

5/9/23 Tuesday

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US Jury Rules Trump Liable for Sexual Abuse, Defamation in E. Jean Carroll Civil Case

Writer E. Jean Carroll's accusations against Trump date back to the mid 1990s and allege the former US president sexually assaulted her in a dressing room at the Bergdorf Goodman department store in New York City. She first voiced the allegations in 2019.

A US jury has found that former US President Donald Trump is liable for defamation and sexual abuse in the E. Jean Carroll civil case.

The Tuesday ruling outlined that while Trump did not commit rape, he was liable for battery in regards to Carroll's claim that the former commander-in-chief sexually abused her.

The nine-member panel awarded the Carroll camp \$2 million in damages; however, as the two-part filing also found Trump liable of defaming the writer when he claimed she made up the allegations, she was awarded an additional \$3 million in punitive damages.

Carroll's suit did not specify a dollar amount being sought for damages, leaving it up to jurors to decide on the total sum.

The ruling, which came down after the jury deliberated for some three hours, settles just one of two lawsuits filed by Carroll against Trump.

An initial but since-stalled defamation suit was filed by Carroll in late 2019 after Trump claimed she only came forward to boost sales of a forthcoming book.

The second suit, which was ruled on Tuesday, was filed in 2022 after a New York law gave sexual abuse victims a one-year window to sue over assaults that took place years prior.

Shortly after news broke of the verdict, Trump blasted the jury's ruling as a "disgrace" and claimed it was yet another edition of the "greatest witch hunt of all time."

"I have absolutely no idea who this woman is," Trump wrote in a Truth Social post. "This verdict is a disgrace."

Earlier Tuesday, Trump indicated he would be taking legal action for what he perceived as an "unconstitutional silencing."

The one-time president had until 5 p.m. local time on Sunday to file a motion informing the court he would be testifying in the case, which he [failed to make](#). He was previously warned that if he failed to file, he would not be allowed to offer comments on the case.

Trump has repeatedly denied ever knowing Carroll.

The ruling comes after footage of a deposition Trump gave in relation to the civil case was publicly released last week, and shined the light on a moment in which Trump outright confused Carroll for his ex-wife Marla Maples in a photo dating back to the 1980s.

Portions of his deposition, which also included comments about the infamous "Access Hollywood" remarks, were played for the jury during the trial, as well as during closing arguments on Monday.

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China Expels Canadian Diplomat in Tit-for-Tat Measure After Zhao Expulsion

China has been accused by the Canadian government of trying to influence its politicians and elections.

Beijing expelled a Canadian envoy on Tuesday in response to an earlier expulsion by Canada of a Chinese diplomat accused of attempting to intimidate a Canadian lawmaker who voiced criticism of China.

On Monday, Canada declared Chinese diplomat Zhao Wei persona non grata and asked that he leave the country. The next day, China responded by doing the same to Jennifer Lalonde, a diplomat at Canada's consulate in Shanghai.

Canada alleged Zhao was part of a campaign to pressure Conservative MP Michael Chong and his extended family that lives in Hong Kong.

Chong has taken strong anti-People's Republic of China (PRC) stances, including sponsoring a motion to declare China's alleged abuses against its minority Uyghur Muslim population as genocide.

The move to expel Zhao came days after Canadian media cited Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) documents that alleged the PRC had been working behind the scenes against Conservative candidates in elections and promoting Liberal party candidates.

The head of the CSIS reportedly told Chong after his vote on the Uyghur issue that he and his family were being targeted. After the report's publication, Chong said he was unaware of any attempts to influence him, but noted he was hit with sanctions by China in 2021 after sponsoring the resolution.

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said additional Chinese diplomats could be expelled if such actions continue.

"We will not tolerate any form of foreign interference in our internal affairs," Joly said in a statement.

Chinese spokesperson Wang Wenbin, during his daily news conference, commented that accusations that China attempts to influence Canada's internal affairs are "ideology- and politically driven manipulation designed to slander and denigrate China."

