

4/24/23 Monday

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'Monday Media Massacre': Twitter Stunned as Lemon, Carlson Handed Pink Slips

Carlson's Monday departure comes less than a week after Fox News chose to settle a defamation lawsuit with Dominion Voting Systems for a whopping \$787.5 million. Lemon, meanwhile, was let go from CNN following a Variety article that claimed he had misogynistic and abusive tendencies towards company staffers.

Netizens were taken for quite the ride on Monday after it was revealed over a short span of time that journalists Don Lemon and Tucker Carlson had been given their pink slips and were sent packing from their broadcast jobs.

Although both news anchors have a history of making controversial comments on the air, reports indicate it was allegedly their behavior behind the scenes that cost them their careers. "I was informed this morning by my agent that I have been terminated by CNN. I am stunned. After 17 years at CNN I would have thought that someone in management would have had the decency to tell me directly. At no time was I ever given any indication that I would not be able to continue to do the work I have loved at the network," Lemon posted to [Twitter](#).

[CNN](#) took to Twitter to say his tweet about the firing was "inaccurate," claiming Lemon was offered "the opportunity to meet with management but instead released a statement on Twitter." Carlson, meanwhile, did not make any similar announcement but seemed unaware of his own departure after he signed off his show on Friday, saying he would see his audience on Monday. That fateful Monday came, and Fox News thanked Carlson for his service to the network. Since the twin announcements, well known media figures took to the Twittersphere to express their thoughts on the media makeover at the two news firms, which have wildly different political views.

Jon Stewart, the former host of the Comedy Central's "Daily Show," reacted with an eyes emoji in a lone tweet.

American journalist Brian Stelter, the former chief media correspondent for CNN, pointed out that Don did not "part ways" with company, as the new CNN CEO Chris Licht had announced, but that he was terminated.

Rather than going the Stewart or Stelter route, US Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-CO) used the opportunity to take a shot at Lemon's departure by giving a nod to an earlier on-air remark he made about how Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley was past her prime. Haley is six years younger than Lemon.

"Looks like Don Lemon was actually the one past his prime," the congresswoman [tweeted](#). Earlier this month, [US media](#) detailed various instances in which Lemon let his alleged misogynistic tendencies and "diva"-like behavior run rampant at his former workplace. The revelation outlined how Lemon formed a habit of bullying and harassing female colleagues behind closed doors starting in 2008.

While CNN fans did not appear to view Lemon's termination as a loss, followers of Carlson took to Twitter and expressed their frustration and disappointment.

The former network show host carried with him an average prime-time audience totaling 2.5 million viewers, according to a [Forbes](#) article from February.

Other netizens poked fun at the coinciding terminations.

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Tucker Carlson's Fox News Ouster Reportedly Done at Direction of Rupert Murdoch

Carlson served as Fox News' most popular host with an average prime-time audience of 2.5 million viewers. But following the network's recent \$787 million settlement in the Dominion Voting lawsuit, the cost of keeping Carlson may have turned out to be too much.

The decision to cut Tucker Carlson from Fox News' host lineup reportedly came down from none other than Rupert Murdoch, the media organization's billionaire chairman.

Officials with knowledge of the behind-the-scenes developments indicated that Murdoch made the decision after taking into consideration commentary from the news group's board members. Insiders have also noted that Carlson's termination was related to a discrimination lawsuit filed by former producer Abby Grossberg. The lawsuit at the center of Carlson's termination was filled with damaging accusations against the network, including misogynistic comments and antisemitic jokes.

However, [Grossberg](#), was not suing Carlson solely for the unprofessional and discriminatory behavior she experienced. In fact, the lawsuit claims she became a scapegoat for the network's male hosts, like Carlson.

Grossberg alleges the network's lawyers coerced her into giving a false deposition regarding the recently settled Dominion Voting Systems lawsuit, which was ongoing at the time.

Fox News had been enveloped in the Dominion defamation suit since the start of 2021 but zeroed in specifically against Fox News and its parent company that March over false claims made by Carlson over the 2020 election results.

Since the filing, the suit revealed various findings, including text threads between Fox employees regarding the false election claims. Carlson was said to have [texted](#) an attorney representing former President Donald Trump, and relayed that Carlson himself doubted election fraud claims touted by the former commander-in-chief.

Insiders have since speculated that with Trump now running in the 2024 presidential election, the network is preparing themselves to avoid further legal headaches, and is willing to throw out loose cannons from their network, even the ones who bring them their highest viewership.

The Fox News group announced earlier Monday that it would be parting ways with Carlson, who had been the host of "Tucker Carlson Tonight" since 2016.

"FOX News Media and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways. We thank him for his service to the network as a host and prior to that as a contributor," the statement by Fox News said.

"Mr. Carlson's last program was Friday April 21st. Fox News Tonight will air live at 8 PM/ET starting this evening as an interim show helmed by rotating FOX News personalities until a new host is named."

Carlson's departure came as a shock to many in the media world, many figures which took to social media to offer their own dose of commentary on the development. Carlson, a longtime conservative, appeared to be Fox's favorite host.

Carlson's career also includes working for CNN, PBS, and MSNBC, before he landed at Fox.

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North Dakota Governor Signs Bill Banning All Abortions at Six Weeks

Since the US Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to have an abortion under the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling last year, Republican-led states have been handing down some of the strictest abortion bans in history.

North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum signed legislation on Monday banning abortion at six weeks of pregnancy, marking one of the strictest laws in the US.

The legislation will effectively ban rape victims and victims of incest from being able to obtain an abortion. Most women, according to the American Pregnancy Association, find out they are pregnant four to seven weeks following conception.

"This bill clarifies and refines existing state law... and reaffirms North Dakota as a pro-life state," Burgum said in a statement.

Democratic Representative Gretchen Dobervich had attempted to amend the bill from six week to 12 weeks for women who have been the victim of sexual violence, however, the state House panel had rejected the move.

The bill cleared the lower chamber with a 76-14 vote; the Senate earlier approved of the bill 42-5. The legislation is expected to take effect immediately, but according to US media it is on hold while it waits for a ruling from the state's Supreme Court.

Following the reversal of Roe v. Wade, bans on abortions at all stages of pregnancy are in place in 13 US states, and on hold in four others due to court injunctions. Meanwhile, Democratic states have moved to strengthen access to abortion in their states.

"North Dakota has always been pro-life and believed in valuing the moms and children both," state Senator Janne Myrdal, the lead sponsor of the measure, told US media after Burgum signed the bill. "We're pretty happy and grateful that the governor stands with that value."

Earlier this month, North Dakota voted to raise their own meal reimbursements from \$35 per day to \$45 per day, despite voting down a bill which would have provided free school lunches for children whose families are at 200% the federal poverty level (which equates to an income of \$49,720 for a family of three).

"Yes I can understand kids going hungry, but is that really the problem of the school district, is that the problem of the state of North Dakota? It's really the problem of parents being negligent with their kids," Senator Mike Wobbema said during the vote in late March.

Wobbema is one of the senators who voted in favor of boosting daily meal reimbursements for himself and his colleagues.

On Friday, Burgum also signed a law that will restrict health care for transgender people in the state, and make it a crime to give a person younger than the age of 18 gender-affirming medical treatments.

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RPT - US Should Not Send More Aid to Fund 'Proxy War' in Ukraine, Audit Needed - Congressman

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) - The United States should not send additional assistance to fund a "proxy war" in Ukraine, and an audit must be conducted on US aid already provided to Kiev, Congressman Paul Gosar told Sputnik.

"Biden and Congress have already wasted nearly \$200 billion American taxpayer dollars funding a proxy war in Ukraine. We should not send another dime to Ukraine and we should audit the money already sent there," Gosar said in a statement.a

The Republican lawmaker recently joined a group of other party lawmakers to introduce a resolution demanding an audit of the funds appropriated by Congress to Ukraine.

Gosar's spokesperson told Sputnik that to-date the Biden administration has yet to provide Congress with copies of all documents and any financial statements detailing purchases, recipients, and government expenditures related to congressionally appropriated funds given to Ukraine.

US journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Seymour Hersh recently told RT that countries in the West are aware of the fact that some of the weapons sent to Ukraine are ending up in illicit markets, but their media are deliberately silent about it.

Months after the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine, there were concerns about reselling of advanced man-portable air defense missiles the West had sent to Ukraine, the journalist said, adding that US broadcaster CBS had wanted to publish a story about it but was forced to retract it.

Hersh also said, according to his source, that the CIA estimates Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has embezzled at least \$400 million from US aid sent to Ukraine.

Western countries have been supplying military aid to Ukraine since the start of hostilities in February 2022. The aid evolved from lighter artillery munitions and training in 2022 to heavier weapons, including tanks, later that year and in 2023. For the past several months Ukraine has been pushing to be supplied with fighter jets. The Kremlin, in turn, has repeatedly warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev.

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Americans, Russians Need Spirit of Elbe, Peaceful World - Veteran

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) - Americans and Russians need to preserve the spirit of their troops' historical meeting at the Elbe River in Germany in April 1945 because the two peoples understand they need a peaceful world, World War II veteran Frank Cohn told Sputnik.

"I will guess that deep down in all of our hearts, we all think that a peaceful world would be wonderful," Cohn, a 97-year-old retired US Army colonel, said.

On April 25, 1945, Soviet and US troops met at the Elbe River near the town of Torgau. The meeting was a key milestone in the process of ending World War II and came about as US troops advanced from the west and Soviet troops advanced from the east, thus splitting Nazi Germany in two.

Cohn said it is a tragedy that the United States and Russia have recently lost their commonality of purpose and goals, including the fight against hunger, tackling climate change and others.

Cohn also expressed frustration that some people in positions of power do not want to see Russians and Americans cooperating with each other.

"All of those are politicians!" he said.

Cohn recalled that General Dwight Eisenhower, who led the US troops in Europe in 1945, issued an order that prevented Americans from crossing the Elbe River in order to avoid unnecessary fights with Soviet troops.

"Only later I realized that I was among a few Americans who met the Russians on their side of the river," Cohn said.

The particular meeting took place not far from the German city of Magdeburg.

Cohn said he never received such a warm reception as the one that Soviet troops gave their US counterparts.

"I never received a reception like that again in my life - with hugs and kisses and being carried around and offers of vodka, which I definitely had to limit. No, that never happened again," he said.

Only later Cohn understood that the emotions were a sign the war was actually over for the Russians.

"But that does not change anything, because we were there to celebrate with them and we, as US soldiers, were the ones that showed there were no more Germans to fight in front of them," he said.

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US Bid to Give Russian Delegation to UN 'Cold Shower' Was Not Realized - Belarusian Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, April 25 (Sputnik) - The attempts of the United States to create unpleasant experiences for the Russian delegation at the UN were not realized, Belarusian Ambassador to the UN Valentin Rybakov told Sputnik.

"From the point of view of a cold shower, these are just wishes and intentions that have not been realized at all," Rybakov said after a meeting of the UN Security Council dedicated to

effective multilateralism and the protection of the principles of the UN Charter on Monday.

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Law Enforcement Clear Protestors From Montana State Capitol Amid Tensions Over Trans Bills

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) - Law enforcement cleared the gallery of the Montana House of Representatives amid protests in support of trans representative Zooey Zephyr, who has not been allowed to speak on legislation in recent days after making comments deemed inappropriate by Republican colleagues.

Earlier this month, Zephyr, spoke in opposition to a measure that would restrict gender-affirming care for minors in Montana.

"I hope the next time there's an invocation, when you bow your heads in prayer, you see the blood on your hands," Zephyr said.

The statement came following a shooting at a Christian school in Tennessee last month by a suspect labeled by police as transgender.

Zephyr's comments drew criticism from some Republican legislators, who called for the representative's censure. Montana House Speaker Matt Regier has since refused to allow Zephyr to speak in the chamber.

On Monday, lawmakers upheld the speaker's decision in a vote of 63-34, sparking protestors in the gallery to begin chanting "let her speak," as Zephyr remained on the House floor and held up a microphone.

Video footage from the state capitol appears to show members of law enforcement, donned in riot gear, clearing people from the gallery after the chamber was unable to restore order.

"I have stepped off the house floor to show support for those who were arrested defending democracy. I will be back as soon as I can," Zephyr said in a statement via Twitter.

The incident occurred as the Montana state legislature considers a number of bills related to transgender issues, including to restrict gender-affirming care for minors, ban drag on adult-oriented "drag" performances in public spaces with minors and address how trans students are referred to in the classroom.

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US Supreme Court to Hear Cases on Whether Officials Can Block Critics Online - Order List

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court will weigh two cases regarding whether public officials in the United States can block critics online without violating the First Amendment of the US Constitution, the court said in an order list.

The Supreme Court on Monday granted petitions for writs of certiorari in two related cases, O'Connor-Ratcliff v. Garnier and Lindke v. Freed. The cases resulted in conflicting rulings from

lower federal courts.

The petitioners in the first case, Michelle O'Connor-Ratcliff and T.J. Zane, were members of a California school board who used their personal social media accounts to engage with the public.

The two officials eventually blocked respondents Christopher Garnier and Kimberly Garnier for allegedly spamming their posts with replies. The Garniers left comments alleging financial mismanagement and incidents of racism, according to court documents.

The US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the Garniers, finding that the school board officials were participating in a public forum via social media.

In the second case, respondent James Freed, a city manager in Port Huron, Michigan, similarly used social media to engage with the public. Kevin Lindke, the petitioner in the case and a resident of Port Huron, criticized the local government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Freed blocked Lindke and others, as well as removed their comments. The US Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Freed, finding that he was acting in a personal capacity and not as a public official.

The Supreme Court will now determine whether public officials violate the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which prevents the government from restricting speech, by blocking individuals on social media.

The decision may be heard after the Supreme Court begins a new term in October.

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First Republic Bank Lost \$100 Bln in Deposits During First Quarter Banking Panic - Reports

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) - First Republic Bank lost over \$100 billion during the first quarter after bank failures spurred a domino-effect of withdrawals from regional lenders and profits fell over 33%, The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday.

First Republic's profits dropped to \$269 million from \$401 million last year, and revenue dropped 13%, or down to \$1.2 billion dollars, said the report. The loans the bank was pressured into taking out after the deposit run is also likely to keep future earnings lower.

Though withdrawals are said to have stabilized, First Republic shares have lost 90% of their value since the banking crisis in March, which the bank is trying to make up by reducing its staff and slashing executive paychecks, according to the report.

First Republic drew massive attention after Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Signature Bank collapsed last month, jeopardizing the trust Americans have in US regional banks and leading many customers to move millions of dollars in deposits to bigger institutions.

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Tucker Carlson Pushed Out of Fox News By Rupert Murdoch- Reports

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) - The decision for Fox News to part ways with prime-time TV host Tucker Carlson came from Fox Corp. Chairman Rupert Murdoch, the LA Times reported citing sources familiar with the matter.

According to the report, Murdoch, with the input from board members and other Fox Corp. executives, was behind the network parting ways with Carlson.

The sources also noted that Carlson's departure was related to the discrimination lawsuit filed by a former producer Abby Grossberg, who alleged that she was bullied and subjected to antisemitic comments when she was on Tucker Carlson Tonight.

Earlier, Fox News Media released a press release stating that the network and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways.

"FOX News Media and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways. We thank him for his service to the network as a host and prior to that as a contributor," the statement said. "Mr. Carlson's last program was Friday April 21st. Fox News Tonight will air live at 8 PM/ET starting this evening as an interim show helmed by rotating FOX News personalities until a new host is named."

Tucker Carlson had hosted his talk show Tucker Carlson Tonight on Fox News since 2016.

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Canadian Defense Minister Says China Also Poses Threat in Arctic Along With Russia

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) - Canada's National Defense Minister Anita Anand said during a Senate hearing that Russia is not the only threat in the Arctic as China has become very active in the region.

