concerns for next winter, the situations in Ukraine and Moldova, and the acceleration of the clean-energy transition, the EU said in a statement.

The council meeting will be accompanied by bilateral talks between Blinken and Borrell to discuss a number of foreign policy issues, the EU also said.

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Teacher Shot By Student Files Lawsuit Against School For Ignoring Warnings - Reports

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) – A US teacher who was shot earlier this year by a 6-year-old student filed a \$40 million lawsuit against the school accusing the administration of ignoring warnings about the boy's behavior, NBC News said on Monday.

The incident happened on January 6 at Richneck Elementary School in Newport News, Virginia. The 6-year-old boy, who is identified as John Doe, pulled out a gun during the lesson and opened fire. He injured the teacher Abigail Zwerner, according to the report.

The lawsuit says that the boy had a history of violent experiences. In particular, just two days before the incident he was suspended from school for breaking Zwerner's cell phone. On January 6 he returned to classes but his mother did not stay with him as required, the report said, citing the lawsuit.

That morning, Zwerner informed the administration that Doe appeared in a "violent mood" and had threatened to physically assault a classmate. Another teacher even informed staff that he had a gun in his backpack. However, the administration reportedly ignored these warnings.

The report also noted that Doe had several incidents before, and was even transferred to another school but was later allowed to return. Last fall he was placed on a modified schedule after "chasing students around the playground with a belt to whip them with it, as well as cursing at staff and teachers," according to the complaint.

At least one parent was required to accompany him during the school day "because of his violent tendencies," it added.

Local authorities said earlier they would not seek charges against the boy, saying that he is too young to understand all the seriousness of his behavior. However, they did not rule out criminal cases against adults involved in the incident, according to the report.

Zwerner also noted that she underwent four surgeries on her injured hand.

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US, Philippines Agree to Expand Military Cooperation to 4 New Sites - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) - The United States and the Philippines have agreed to expand their military cooperation agreement to include operations at four new locations around the Indo-Pacific country, the US Defense Department said on Monday.

“The United States stands steadfastly in support of the Philippines as we announced plans today to expand the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Arrangement (EDCA) to include four new sites: Naval Base Camilo Osias in Santa Ana, Cagayan; Camp Melchor Dela Cruz in Gamu, Isabela; Balabac Island in Palawan; and Lal-lo Airport in Cagayan,” the Defense Department said in a statement.

The naming of the locations comes following a deal announced in February to designate four new strategic sites in the Philippines for EDCA use, the statement said.

The new locations, as well as five existing sites, will strengthen the interoperability of US and Philippine forces, enabling them to respond more seamlessly to challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, the statement said.

The EDCA allows the United States to deploy troops to the Philippines for extended periods, as well as build and operate joint facilities on Philippine bases. The agreement does not allow the establishment of permanent US military bases in the Philippines.

The United States intends to expand funding on top of \$82 million already allocated toward infrastructure investments at EDCA sites, the statement said.

Washington prepared to work in lockstep with Manila to rapidly pursue modernization projects at the EDCA locations, the statement added.

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Majority of Americans Approve of Trump Indictment – Poll

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Sputnik) – Sixty percent of Americans approve of the Manhattan district attorney’s indictment of former President Donald Trump on criminal charges, according to a CNN-SSRS poll released Monday.

While responses were divided along partisan lines – 94% of Democrats and 62% of independents were in approval compared to 79% disapproval among Republicans – the majority aligned along major demographic vectors such as gender, race, age, and educational level in approving of the indictment.

At the same time, respondents were divided over whether Trump’s alleged involvement in hush money payments to porn star Stormy Daniels was illegal or only unethical, with 37% saying it

was illegal, 33% unethical but not illegal, and 20% unsure. Nonetheless, the poll found Trump's 34% overall favorability rating similar to his 32% rating in January.

The CNN poll was conducted by SSRS from March 31 to April among 1,048 adults.

In contrast, an ABC News poll conducted by Ipsos on the same dates among 593 adults found 45% approved of the charges against Trump.