He added that China reserves the right to take further action, and that the move was a "reciprocal countermeasure." He didn't give an answer when asked why Lalonde was specifically picked to be expelled.

Commenting on the CSIS report, Wang told reporters the findings were part of an attempt to "smear the Chinese diplomatic and consular missions in Canada."

"None of the accusations are based on facts," Wang said. "They are trumped up with [a] hidden agenda."

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Tucker Carlson Reveals New Show Amid Claims Fox News Breached His Contract By - Ian DeMartino

Tucker Carlson was abruptly taken off the air last month, shortly after the Fox Corporation settled a defamation lawsuit with Dominion Voting Systems for \$787.5 million.

Former Fox News host Tucker Carlson took to Twitter on Tuesday to announce that he will be launching a new show . . . on Twitter.

Tucker, who was taken off the air by Fox News a little more than two weeks ago, said his new show will be “a new version of the show we’ve been doing for the last six and a half years to Twitter,” but did not provide any more specifics other than that it will come “soon.”

He also promised his team will be bringing “other things” but did not clarify what they could be. Carlson has a non-compete clause in his Fox News contract that should, in theory, prevent the controversial former host from starting a new show as long as they continue to pay him the length of his contract which ends in January 2025.

It has been reported that almost immediately after his ousting, Carlson received multiple high-priced offers from other conservative outlets, as well as rumors he was talking with Twitter CEO Elon Musk.

Carlson’s lawyers have reportedly sent a letter to Fox, alleging the company breached the contract, which would void the non-compete clause. The letter reportedly accuses Fox executives, including Fox Chairman Rupert Murdoch, of making and breaking promises to Tucker.

The promises, the lawyers argue, represent additional terms of employment for Carlson, which when broken, breached his contract. The letter alleges Carlson was promised Fox would not leak his private communications to the media, and that any settlement with Dominion Voting Systems would not “indicate wrongdoing” on Carlson’s part.

However, shortly after his firing, private texts from Carlson that were redacted in public court documents were leaked to the media, including the New York Times and ProPublica.

One [US media outlet](#) exclusively reported that Carlson was told by a Fox board member that his show’s cancellation was part of the Dominion Voting Systems settlement.

“These actions not only breached the covenant of good faith and fair dealing in the Agreement, but give rise to claims for breach of contract, and intentional and negligent misrepresentation,” the letter reportedly reads.

A Fox News spokesperson had denied Carlson’s ousting was related to the Dominion Voting Systems settlement, and a lawyer working for Dominion also insisted the company did not encourage his ouster.

In the Tuesday video announcing his new show, Tucker blasted the media, using his version of Madeleine L'Engle’s quote: “Truth is what is true, and it’s not necessarily factual.”

“You often hear people say the news is full of lies. But most of the time that is not exactly right. Much of what you see on television or read in the New York Times is in fact true in a literal sense,” Tucker begins in his announcement video. “It could pass one of the media’s own ‘fact checks.’ Lawyers would be willing to sign off on it. In fact, they may have. But that doesn’t make it true. It’s not true. At the most basic level, the news that you consume is a lie. A lie of the

stealthiest and most insidious kind. Facts have been withheld of purpose. Along with proportion and perspective. You are being manipulated.”

Twitter currently allows Twitter Blue subscribers to upload and share videos up to 60 minutes in length and 2GB in size. It is unclear if Tucker’s show will be published using this format or if there are unannounced features coming to the platform.

Later Tuesday, Twitter CEO Elon Musk stated [in a tweet](#) that Carlson and the company have not signed "a deal of any kind." He further detailed that Carlson is subject to the same rules as everyone else on the platform, including Community Notes and advertising revenue sharing, which he says is coming soon.

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AMLO Urges Biden in Putting Stop to USAID's Meddling in Mexico

The Mexican president previously accused USAID of promoting “a form of coup” in 2021 due to its funding of NGOs opposed to his administration.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, commonly referred to as AMLO, recently sent a letter to US President Joe Biden asking that he stop interference in his country by the United States Agency of International Development (USAID).