"The Arctic threat is not just about Russia. We are seeing greater activity in that region by, for example, China, which has declared itself a near-Arctic state. So, without drawing attention to that nomenclature, we need to understand that the threat and potential threat in that region is not going to be posed by one country alone," Anand said on Monday.

Canada's analysis of the threat will include what the government needs to accomplish in terms of military capabilities and human resources to effectively defend its interests in the Arctic, Anand added.

In a joint statement in March, Russia and China said that the two countries stand for preserving the Arctic as a territory of peace and constructive cooperation.

Shortly before that, The Military Times reported that the US National Guard is preparing for possible conflicts with Russia and China in the Arctic, including in the event of a military clash between Moscow and Beijing with Washington's NATO allies.

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Canada Extracts Diplomats From Sudan, Mulls Options to Evacuate Citizens - Defense Chief

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) - Canada has extracted its diplomats from Khartoum and is reviewing options to evacuate Canadian citizens that remain in the conflict zone in Sudan, Canadian National Defense Minister Anita Anand said during a Senate hearing.

"Our diplomats have been extracted and are working from outside the country. And we are looking at every possible option, regarding the remaining Canadian citizens," Anand said on Monday.

Canada's national security team has been working all weekend and last week on ensuring that they are doing everything possible to help Canadians in Sudan and to address the situation on the ground in that country, Anand said.

The defense minister pointed out that Canada has temporarily suspended its operations in Sudan.

However, officials are in touch with Canadian citizens in Sudan and members of the armed forces in the region are working closely with allies and partners on options for evacuation assistance, Anand added.

Earlier on Monday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the rival Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have agreed to a 72-hour ceasefire after approximately 600 people were killed in fighting between the two warring parties.

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Russia Hopes West Takes Lavrov's UNSC Statement Seriously - Ryabkov

UNITED NATIONS, April 25 (Sputnik) - Russia is hoping that western states will take to heart Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement to the UN Security Council because their actions lead to escalation, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told reporters.

"We hope that those to whom our signals are addressed, and this is the Western group, will take seriously what Lavrov said, because the moment is really extremely acute... this situation is potentially fraught with further escalation. They have to stop," he said on Monday.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, April 25 (Sputnik) -

LAVROV VISITS UNITED NATIONS

* The United States took the path of destroying globalization in an effort to maintain its dominance, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told a UN Security Council meeting on

Monday.

* The world may reach an even more dangerous threshold than during the Cold War, Lavrov said.

* The International Monetary Fund has turned into a tool used by the United States to achieve its goals, including those of military nature, Lavrov said.

SITUATION IN SUDAN

* The United States is actively facilitating the departure of US citizens seeking to leave Sudan amid violent clashes between two warring parties, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday.

* The Biden administration sees the possibility of a protracted conflict or a durable ceasefire to emerge as a result of the escalation of tensions in Sudan, Sullivan said.

* The Sudanese government forces are in control of all the borders of the country, military spokesman Gen Brigadier Nabil Abdallah told Sputnik.

* The Sudanese armed forces have captured key sites held by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), except for Khartoum and Nyala airports, Abdallah told Sputnik

SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

* The Western nations will not pay compensation to Turkey if Ankara joins sanctions against Russia, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Monday.

* Russia's economic growth will be similar to that of France despite sanctions, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday, when commenting on the forecasts made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

* Hungary will not agree even to a partial imposition of sanctions against Russia's nuclear energy sector, as proposed by the Baltic states, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Statements saying that Russia started the special military operation in Ukraine without a reason are a "terrible lie," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday.

* During the past day Ukraine lost over 280 military and mercenaries in the Donetsk direction, as well as 19 pieces of equipment, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* Kiev made an attempt to attack the Black Sea Fleet base in the city of Sevastopol with three unmanned speedboats early on Monday, all of them were destroyed, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* The Abrams M1 tanks which are due to be sent to Germany in the coming weeks will only be used for training purposes and are different from the refurbished tanks that will be sent to Ukraine later this year for combat use, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said,

INCIDENT IN JERUSALEM

* Several people suffered injuries after a car rammed into pedestrians in downtown Jerusalem on Monday, the Israeli police said.

* The incident with a car ramming into pedestrians in downtown Jerusalem is a terrorist attack, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT

* Russia continues its mediation efforts in the settlement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, but the situation is not easy and additional efforts are required, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday.

* The Russian Foreign Ministry said, commenting Baku's decision to set up a checkpoint in the Lachin corridor, the only land route linking Armenia and the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, that any unilateral steps are unacceptable.

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Russia to Send Protest Note to US Over Failure to Issue Visas for Its Journalists -Ryabkov

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - Russia plans to send a protest note to the United States over its rejection to grant visas to Russian journalists planning to cover UN Security Council meetings chaired by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Monday.

"I can not specify the level of demarche right now... But of course, we will hold a demarche, we will express a corresponding protest and rejection of what is happening," Ryabkov said.

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Lavrov Says Told Guterres About West's Reluctance to Fulfill Provisions of Black Sea Deal

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Monday that he communicated his concerns to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres regarding the West's reluctance to fulfill provisions of the Black Sea grain deal when it comes to Russia's agricultural exports.

"I frankly told Antonio Guterres that we have not yet seen any desire from Western countries to take real steps to successfully implement the initiative of the Secretary General on a package approach to the export of agricultural products from Ukraine and the Russian Federation," Lavrov told journalists following his meeting with Guterres.

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Lavrov Says Russia Will Study Guterres' Proposals on Way Forward for Black Sea Deal

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - Russia will study UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' proposals regarding improvement of the Black Sea grain deal, Foreign Minister

Sergey Lavrov said on Monday.

During a meeting with Lavrov in New York earlier in the day, Guterres handed over a letter for President Vladimir Putin regarding improvement of the Black Sea grain deal.

"He [Guterres] conveyed his thoughts to us in the form of a letter, which outlined ideas on how to proceed. Of course, we need to study the letter," Lavrov told journalists.

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Florida Governor Ron Desantis Meets with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and his wife Casey DeSantis met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Japan to discuss mutual and trade interests between Florida and Japan in addition to leading a roundtable discussion with Japanese business leaders, DeSantis' office said in a release on Monday.

"Japan has been a strong trade partner with Florida and I believe that we can work together to create even more opportunities for the future. I was happy to meet with the Prime Minister and his team to build on discussions we had during the SEUS Japan Conference in Florida," said DeSantis in the release.

Florida recently hosted the Southeast US-Japan (SEUS) conference in November, where DeSantis also met with Japan's ambassador to the US. Today's roundtable discussions were held with the Japan Business Federation, which DeSantis led jointly with Florida Secretary of Commerce Laura DiBella, Florida Secretary of State Cord Byrd, and Enterprise Florida Vice Board Chair Freddie Figgers.

DeSantis also established a partnership with NTT Data, a Tokyo-based tech company, to provide university studies internships that will give students the opportunity to interact with business executives while learning about global business, said the release.

Japan is currently the sixth-largest foreign investor in Florida, with over 200 Japanese companies employing more than 22,000 Floridians. Florida is currently the second-largest bilateral merchandise trade partner in the Asia-Pacific region.

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Blinken Says Parties to Sudan Conflict Agree to 72-Hour Ceasefire, US Urges Compliance

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have agreed to a 72-hour ceasefire after approximately 600 people were killed as a result of conflict between the two parties, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday.

"Following intense negotiation over the past 48 hours, the SAF and the RSF have agreed to

implement a nationwide ceasefire starting at midnight on April 24, to last for 72 hours," Blinken said in a statement.

The United States urges the SAF and RSF to immediately and fully uphold the ceasefire, the statement said.

The US will coordinate with regional and international partners, as well as Sudanese civilian stakeholders, to assist in the creation of a committee to oversee the negotiation and implementation of a permanent end to hostilities, the statement said.

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Lavrov Says Guterres Focused on Black Sea Grain Deal During NY Meeting

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Monday that his meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in New York focused on the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

"We discussed all the current issues on the UN agenda, and Antonio Guterres paid special attention to the prospects for the implementation of the so-called Black Sea initiative," Lavrov told journalists.