According to López Obrador, USAID is funding opposition parties and so-called 'non-government organizations' opposed to his administration, including Mexicans Against Corruption and Impunity and Article 19.

“I would like to express briefly,” AMLO said in the letter, “that for some time now, the United States government, in particular the United States Agency for International Development, has been financing organizations openly opposed to the legal and legitimate government that I represent, which is clearly an interventionist act, contrary to international law and the respect that should prevail among independent and sovereign states.”

López Obrador also added in the letter that funding to those groups has increased recently. “[A] few days ago it was announced that said agency [USAID] will increase the budget granted to organizations opposed to our government, as published in the official page of the State Department,” he wrote.

However, AMLO stopped short of saying that Biden is aware of the program, instead asking for his “valuable intervention” to end it.

He also said he considered not sending the letter, but did so as a matter of principle and in defense of his country’s sovereignty so “future generations should not wonder why this type of violations against the nation’s sovereignty were allowed.”

Article 19, responded, saying that AMLO's comments amounted to "attacks against press freedom."

AMLO spoke about the letter at a May 3 news conference after being asked if he brought up the issue of the US Department of Defense spying on the Mexican military, including top officials like the Secretariat of the Navy and the Secretariat of National Defense.

López Obrador accused the US of spying at an April conference, claiming media in Mexico “are publishing information provided by the DEA [US Drug Enforcement Agency] and Pentagon” that had been obtained illegally.

The letter to Biden was given to his national security adviser Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, who was in Mexico on official business.

USAID has long been criticized for clandestinely undermining governments on behalf of the US intelligence community, particularly in Central and South America.

State Department documents and cables have revealed over the past decade that USAID has been involved in coups or attempted coups in Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela and a number of other countries over the past two decades.

AMLO said during the earlier presser that he is not concerned about the alleged interventionism, explaining it loses its power once the people are made aware of its existence.

“If we inform the people, there is no problem because we have nothing to hide. We have no complicity with anyone; we are not corrupt; we have moral authority,” López Obrador said. “We are doing this, because, although it does not harm us, politically speaking, by revealing all this, the people become aware—they understand better what we have been saying all this time, that these conservatives are traitors to the nation.”

Biden and López Obrador spoke on the phone on Tuesday in a talk that focused on the growing border crisis as Title 42 nears its expiration. It is not known if AMLO brought up the issue of USAID to Biden during that talk.

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AI Tech Could Eliminate 80% of Jobs Over Next Few Years

SingularityNET envisions an AI marketplace where AI developers could deploy their programs on the company’s decentralized network which could be used and paid for by its users directly. It utilizes the Ethereum blockchain.

An artificial intelligence expert who has been working on making a decentralized AI platform powered by blockchain technologies has said he believes AI could replace 80% of jobs over the next few years.

Ben Goertzel, the founder and CEO of SingularityNET, said in an interview with US media that AI could replace most jobs even without reaching the point of matching human intelligence. Goertzel says current AIs are not close to reaching that goal but says even so, 8 in 10 jobs could be replaced by systems similar to AI systems today.

“You could probably obsolete maybe 80 percent of jobs that people do, without having an AGI [artificial general intelligence, the point at which an AI matches human intelligence], by my guess. Not with ChatGPT exactly as a product,” he said. “But with systems of that nature, which are going to follow in the next few years.”

Goertzel further said he does not see the growth in AI as a threat, but rather an opportunity for humans to improve their lives.

"I don't think it's a threat. I think it's a benefit. People can find better things to do with their life than work for a living... Pretty much every job involving paperwork should be automatable." But Goertzel admitted there will be some growing pains. "The problem I see is in the interim period, when AIs are obsoleting one human job after another... I don't know how (to) solve all the social issues," he admitted.

Still, Goertzel says there will be benefits, like robot nurses. "In that case, you're not eliminating human jobs. Because basically, there's not enough people who want to do nursing and nursing assistant jobs," he said, adding education is another market ripe for humanoid robots.

Since at least 2010, South Korea has been utilizing robots in the classroom, largely for teaching English. However, those robots were controlled remotely by a human, AI robots would operate autonomously.

When asked about potential AI regulation, Goertzel said governance of AI needs to involve the general population. He says the companies driving AI development today are focused on "maximizing shareholder value" over "doing good things."

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Biden to Host Indian Prime Minister Modi on June 22 - White House

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will receive Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for an official state visit on June 22, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.

"President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden will host Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the Republic of India for an Official State Visit to the United States, which will include a state dinner, on June 22, 2023," Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

The visit will strengthen the two countries' commitment to a free, open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific and their resolve to "elevate strategic technology partnership, including in defense, clean energy, and space," according to the statement.

The two leaders will also discuss ways to further expand educational exchanges and people-to-people ties, as well as cooperation to confront challenges related to climate change.

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US Issues Rule to Asylum Claims at Border Ahead of Title 42's End - Notice

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - The United States has issued a new regulation that will make it harder for migrants to claim asylum at the US border if they failed to seek refugee status in another country, according to a notice published in the Federal Register on Wednesday.

"The rule encourages migrants to avail themselves of lawful, safe, and orderly pathways into the United States, or otherwise to seek asylum or other protection in another country through

which they travel, thereby reducing reliance on human smuggling networks that exploit migrants for financial gain," the notice states.

The regulation will become effective on May 11, when Title 42, the COVID-era public health order that restricted access at the border, is set to end.

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US Opens Embassy in Tonga in Push to Boost Presence in Pacific Amid China's Influence

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – The United States has opened an embassy in Tonga, the Department of State announced on Wednesday, in an apparent effort to boost US clout in the region to counter growing Chinese influence.

"We are pleased to announce the United States officially opened the U.S. Embassy in Nuku'alofa on May 9, 2023, less than one year after Vice President [Kamala] Harris announced at a meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum that we would begin discussions with Tonga regarding in establishing an embassy," the statement said.

The opening reflects the renewal of bilateral relations and underlines the strength of the US's commitment to the partnership with Tonga and the entire Indo-Pacific region, it added.

The United States considers the move a first step toward deploying additional diplomatic personnel and resources, including the potential appointment of a resident ambassador to Tonga, according to the statement.

The US-Tonga relationship dates back to the late 19th century, with diplomatic relations officially established in 1972.

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US Consumer Price Grows 4.9% in Year to April, Smallest in 2 Years - Labor Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US consumer prices rose 4.9% in the 12 months to April, expanding at its smallest pace in two years, the Labor Department said Tuesday in data that showed progress in the Federal Reserve's battle against inflation as debate grew on whether the central bank would be ready to pause its aggressive rate hikes.

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, known in short as the CPI, was forecast to grow 5% in the year to April, unchanged from March. "The all items index increased 4.9 percent for the 12 months ending April; this was the smallest 12-month increase since the period ending April 2021," the Labor Department said in a news release.

On a monthly basis, annual CPI was flat, growing at 0.4% for April, with no change from March. The core reading on year-on-year and month-on-month CPI, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, was also unchanged from March, growing at 5.5% and 0.4%, respectively, in

April.

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Biden to Sign Defense, Surveillance Pacts With Papua New Guinea – PNG Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will sign defense and satellite surveillance agreements with Papua New Guinea during his historic visit to the Pacific Island nation later this month, PNG Foreign Minister Justin Tkachenko told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday.

According to Tkachenko, the defense cooperation agreement was finalized last week, "which now allows us to officially sign it when Biden comes here."

Another deal to be signed will allow the US Coast Guard to patrol PNG's exclusive economic zone, with the island nation's officials on board as "ship riders." The agreement will also cover satellite surveillance, the minister told Reuters.

"We will be able to utilize the US satellite security systems. Once we sign that it will help monitor our waters, which we can't at the moment," Tkachenko stated.

The minister called it a "fantastic agreement" to protect the country's natural resources from being illegally poached and stolen, especially fishing.

In addition, the US will double its development assistance to the country to \$32 million, including \$25 million to tackle climate change, the report said, citing State Department documents submitted to the US Congress.