Guterres himself highlighted the package nature of the deal, which - along with facilitating Ukraine's grain shipments - should remove obstacles to Russia's agricultural exports, the minister noted.

The meeting lasted more than an hour, Lavrov said.

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No Explosive Devices Found in Suspicious Suitcases Near Russian Embassy

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) – Explosives experts opened two suspicious suitcases that were found in front of the Russian embassy in Washington and did not find any explosive devices in them, an embassy official told Sputnik in a statement on Monday.

"They [explosives technicians] opened the suitcases. No explosive devices were found. The police took the suitcases and left the area near the embassy," the official said.

Earlier in the day, the US Secret Service had cordoned off the area around the Russian Embassy in Washington D.C. after an unidentified Asian woman left two suspicious suitcases next to the embassy building.

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UN Chief Updates Lavrov on Efforts to Address Problem of US Visas for Russian Officials

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and update him on the United Nations' efforts to address the so-called host country issues, especially the difficulty for Russian officials to obtain US visas to attend events at the world body, the United Nations said in a readout of the meeting on Monday.

"The Secretary-General also updated Foreign Minister Lavrov on the efforts of the Secretariat to address host country issues, notably in relation to visas for Russian officials," the readout said.

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Guterres Presents Lavrov With Letter to Putin on Grain Deal Improvement - Office

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in New York handed over a letter for President Vladimir Putin regarding improvement of the Black Sea grain deal, spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"He [Guterres] presented the Foreign Minister with a letter to President Vladimir Putin, outlining a proposed what forward aimed at the improvement, extension and expansion of the BSGI [Black Sea Grain Initiative], taking into account positions recently expressed by the parties and the risks posed by global food insecurity," Dujarric said in a statement.

Guterres also "took note" of Russia's concerns with regard to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on promoting Russian food products and fertilizers to the world markets, the statement added.

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Abrams Tanks Arriving Soon for Ukraine for Training Purposes Only - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The Abrams M1 tanks which are due to be sent to Germany in the coming weeks will only be used for training purposes and are different from the refurbished tanks that will be sent to Ukraine later this year for combat use, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Monday.

"These [M1 Abrams] tanks will be for training purposes only. These will not be the refurbished tanks that eventually go to Ukraine. And that is because those refurbished tanks are being produced to Ukraine's specifications, and they will be used in actual combat," Ryder said during a press briefing.

The provision of training tanks to Ukraine will enable the United States to do the training

concurrent with the production of the tanks for Kiev, Ryder said.

Earlier in April, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said the Pentagon has managed to expedite the delivery of 31 Abrams tanks for training purposes and they will arrive in Germany in the coming weeks. According to media reports, the training on M1 Abrams tanks is expected to last for 10 weeks.

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US Secret Service Cordons Off Area Near Russian Embassy Over Suspicious Luggage

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) – The US Secret Service has cordoned the area around the Russian Embassy in Washington D.C. after an unidentified woman left two suspicious suitcases next to the mission's building, an embassy official told Sputnik.

"At 12:43 p.m. EST [16:43 GMT], an Asian looking woman left two suitcases near the embassy building. She stood for eight minutes and then left the place. The Secret Service and explosives technicians have sealed off the surrounding area near Wisconsin Avenue and are working on the scene. Information about the woman has been turned over to the Secret Service," the official said.

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Biden Will Enhance US Deterrence Commitments to Seoul Amid N. Korea Launches - White House

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden, during a visit from South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol this week, will reinforce and enhance the United States' deterrence commitment to South Korea in light of North Korea's latest ballistic missile tests, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday.

"This visit, of course, also comes at a critical moment as North Korea continues to develop its nuclear and missile capabilities, the two leaders will have a chance to consult closely on that," Sullivan said during a press briefing. "President Biden will reinforce and enhance our extended deterrence commitments to South Korea with respect to the threat the DPRK poses."

Biden and Yoon will release a statement later this week that deals with extended deterrence, particularly concerning North Korea, according to Sullivan.

The alliance between the United States, South Korea, and Japan remains committed to pursuing dialogue with North Korea to reach a diplomatic resolution to long standing differences and to achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Sullivan said.

Sullivan added that the alliance is ready to meet at any time at any place to address serious concerns, and they are open to the possibility of providing North Korea with humanitarian assistance with appropriate safeguards.

Aside from announcing a major deliverable on extended deterrence capabilities, Sullivan said Biden and Yoon will also announce major deliverables on cyber cooperation, on climate mitigation, on foreign assistance, and on investment between the two countries.

The two leaders are expected to discuss the military situation on the ground in Ukraine as well, Sullivan said.

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Some States on UNSC Ready for Constructive Dialogue, Others Make Circus - Zakharova

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - Some states on the UN Security Council are open to constructive negotiations but some want to create a circus in the chamber, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Monday.

"There are countries which are ready for constructive discussions of current issues but there are also some countries which make not even a show but a circus out of anything," Zakharova said.

It is possible to state this given the statements they issue, Zakharova added.

The spokeswoman made the comments during a discussion dubbed "Effective Multilateralism Through the Defense of the Principles of the Charter of the United Nations." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov chaired half of the meeting.

Zakharova also commented on the United Nations-brokered grain export agreement by saying that both parts of the deal should be fulfilled equally. Russia has voiced dissatisfaction that a minuscule amount of its grain and fertilizer is entering the global markets.

Lavrov is in New York for two days to complement the Russian delegation in the United Nations during the country's presidency of the UN Security Council during the month of April.

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Sullivan Says Agreed to Hold Strategic Talks on Range of Issues With Brazilian Counterpart

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday that he and his Brazilian counterpart, National Security Advisor Ambassador Celso Amorim, agreed to hold a longer strategic conversation about the full range of issues in the bilateral relations during a phone call earlier in the month.

"We agreed we're going to follow up and have a further longer strategic conversation about the full range of issues that the US and Brazil both face around the world," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

During the phone call, which took place on April 18, the two officials had a chance to discuss bilateral and global issues, including the situation in Ukraine

"I had a good conversation with my Brazilian counterpart Ambassador Amorim. We covered a

wide range of issues, including Ukraine, and some of the public comments that we had seen. It was constructive, it was detailed," Sullivan said.

Sullivan referred to comments made by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva earlier in the month, who said that the United States and Europe should start talking about reaching a settlement in Ukraine and not encourage the conflict. In addition, he suggested creating a format similar to the G20 to discuss the situation in Ukraine.

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Germany Buys 227 All-Terrain Defense Combat Vehicles From UK-Sweden Contractor - BAE

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Germany is investing in an additional 227 ultra-mobile, protected, all-terrain vehicles from BAE Systems costing around \$400 million, the United Kingdom-based giant defense contractor announced in a press release on Monday.

"The German contract, worth around \$400 million, follows the joint procurement by Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom in support of Arctic operations for the Collaborative All-Terrain Vehicle (CATV) program, with Sweden as the lead nation," the release said. "This will extend the deliveries from the framework agreement, which are to begin in 2024, out to 2030."

The new contract is for additional troop transport vehicles and armored personnel carriers (APCs), as well as three new German BvS10 versions; Command and Control (C2), and two logistics variants that will add combat support to the German Armed Forces, BAE said.

"This framework agreement streamlines the process by allowing prospective and existing customers to acquire vehicles at previously negotiated terms, while also benefiting from the joint development," BAE Systems Haggblunds Managing Director Tommy Gustafsson-Rask, which manufactures the vehicles in Örnsköldsvik, Sweden, said in the release.

BAE Systems' military all-terrain vehicles are designed for operations in the harshest and most remote environments, the company said.

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Hiring of Officer Who Killed Breonna Taylor Sparks Protests in Kentucky

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - A small group of demonstrators gathered in front of the Carroll County Courthouse in Kentucky on Monday protesting the hiring of the police officer who fatally shot Breonna Taylor, a 26-year old Black woman, two years ago.