Biden will visit Papua New Guinea while traveling from the G7 Leaders' Summit in Hiroshima, Japan to the Quad Leaders' Summit in Sydney, Australia later this month. He will become the first sitting US president to visit a Pacific Island country.

The Papua New Guinea trip comes as the US is seeking to counter China's rising influence in the region, especially in light of the security pact that Beijing struck with the Solomon Islands last year.

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House Panel Says CIA Conspired with Biden's Team to Blame Russia for Hunter Laptop Story

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Senior Biden administration campaign officials conspired with the CIA to discredit allegations about Hunter Biden and portray them as "Russian disinformation," a new report from the US House Judiciary Committee stated on Wednesday.

"Evidence suggests that senior Biden campaign officials, including now Secretary of State Antony Blinken, now Deputy Press Secretary Andrew Bates, and now Counselor to the President Steve Ricchetti, took active measures to discredit the allegations about Hunter Biden by exploiting the national security credentials of former intelligence officials," the committee said

in a press release coinciding with the release of the report.

The committee through its investigations found that Blinken, then a senior Biden campaign advisor, was the impetus of a public letter in which 51 former intelligence officials stated that a story in the New York Post about Hunter Biden's laptop had "all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation."

Senior Biden administration officials then "coordinated efforts to disseminate" the public letter to members of the media in an effort to discredit the allegations about Hunter Biden, the committee stated.

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Migrant Surge at US-Mexico Border to Last 'A Few Weeks' When Title 42 Ends - Sr. Official

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - The current surge of migrants arriving on the US southern border is expected to continue for several weeks after the Title 42 border expulsion policy ends late Thursday, a senior US administration official said during a conference call.

The Trump-era public health emergency order known as Title 42 allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"There are many thousands of individuals in Mexico who have been waiting across from the border for some time," the US official said. "We believe that the current elevated numbers we're seeing will likely continue for a few weeks."

US President Joe Biden said during a press conference on Tuesday that the US southern border will be chaotic when Title 42 expires, and it remains to be seen if the United States is prepared to deal with the massive surge of migrants anticipated when the policy expires.

On Monday, US Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said more than 26,000 migrants have been apprehended on the US southern border over the last three days.

US Congressman Tony Gonzales told Fox News that Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei informed him the White House is ignoring his warning calls about a group of 80,000 migrants making their way to the United States' border with Mexico in light of the end of Title 42.

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UK National Extradited to US Pleads Guilty to 2020 Twitter Hack - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - A British citizen pleaded guilty to a 2020 hack of Twitter accounts belonging to high-profile figures such as then-Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, the US Justice Department said in a statement

"A UK citizen pleaded guilty today in New York to his role in cyberstalking and multiple schemes that involve computer hacking, including the July 2020 hack of Twitter," the release said on Tuesday. "Joseph James O'Connor, aka PlugwalkJoe, 23, was extradited from Spain on April

26."

The 2020 Twitter hack compromised more than 100 high-profile accounts on the social media site. Some of the other hacked accounts belonged to Elon Musk, former President Barack Obama, and investor Warren Buffett, among other famous people.

The Justice Department also said O'Connor and his co-conspirators perpetrated a scheme to use subscriber identity module (SIM) swaps to conduct cyber intrusions to steal around \$794,000 worth of cryptocurrency from a Manhattan-based company which provided wallet infrastructure and related software.

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Biden Says 'Going to Be Chaotic' at US Southern Border For A While After Title 42 Ends

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said during a press conference that it will be chaotic on the US southern border when the Title 42 border expulsion policy ends late Thursday and it remains to be seen if the United States is prepared to deal with the massive surge of migrants anticipated when the policy expires.

"It's going to be chaotic for a while," Biden said on Tuesday.

When asked if the United States is prepared to respond to a surge of migrants on the US-Mexico border, Biden said that remains to be seen.