Myles Cosgrove, then a Louisville Police Department officer, fired the shot that killed Taylor during a narcotics raid in March 2020. Cosgrove was fired in January of 2021 for violating use-of-force procedures. Cosgrove fired his gun sixteen times during the raid.

The Carroll County Sheriff's Office confirmed to WHAS11 News on Saturday that the sheriff's department hired Cosgrove.

Cosgrove never faced criminal charges related to her death, a fact Carroll County Chief Deputy

Robert Miller pointed to in reference to his hiring, the report said.

Taylor, then 26 and an emergency medical technician, was killed on March 13, 2020 as three white plainclothes officers - Jonathan Mattingly, Cosgrove and Brett Hankison - were executing a "no knock" search warrant for Taylor's ex-boyfriend for allegedly dealing drugs.

Taylor's boyfriend at the time, Kenneth Walker, fired one shot at what he thought were intruders. He hit Mattingly in the leg and the trio fired 32 bullets into the apartment, hitting and killing Taylor.

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US Not Currently Considering US Forces on Ground in Sudan to Evacuate Americans - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United States does not currently foresee it will need to deploy American forces to Sudan to help facilitate the departure of US citizens amid violent clashes between the Sudanese armed forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday.

"We believe that the current course that we are on, which is to continue to try to facilitate and support this land evacuation route, is the best way for us to proceed again that involves a set of ISR [US Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance] assets. It does not currently involve US forces on the ground," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

Moreover, the United States is moving naval assets within the region to support the departure of American citizens that have begun arriving in Port Sudan at the Red Sea, Sullivan added.

The US special forces troops already evacuated under 100 US diplomatic personnel and their families from the US Embassy in Khartoum over the weekend in an operation that lasted under an hour, according to Pentagon officials.

Violent clashes broke out between the Sudanese regular army and the paramilitary group RSF on April 15, with the epicenter in Khartoum. Government forces accused the RSF of mutiny and launched airstrikes against their bases. Abdel Fattah Burhan, the head of the Sudanese military, issued a decree disbanding the RSF. The sides agreed to a truce from last Friday to Sunday for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

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White House Says Protracted Conflict, Ceasefire Both Potential Outcomes in Sudan

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration sees the possibility of a protracted conflict or a durable ceasefire to emerge as a result of the escalation of tensions in Sudan, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday.

"We have not given up on the notion that there could be a ceasefire that comes into effect and is durable," Sullivan said during a press briefing. "We see the risk of protracted conflict here, but

we also see a possibility... that we could get to a ceasefire, and we want to drive to that if at all possible.”

There are ongoing efforts to reduce violence in the conflict in Sudan, which has killed approximately 600 people so far, Sullivan said, adding that the United States will push the sides to the conflict to continue efforts to diminish violence and implement a ceasefire.

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US Actively Facilitating Departure of US Citizens From Sudan - National Security Advisor

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United States is actively facilitating the departure of US citizens seeking to leave Sudan amid violent clashes between two warring parties, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday.

"At the President's direction, we are actively facilitating the departure of American citizens who want to leave Sudan as the State Department has been urging them to do for years," Sullivan said during a press briefing. "We have deployed US intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets to support land evacuation routes which Americans are using, and we're moving naval assets within the region to provide support. American citizens have begun arriving in Port Sudan and we are helping to facilitate their onward travel."

The US military already evacuated under 100 US diplomatic personnel and their families from the US Embassy in Khartoum over the weekend.

Violent clashes broke out between the Sudanese regular army and the paramilitary group RSF on April 15, with the epicenter in Khartoum. Government forces accused the RSF of mutiny and launched airstrikes against their bases. Abdel Fattah Burhan, the head of the Sudanese military, issued a decree disbanding the RSF. The sides agreed to a truce from last Friday to Sunday for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

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Biden's Support Plummet Among Young Americans Under Age 30 - Poll

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Only about one-third of Americans below the age of 30 now approve of President Joe Biden and his policies, a new Harvard University Youth Poll revealed on Monday.

"A national poll released today by the Institute of Politics at Harvard Kennedy School indicates that among 18-to-29-year-olds, President Biden's approval rating stands at 36%, a drop of three percentage points since last fall (39%) and five percentage points since last spring (41%.)" a release on the poll said.

Only about one-in-four young adults approve of Biden's handling of the US economy (28%) and inflation (22%), while only 38% approve of his handling of race relations, 37% of the conflict in

Ukraine and 27% of gun violence, the release said.

"While close to two-thirds (64%) of registered voters who are Democrats approve of his [Biden's] job performance, approval drops to only six percent of Republicans and 30% of independent and unaffiliated registered voters," the release said.

Only 39% of young Americans approve of the performance of Democrats in Congress, while only 29% approve of the performance of Republicans in Congress, the release said.

The Spring 2023 Harvard Youth Poll surveyed 2,069 young Americans between 18- and 29-years old and was conducted between March 13 and 22.

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Anchor Don Lemon Terminated by CNN, Says 'Stunned' By Decision After 17 Years on Network

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) -CNN has terminated its contract with anchor Don Lemon, the anchor said in a Twitter post on Monday, adding that he is 'stunned' by the network's decision.

"I was informed this morning by my agent that I have been terminated by CNN. I am stunned. After 17 years at CNN I would have thought that someone in management would have the decency to tell me directly," he said.

Lemon issued his statement aimed at his former employer three hours after appearing on air. Lemon co-hosted 'CNN This Morning' for nearly 6 months and also hosted the prime-time show 'Don Lemon Tonight' for over 8 years.

CNN issued a separate statement contradicting Lemon's account of events, adding that the anchor was offered an opportunity to meet with management but instead released a statement on Twitter.

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US General McFarlane Says Islamic State Threat in Iraq, Syria 'Absolutely Still Exists'

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The threat of the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia) is still very much present, Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) Maj. Gen. Matthew McFarlane said on Monday.

"The threat of ISIS [Islamic State] absolutely still exists," McFarlane told reporters during a digital press briefing.

McFarlane pointed out the importance of building the capacity and capabilities of the US partners in the fight against the terror group.

McFarlane also noted a significant reduction in the numbers of Islamic State attacks but added that accomplishing the final goal of defeating the terror group will take many steps.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Dana Stroul confirmed during the briefing that the

Islamic State threat is still active and the job is not yet complete.

“Even though ISIS [Islamic State] is defeated on the ground, in Iraq and Syria, its ideology is unconstrained, Stroul said.

Countering the Islamic State is a key goal of the United States' strategy and it is necessary to maintain international efforts to defeat this group, Stroul added.

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US Wants China to Distance Itself From 'Sentiment' Expressed by Envoy to France - Kirby

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United States would like to see China distance itself from seeing the former Soviet republics as lacking sovereignty in international relations, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday, when asked to comment on a recent statement made by Chinese Ambassador to France Lu Shaye.

On Friday, Lu said in an interview with the French television network LCI that Crimea was historically part of Russia and was offered to Ukraine by former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. Lu also said the United States is not interested in ending the conflict in Ukraine and questioned the sovereignty of the former Soviet republics, noting that they have no effective status in international law because there is no international agreement defining their status as sovereign states.

“I think we would certainly like to see them walk further away from that kind of sentiment. I will let them speak for themselves, but clearly, these are two countries, Russia and China, that are growing closer together,” Kirby said during a press briefing.

Media reported on Monday that the French Foreign Ministry has summoned the Chinese ambassador over his comments that caused discontent in European political circles.

On Sunday, about 80 European lawmakers in a letter called on French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna to declare the Chinese Ambassador to France Lu persona non grata because of his denial of the sovereignty of the former Soviet Union states.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry noted that China respects the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries and supports the goals and principles of the UN Charter.

Crimea became part of independent Ukraine after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and was reunified with Russia after its residents overwhelmingly voted to do so in a 2014 referendum. Ukraine and the countries of the collective West do not recognize the results of the referendum and consider Crimea a territory occupied by Russia.

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US Should Not Send More Aid to Fund 'Proxy War' in Ukraine, Audit Needed - Congressman

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United States should not send additional assistance to fund a "proxy war" in Ukraine, and an audit must be conducted on US aid already provided to Kiev, Congressman Paul Gosar told Sputnik on Monday.

"Biden and Congress have already wasted nearly \$200 billion American taxpayer dollars funding a proxy war in Ukraine. We should not send another dime to Ukraine and we should audit the money already sent there," Gosar said in a statement.

The Republican lawmaker recently joined a group of other party lawmakers to introduce a resolution demanding an audit of the funds appropriated by Congress to Ukraine.

Gosar's spokesperson told Sputnik that to-date the Biden administration has yet to provide Congress with copies of all documents and any financial statements detailing purchases, recipients, and government expenditures related to congressionally appropriated funds given to Ukraine.

US journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Seymour Hersh recently told RT that countries in the West are aware of the fact that some of the weapons sent to Ukraine are ending up in illicit markets, but their media are deliberately silent about it.

Months after the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine, there were concerns about reselling of advanced man-portable air defense missiles the West had sent to Ukraine, the journalist said, adding that US broadcaster CBS had wanted to publish a story about it but was forced to retract it.

Hersh also said, according to his source, that the CIA estimates Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has embezzled at least \$400 million from US aid sent to Ukraine.

Western countries have been supplying military aid to Ukraine since the start of hostilities in February 2022. The aid evolved from lighter artillery munitions and training in 2022 to heavier weapons, including tanks, later that year and in 2023. For the past several months Ukraine has been pushing to be supplied with fighter jets. The Kremlin, in turn, has repeatedly warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev.

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US House Homeland Security Panel Introduces Bill to Resume Building Border Wall - Chairman

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Republican members of the US House Homeland Security Committee are introducing legislation to resume construction of a border wall between the United States and Mexico, committee chairman Mark Green said on Monday.

"Today, this Committee introduced real border security solutions crafted with the insight of those who pay the cost of this crisis every day," Green said in a statement. "This legislation demands transparency from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and ensures Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and border states have the infrastructure, personnel, and technology needed to take back control of our sovereign borders."

The bill, dubbed the Border Reinforcement Act of 2023, was written with the insight of frontline Border Patrol agents, local business owners, farmers, ranchers, and state and local law enforcement, the statement said.

The legislation would require DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to immediately resume construction of a southern border wall, the statement said.

The bill would also bolster CBP staffing by mandating the hiring of 22,000 new Border Patrol agents, the statement said. The bill would establish retention bonuses for Border Patrol personnel and increase grants to local law enforcement as well.

In addition, the legislation requires DHS to disclose all monthly data, including data on so-called "gotaways," currently not available to the public, the statement said.

The border crisis is one of the greatest security threats facing the American people, the statement said. House Homeland Security Committee Republicans will not let the problem continue as US President Joe Biden and Mayorkas refuse to enforce border laws, the statement said.

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UN Charter is Not 'Obsolete,' It is Badly Implemented - UN Ambassador

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Charter is not outdated, but it is not implemented well, the Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun said on Monday.

"The problems that have been arising in the world today are not because the UN Charter has become obsolete, but because its promises and principles are not being effectively implemented," Zhang told the Security Council meeting.

The future well-being of humankind depends on the preservation of the UN's role, he added.

The Chinese Ambassador spoke at the UN Security Council meeting where Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was present. Lavrov is in New York for two days as part of the Russian UN Security Council Presidency.

Lavrov arrived in New York on Sunday evening. The minister had issues with receiving US visas. Even though a significant majority of the Russian delegation were issued US visas, in the end, Russian journalists who were supposed to go with Lavrov were approved only when his plane had taken off.

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China's Envoy to UN Says 'Acts of Hegemony, Bullying' Are Harming World

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - Actions of hegemony, bullying of other states and block politics cause big troubles to the world, the Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun said on Monday.

"Acts of hegemony and bully are causing colossal harm to the world. Block politics are creating huge divisions and confrontations, it has become all the more urgent and important to uphold the UN Charter," Jun told the Security Council meeting.

The future well-being of humankind depend on the preservation of the UN role, he added. Chinese Ambassador spoke at the UN Security Council meeting where Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was present. Lavrov is in New York for two days as part of the Russian UN Security Council Presidency.

Lavrov arrived in New York on Sunday evening. The minister had issues with receiving US visas. Even though significant majority were granted the US visas, in the end, Russian journalists supposed to go with Lavrov were approved only when his plane had taken off.

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China Supports Guterres' Call to Reform International Financial Institutions - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - China supports the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' call to reform the international financial system, Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun said on Monday.

"We support the initiative of Secretary General Guterres to reform the international financial institutions, and we must act immediately to improve their global governance system." Jun told the Security Council meeting.

Chinese Ambassador spoke at UN Security Council meeting where also the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was present.

Lavrov is in New York for two days as part of Russian UN Security Council Presidency.

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US General Says Russia Engages in 'Unsafe, Unprofessional' Air Activity in Syria

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Russian troops in Syria continue to engage in "unsafe and unprofessional" activities in the air, Maj. Gen. Matthew McFarlane, who heads the US-led military coalition against the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia), said on Monday.

"We continue see unsafe and unprofessional air activity from the Russians and we do use deconfliction line to ensure we are keeping our forces safe," McFarlane said during a press briefing.

The US military is closely monitoring the Russian military' activities and is trying to mitigate any potential risks, McFarlane said.

"We want to make sure that we stay on our mission, which is defeating ISIS [Islamic State]," McFarlane added.

Russian Center for the Reconciliation of Warring Parties in Syria Deputy Chief Oleg Gurinov said in March that the United States grossly violates the deconfliction protocols and the bilateral memorandum on flight safety in Syria.

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US Sanctions Iran's Cyber Policy Chief, 4 More Officials for 'Suppression' of Protests

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on Iran's cyber policy chief and four other senior officials for what they say was suppression of protests, the Department of the Treasury announced on Monday.

"Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned four senior officials of the Law Enforcement Forces of Iran (LEF) and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the primary Iranian security forces responsible for the regime's brutal suppression of the protests that broke out in September 2022 following the arrest and death of Mahsa Jina Amini while in the custody of Iran's Morality Police," the Treasury said in a statement.

OFAC is also taking action against the new secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Cyberspace, the body in charge of the country's cyberspace policy and blockage of popular websites, the statement added.

The action is being taken in coordination with the United Kingdom, the Treasury said.

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Weapons Manufacturers Struggling to Get Labor Amid Ukraine Conflict Demand Surge - Reports

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Weapons manufacturers in the United States and Europe are struggling to hire enough workers to meet the demand surge linked to the conflict in Ukraine, The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday.

US and European defense companies are working on a record number of orders as Western governments provide billions in security assistance to Ukraine, the report said.

Weapons manufacturers are struggling to hire enough workers as companies attempt to grow their workforces at the same time, the report said.

Moreover, defense jobs can require security clearances, niche skills and potentially moving to remote areas, the report said.

Weapons manufacturers' struggle to hire enough workers is part of a broader supply-chain challenge for the defense industry, the report said.

US defense companies have struggled to hire enough workers since last year, after some personnel furloughed during the COVID-19 pandemic did not return, the report said.

Labor challenges could become even more acute in Europe, the report said. European governments have raised defense spending amid concerns about Russia, resulting in large recruitment efforts by weapons manufacturers, particularly in the munitions sector, the report said.

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World Today Needs Effective UN And Effective Multilateralism - US Envoy

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The world today requires an effective United Nations and effective Multilateralism, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Monday.

"Right now, as much as ever, the world needs an effective UN and effective multilateralism," Thomas-Greenfield told reporters.

Thomas-Greenfield spoke at the meeting chaired by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. On Monday, Lavrov is also scheduled to meet with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

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UPDATE - Tucker Carlson to Leave Fox News - Statement

(Updates with more details in para 3)

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Fox News Media and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways, the media network said in a press release on Monday.