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Biden Says Weighing Use of 14th Amendment to Bypass Congress Debt Ceiling Negotiations

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said during a press conference that he is considering the use of the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution to bypass the need to negotiate a debt ceiling increase with Congress, following a meeting between the president and congressional leadership on the matter.

"I have been considering the Fourteenth Amendment," Biden said on Tuesday.

However, the matter would have to be litigated in court, Biden added.

The Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel advised former US President Barack Obama on the possible use of the Fourteenth Amendment to circumvent negotiations with Congress, although their legal opinion never became public.

The Fourteenth Amendment states that the validity of the United States' public debt "shall not be questioned," leaving room for interpretation as to whether or not it is the purview of the executive branch to unilaterally raise the borrowing limit.

The Obama administration ultimately never pursued the Fourteenth Amendment route, with former White House spokesperson Jay Carney saying in 2012 that the administration

determined the president lacks such authority.

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Biden Says Prepared to Have Separate Talks on Spending, Not Under Threat of Default

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said that he told congressional leaders he is prepared to have separate negotiations on spending priorities, but not at the risk of the United States defaulting on its debt.

"I told congressional leaders I'm prepared to begin a separate discussion about my budget, spending priorities, but not under the threat of default," Biden said on Tuesday after meeting with congressional leaders to discuss raising the debt limit.

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Biden Says Meetings With Congressional Leaders 'Productive,' US Will Not Default

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said his meeting with congressional leaders earlier on Tuesday about raising the debt ceiling was productive and the United States will not default on its debt obligations.

"I just finished. I thought a productive meeting with congressional leadership about the path forward to make sure America does not default," Biden said on Tuesday evening. "I'm pleased, but not surprised to hear Republican minority leader of the United States Senate saying at our meeting that the United States is not going to default. Never has, never will. And he's absolutely correct."

Biden added that he will meet again with congressional leaders on Friday.

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US Approves \$250M In Sale of Light Tactical Vehicles to Slovakia - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has approved a quarter of a billion dollars sale of heavy gun-carrying light tactical vehicles to Slovakia, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible foreign military sale to the government of Slovakia of M1278A1/A2 Heavy Gun Carriers Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs) and related equipment and services for an estimated cost of \$250 million," the DSCA said in a press release on Tuesday.

The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of the possible sale earlier in the day, the release said.

The Slovakian government has requested to buy 192 JLTVs as well as M153 common remote weapons stations and M2 quick change barrels 0.50 caliber machine guns, the release added.

The arms package will also include MK19 40mm grenade launchers, M2A1 machine guns, gun mounts, chemical agent detectors; driver vision enhancers, special tools and spare parts, according to the release.

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Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore to Be Sued Over Hundreds of Sex Abuse Cases - Lawyers

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Civil Rights Attorney Benjamin Crump and his colleague Adam Slater announced their intention to file civil actions against the Roman Catholic archdiocese in Baltimore over allegations that priests and other church personnel sexually abused hundreds of individuals.

"The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore will be named in a series of civil actions collectively alleging that hundreds of individuals were sexually abused by clergy, seminarians, deacons, and employees of the church," Crump's law firm said in a letter on Tuesday.

The lawsuit follows release of a report developed by the Maryland Attorney General's Office in April that detailed the widespread sexual abuse that allegedly occurred over an 80-year span, committed by priests, deacons and other church leaders who held positions of authority in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

The more than 450-page report identified 156 priests, seminarians, Catholic teachers and deacons in the Archdiocese who allegedly sexually abused and physically tortured more than 600 victims.

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US Prosecutors Charging George Santos, Congressman to Appear in Court Soon - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Federal prosecutors in the United States are charging Congressman George Santos with unspecified crimes amid a number of probes into the lawmaker's alleged dishonesty, CNN reported, citing three sources familiar with the matter.

The criminal charges were filed under seal in the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York, the report said on Tuesday.

Santos could appear in court as soon as Wednesday, the report added.

Although the exact nature of the criminal charges remain unknown, investigators have been probing allegations of false statements in Santos' campaign finance filings, the report said.

The lawmaker also received criticism from both Democrats and Republican colleagues after

admitting to fabricating portions of his biography on the campaign trail.