"FOX News Media and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways. We thank him for his service to the network as a host and prior to that as a contributor," the statement said. "Mr. Carlson's last program was Friday April 21st. Fox News Tonight will air live at 8 PM/ET starting this evening as an interim show helmed by rotating FOX News personalities until a new host is named."

Fox Corp shares dropped by 5% at the time of the departure announcement, according to market data.

Last week, Fox Corp. reached a \$787.5 million settlement with Dominion Voting Systems over defamation charges in response to accusations made by the network that the company had rigged its voting machines against then-President Donald Trump in the 2020 election.

Tucker Carlson had hosted his talk show "Tonight with Tucker Carlson" on Fox News since 2016.

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US to Consider Lifting Venezuela Sanctions if Maduro 'Advances Will of People' – Kirby

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) – The Biden administration is ready to consider lifting sanctions on Venezuela if it sees steps by President Nicolas Maduro to meet the will of the

Venezuelan people, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday.

"[I]f we see demonstrable efforts by the Maduro regime to advance the will of the Venezuelan people in meaningful ways, then we are willing to take a look at the sanctions. But it's still in place largely and appropriately so," Kirby said during a press briefing. "No sanctions changes, no policy changes to speak to today."

The United States will continue to hold people in Venezuela accountable for corruption, illegal behavior, and civil and human rights abuses, Kirby added.

On Saturday, Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez said that Caracas has lost \$232 billion since 2015, when the Obama administration imposed sanctions on the South American country.

In 2015, then-US President Barack Obama declared Venezuela a national security threat and ordered the US Treasury Department to freeze foreign property and assets of several Venezuelan officials. Washington has since expanded the sanctions regime.

In 2019, the US imposed comprehensive sanctions on the country, targeting its oil and financial industries as well as freezing its reserves, in response to a political crisis that saw Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido proclaiming himself interim president.

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Almost Half of Americans Under Age 30 Felt 'Unsafe' During Past Month - Harvard Poll

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Almost half of young Americans under the age of 30 have felt unsafe in the past month and four out of ten of them are worried about falling victim to widespread gun violence, a new youth poll from Harvard University's Institute of Politics said on Monday.

"Overall nearly half (48%) of young Americans indicate they have felt unsafe in the past month, including 16% in a shopping mall, 15% on public transportation, 13% in their neighborhood - and 21% somewhere else in their city or town," the release said. "Twenty one percent of college students felt unsafe at their school."

"The poll also finds that40% [Americans aged 18 through 29] worried about falling victim to gun violence," the poll said.

Trust in law enforcement institutions has also plummeted, the Harvard poll found.

"Trust in the Supreme Court to 'do the right thing' has fallen by ten percentage points over the last decade, while less than half of young Americans feel like their local police department makes them safer," the Harvard poll found.

Nearly half (47%) of Americans under the age of 30 report "feeling down, depressed, or hopeless," and 24% have considered self-harm at least several days in the last two weeks, the poll said.

"The data collected in this poll clearly demonstrates not only the growing levels of political engagement among young people, but the urgency of addressing serious issues such as mental health, gun violence, housing, and more," said IOP Director Setti Warren. "The results of

previous Harvard Youth polls have had a direct influence on public policy, and I expect to see that trend continue."

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Biden Says Susan Rice Stepping Down From Post as US Domestic Policy Chief

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Monday that White House Domestic Policy Council Director Susan Rice is stepping down from her post.

"As the only person to serve as both National Security Advisor and Domestic Policy Advisor, Susan's record of public service makes history," Biden said in a press release. "But what sets her apart as a leader and colleague is the seriousness with which she takes her role and the urgency and tenacity she brings, her bias towards action and results, and the integrity, humility and humor with which she does this work. I thank Susan for her service, her counsel and her friendship. I will miss her."

Rice, according to Biden, helped expand and strengthen the Affordable Care Act, released a comprehensive national mental health strategy and enabled Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices for seniors and cap the cost of insulin at \$35.

Rice also helped the White House's efforts to reduce gun violence and advance police reform, Biden added.

In April 2021, Russia banned Rice from entering the country following complications in the relationship between the Biden administration and Moscow. Rice previously served as US National Security Advisor and US Ambassador to the United Nations during the Obama administration.

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UK Requests UN Security Council Meeting on Situation in Sudan - Ambassador

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United Kingdom has requested a UN Security Council meeting for Tuesday to address the situation in Sudan, UK Ambassador to the United Nations Barbara Woodward said.

"We have requested a [UN Security] Council meeting to address the situation [in Sudan] tomorrow," Woodward said on Monday.

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Tucker Carlson to Leave Fox News - Press Release

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Fox News Media and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways, the media network said in a press release on Monday.

"FOX News Media and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways. We thank him for his service to the network as a host and prior to that as a contributor," the statement said. "Mr. Carlson's last program was Friday April 21st. Fox News Tonight will air live at 8 PM/ET starting this evening as an interim show helmed by rotating FOX News personalities until a new host is named."

Last week, Fox Corp. reached a \$787.5 million settlement with Dominion Voting Systems over defamation charges in response to accusations made by the network that the company had rigged its voting machines against then-President Donald Trump in the 2020 election.

Tucker Carlson had hosted his talk show "Tonight with Tucker Carlson" on Fox News since 2016.

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Biden Opposes Bill That Seeks to End Duty Waiver on Solar Cells From Asian Partners - OMB

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration opposes a bill introduced by Republicans in the US House of Representatives seeking to invalidate a federal rule that temporarily suspends tariffs on imports of solar cells and modules from four Asian countries, the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said on Monday.

"The Administration strongly opposes H.J. Res. 39, which would disapprove a rule issued by the Department of Commerce (Commerce) that temporarily suspends the collection of certain duties on imports of solar cells and modules from four Southeast Asian countries: Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam," the White House said in a press release.

President Joe Biden will veto the bill if it reaches his desk and he does not intend to extend the tariff suspension on the four Asian countries when it expires in June 2024, the release said.

Biden is working to prioritize investments that will help build supply chains in the United States, including for solar energy, but it will take time to ramp up production, the release said.

The United States is dependent on imports for solar power products that are important for reducing energy costs for US consumers because of unfair trade practices and underinvestment in domestic manufacturing, the release added.

The legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives in early March by Republican lawmaker Bill Posey.

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Kenyan Foreign Affairs Chief Says Confident in Ability to Resolve Sudan Conflict Soon

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Alfred Mutua said on Monday that he believes warring parties in Sudan will soon be able to resolve disagreements and end fighting in the country, which has killed approximately 600 people so far.

"We do believe that we are at a good place, because the two warring leaders are talking to us. So, that's a good sign," Mutua said during a press conference. "We are quite encouraged about peace being found in Sudan very soon."

Kenya is confident that conflicting parties in Sudan can resolve remaining disagreements on the integration of military forces, Mutua said. The world will be telling a "different story" about Sudan by the end of the year, Mutua said.

Mutua also called on "external forces" to stay away from Sudan and allow the existing parties to negotiate a settlement to the conflict.

Kenya maintains a diplomatic presence in Sudan, despite the decision of the United States to evacuate its embassy personnel over the weekend, Mutua said. Kenya has offered to help mediate an end to the conflict in Sudan, Mutua said.

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World Has Reached Possibly Even More 'Dangerous Threshold' Than During Cold War - Lavrov

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - The world might have reached an even more dangerous threshold than during the Cold War, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday.

"Again, as was the case in the Cold War, we have reached the dangerous, possibly even more dangerous threshold," Lavrov said during a UN Security Council meeting.

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Police Officer Who Shot Daunte Wright Released From Prison - Dept. of Corrections

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Former Minneapolis police officer Kim Potter, who claimed that she mistook her gun for a taser when she shot and killed Daunte Wright, has been released from prison, the Minnesota Department of Corrections said on Monday.

"Potter was released at about 4 a.m. 'out of an abundance of caution' for Potter's safety," the Department of Corrections told NBC News. "The department confirmed Friday she would be released Monday from the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Shakopee, but declined to say what time due to security concerns."