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Jeffries Says Biden Asked Congressional Leaders to Meet as Soon as Tonight on Debt Limit

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said during a press conference that President Joe Biden asked congressional leaders to meet as soon as Tuesday evening to resume negotiations on raising the debt ceiling.

"President Biden has asked the four corners of the Capitol along with the administration to get together as early as this evening, if not tomorrow, to make sure that we can have a conversation about the budget, about the appropriations process, about spending and investments and revenue - and all four parties have agreed," Jeffries said on Tuesday afternoon.

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US Approves \$124M In Sniper Targeting Pods Sale to Poland - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has given the go-ahead for the sale of \$124 million worth of snipers targeting equipment to Poland, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Poland of Sniper Advanced Targeting Pods and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$124.7 million," the DSCA said in a press release on Tuesday.

The DSCA said it delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale earlier in the day, the release said.

"The government of Poland has requested to buy 34 AN/AAQ-33 Sniper Advanced Targeting Pods (ATP) with Shipping Containers," the release said. "The estimated total cost is \$124.7 million."

The sale will also include system support and support equipment; spare parts, consumables, accessories and repair and return support; integration and test equipment and support; unclassified software and other engineering support, the release added.

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McCarthy Says Congressional Leaders, Biden Will Resume US Debt Ceiling Negotiations Friday

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said during a press briefing that he, President Joe Biden and other congressional leaders will meet on Friday to resume negotiations on raising the United States' debt ceiling.

"The staff will get together, and we'll get back together, the principals, on Friday," McCarthy said on Tuesday after conducting talks with Biden, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Last month, House Republicans passed legislation to raise the debt ceiling in exchange for cuts to government spending. Biden and Schumer have rejected the proposal.

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Republican Leaders Say No 'New Movement' in Debt Ceiling Talks, US Will Not Default

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Republican congressional leaders told reporters after meeting with President Joe Biden and Democrat leaders that there was no new movement on the negotiations to raise the US debt ceiling, but said they do not expect the United States will default on its debt obligations as soon as early June.

"I didn't see any new movement," US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said on Tuesday. "I would hope that he would be willing to negotiate for the next two weeks so we could actually solve this problem and not take America on the brink."

US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said the United States will not default on its debt obligations.

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Tucker Carlson Says He's Launching Show on Twitter

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – Famous US journalist Tucker Carlson, who recently left his job at Fox News, revealed his plans on Tuesday to launch a new show on Twitter.

"Starting soon, we will be bringing a new version of the show we have been doing for last 6.5 years to Twitter. We will bring some other things, too, which we will tell you about," Carlson said in a video message published on Twitter.

The journalist warned that mainstream media are manipulating audiences by providing people with information from specific angles. He also noted that they have limits that every employee should follow.

"You know if you will bump up against those limits often enough, you will be fired for it. That is not a guess, it is a guarantee. Every person who works in English language media understands

that," he said.

Carlson also warned that "the news is full of lies" at the most basic level. He also pointed out that freedom of speech is the most important right the people have.

"Without it you have no others. See you soon," he said, inviting people to follow his show.

Fox News said the media giant and Carlson agreed to part ways, a move that came despite the fact that he hosted the network's top-rated program. Conflicting reports suggested Carlson was let go due to his controversial coverage of topics - ranging from the January 6 riots to US support for the war in Ukraine - while others said he was fired for sharp criticism of senior management.

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White House Ignoring Calls From Guatemala Warning of 80,000 US-Bound Migrants - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Tony Gonzales told Fox News that Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei informed him the White House is ignoring his warning calls about a group of 80,000 migrants making their way to the United States' border with Mexico.

A Fox News correspondent said on Tuesday, citing Giammattei, that the group of 80,000 migrants consists of predominantly Venezuelan nationals.

A massive surge of illegal immigrants is underway at the US-Mexico border ahead of the Trump-era public health emergency order known as Title 42 - which allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19 - expiring on Thursday.