Potter shot and killed Wright, a 20-year-old unarmed Black man, during a traffic stop near

Minneapolis in April 2021. When the police officers ran his name in the database, they discovered Wright had a warrant for a misdemeanor weapons possession charge. The officers then ordered Wright out of his car, but he struggled with them and Wright shot him.

Potter was convicted of two counts of manslaughter and was sentenced to two years in prison. She served 16 months of her sentence.

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Ukraine Issue Cannot Be Considered Separately From Geopolitical Context - Lavrov

UNITED NATIONS, April 24 (Sputnik) - The Ukrainian issue can not be considered separately from the geopolitical context, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday.

"We can not consider the Ukrainian issue separately from the geopolitical context, [the] multilateralism that provides respect for the United Nations Charter in all inter-linkages of its principles," Lavrov said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

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UN Not Leaving Sudan Amid Ongoing Violence - Guterres

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is not leaving the crisis-torn Sudan, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the UN Security Council on Monday.

"The United Nations is not leaving Sudan," Guterres said. "I've authorized the temporary location both inside and outside Sudan of the United Nations personnel and their families."

Guterres also called on all Council members to exert maximum leverage on all parties to end the violence and restore order.

Violent clashes broke out between the Sudanese regular army and the RSF on April 15, with the epicenter located in Khartoum. Government forces accused the RSF of mutiny and launched airstrikes against their bases. Abdel Fattah Burhan, the head of the Sudanese military, issued a decree disbanding the RSF. The sides agreed to a three-day truce starting Friday for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

So far, around 600 people have died in the clashes, the Sudanese Health Ministry said on Friday. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization reported that over 3,500 people had been injured.

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Bretton Woods Institutions Do Not Reflect Reality of Today's Global Economy - UN Chief

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The Bretton Woods institutions do not reflect the reality of the global economy, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday.

"The same is true for the Bretton Woods institutions, they do not reflect also the reality of today's global economy," Guterres told the UN Security Council.

In February, Guterres said the global financial architecture needs to undergo radical transformation rather than a simple evolution and it was time for a "new Bretton Woods moment."

The UN chief emphasized that the global financial architecture is at the heart of the most significant problems facing the world, including economic inequality and injustice.

Guterres urged the international community to keep the developing countries at the center of every decision and mechanism of the global financial system.

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Lavrov at UNSC Meeting Says US Took Path to Destroy Globalization

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United States took the path of destroying globalization in an effort to maintain its dominance, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told a UN Security Council meeting on Monday.

"In a desperate attempt to assert their domination by punishing those unsubmissive, the United States has taken the path of destroying globalization," Lavrov said.

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White House Briefs Sister of Convicted Spy Paul Whelan on His Case - Statement

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The White House has briefed the sister of Paul Whelan, who serves a 16-year prison sentence in Russia for espionage, about his case, the Whelan family said in a statement on Monday.

"Elizabeth was also given a briefing by White House officials last Thursday. While it was inconclusive, we appreciate that they have heard our concerns. It is not at all clear that they have taken the steps to create opportunities to bring Paul home, but we will continue to watch and hope for that activity," the statement said.

The family noted that US ambassador Lynne Tracy spoke with Whelan by phone last Thursday. During the call, which continued for an hour, he conveyed his concerns over detention.

"Paul also communicated very clearly his concern lest the US government bring home other American citizens from Russia and leave him behind again," the statement said.

The Russian authorities arrested Whelan in Moscow in December 2018 and sentenced him to

16 years in prison on charges of espionage. Whelan has maintained that he is innocent and insisted that he arrived in Russia for a friend's wedding.

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IMF Morphed Into Tool For Achieving US Military Goals -Lavrov

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) -The International Monetary Fund has turned into a tool used by the United States to achieve its goals including those of military nature, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the UN Security Council on Monday

"Now, clearly and openly the International Monetary Fund has morphed into a tool for the achievement of the goals of the United States and their allies, including goals of military nature," Lavrov said.

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US-China Communications Lines Still Open Though Biden-Xi Call Has Not Happened - Kirby

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping are still working to arrange an appropriate time for phone talks, but communications between the two countries remain open, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday.

"There will be a phone call between the two leaders at a time both leaders deem as appropriate. It doesn't mean that because they haven't spoken recently that there isn't lines of communication open between them as it is," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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Hunter Biden Seeks Probe of ex-Trump Aide Who Circulated His Bank Records - Reports

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - Hunter Biden's lawyers have asked the Treasury Department to launch a probe into a former aide of ex-President Donald Trump for circulating bank records linked to the current president's son, NBC News reported on Monday, citing copies of letters it obtained.

In a letter to the Treasury Department's Inspector General, the lawyers note that former Trump aide Garrett Ziegler posted on his website five Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) from JPMorgan Chase related to Hunter Biden.

"Ziegler has used Mr. Biden's SARs and other financial records to craft a false narrative that Mr.

Biden is associated with a human trafficking ring. In his persistent and continued broadcast of this fictitious tale, Ziegler has called upon House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer to disseminate Mr. Biden's private information to an even wider audience," the lawyers state in the letter, as cited by NBC.

The letter is part of a new strategy led by Hunter Biden's lawyer Abbe Lowell to strike back at the detractors of the president's son.

In a separate letter, Biden's lawyers asked the House Ethics Committee to take action against Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene in response to her "defamatory statements" and publication of "conspiracy theories" about the president's son.

Greene recently posted a video on Twitter alleging that the Biden family was "linked to an eastern European prostitution or human trafficking ring."

In their letter, Hunter's lawyers say that Greene posted videos of Hunter Biden with his niece and another female family member and suggested that the two were prostitutes.

Hunter Biden has come under intensifying scrutiny in recent months over his financial dealings and foreign business work. The House Oversight has subpoenaed at least four major banks to demand his financial records as part of a wider probe into his business dealings.

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US Quietly Preparing for Failure of Ukraine Counteroffensive – Reports

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) - The United States is quietly preparing for the possibility that Ukraine's expected counteroffensive might fail to reach its objectives, a scenario that would embolden critics at home and abroad, Politico reported on Monday.

The Biden administration is concerned that should the operation yield limited results, it will prompt backlash from both the hawkish and dovish camps, the report said, citing unnamed administrations officials.

The one side would blast the US for failing to provide Kiev with longer-range missiles, fighter jets and more air defenses, while the other would insist on the futility of the attempts to arm Kiev, the report added.

US officials have also reportedly alerted Ukraine about the dangers of overextending its ambitions and overstretching its troops — the same warning the Biden administration gave the former Afghan government as the Taliban (under UN sanctions for terrorism activities) made nationwide advances during the US military withdrawal in 2021.

Earlier this month, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal told The Hill that Kiev could launch a counteroffensive as late as this summer. Later, he said the offensive would begin soon. US media have reported that the operation was scheduled for April 30.

Last week, Foreign Policy reported, citing a Ukrainian lawmaker, that Ukraine hoped to launch the offensive in April, but the shortage of weapons has delayed it indefinitely.

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

Republicans Launch Site to Check Biden's Activities Ahead of Elections – Reports

WASHINGTON, April 24 (Sputnik) – The Republican Party launched a special website to check US President Joe Biden's actions ahead of his widely anticipated announcement to run for President in 2024, Fox News said on Monday.

Republican National Committee (RNC) chairwoman Ronna McDaniel accused Biden of creating multiple crises and lying about the damages he has done to the United States.

"The RNC will continue to hold Biden accountable for his lies, and on November 2024, the American people will too," McDaniel said in a statement, according to Fox News. She also emphasized that the current administration refused to acknowledge the truth about issues like border security, the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, and the situation in the economy, she added.

The goal of the new website is to share fact checks with the press and public to show when Biden is trying to 'hide the real situation', according to the report.

Currently, the site contains several stories about Biden's actions, dated by January 2023 or earlier. The site also urges users to donate and to "support holding Joe Biden accountable."

US media reported last week that Biden plans to make his official re-election announcement on Tuesday, which is the four-year anniversary of his 2020 campaign bid.