An all-time record number of migrants has arrived at the US southern border under the Biden administration, hitting two consecutive records in 2021 and 2022, exceeding 2.3 million people. In fiscal year 2023, the US authorities said they have encountered more than 1.2 million migrants. Fox News and other media outlets have said the number of illegal immigrants to enter the United States since Biden assumed office has exceeded six million.

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Pentagon Says Russia, China Continuing Investments in Long-Range Missile Capabilities

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Russia and China are continuing to invest in long-range missile capabilities such as hypersonic glide vehicles that could put the United States at risk, Assistant Defense Secretary for Space Policy John Plumb said in testimony to a US Senate armed services panel subcommittee.

"Russia also continues to invest in long-range cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and hypersonic glide vehicles - capabilities that place the United States homeland at risk," Plumb said on

Tuesday.

China has also accelerated efforts to develop, test and field advanced missile systems, including ballistic, cruise and hypersonic glide vehicles, Plumb said.

China's military modernization is proceeding at an "alarming pace," US Northern Command chief Gen. Glen VanHerck also said in testimony to lawmakers.

China continues to develop long-range conventional and strategic capabilities to project military power at greater distances, VanHerck said.

The US works with allies and partners to improve the ability to share sensing and tracking data in real time to maximize collective capabilities, Plumb added.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) -

VICTORY DAY

* The arrival of the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) leaders in Moscow to attend the Victory Day parade shows their grateful attitude to the act of bravery of our ancestors, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday.

* The Immortal Regiment march, commemorating the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany and the sacrifice of those who died in the World War II, has started in Berlin, a RIA Novosti correspondent reported.

* Employees of the Russian embassy in Italy, representatives of the military attache's office and Russian foreign institutions staff took part in the ceremony of laying wreaths at the memorial dedicated to Soviet soldiers in Palestrina in commemoration of Victory Day.

* Russian diplomats, foreign institution employees and nationals celebrated Victory Day in Incheon, South Korea, by laying flowers at the memorial dedicated to the sailors of the Russian cruiser Varyag and the gunboat Korietz, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

WESTERN AID TO UKRAINE

* The United States will provide \$1.2 billion in new military aid for Ukraine to bolster its air defenses and sustain its artillery ammunition needs, the Defense Department said on Tuesday.

* A large amount of ammunition from warehouses in Europe has already been delivery to Ukraine under the EU plan or is on its way, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

* The United States will continue to train Ukrainian forces for as long as there is a demand, which is currently under discussion with Kiev, Defense Department spokesperson Patrick Ryder said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The Russian military attacked places of temporary deployment of Ukrainian reserves on

Monday night, the Defense Ministry said on Tuesday.

* Agence France-Presse said on Tuesday that its journalist Arman Soldin was killed near the city of Bakhmut (also known as Artyomovsk) amid heavy fighting.

* Ukraine has not yet finalized its offensive plan against Russia and is considering different options, Ukrainian National Security Secretary Oleksiy Danilov said.

DIPLOMATIC INCIDENT IN POLAND

* An aggressive crowd has blocked the way of Russian Ambassador to Poland Sergey Andreev at the memorial cemetery in Warsaw, where the diplomat arrived on Tuesday to lay flowers on Victory Day, a RIA Novosti correspondent reported.

* Moscow will express protest to Poland in connection with the provocative actions against Russian diplomats at the memorial cemetery on May 9, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

TRUMP COURT CASE

* A federal jury in the state of New York ruled in favor of E. Jean Carroll in a case involving accusations of rape by former US President Donald Trump, awarding her approximately \$5 million in damages, CNN reported on Tuesday.

* Trump said that he has no idea who E. Jean Carroll is, following a federal jury's decision earlier on Tuesday to find Trump liable for battery and defamation based on Carroll's accusations of sexual assault in 1996.

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Biden Starts Meeting With Congressional Leaders on Issue of Raising US Debt Limit

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has started the meeting with congressional leaders at the White House on Tuesday afternoon to negotiate raising the US debt limit in order to avoid a possible default in June.

Biden has been joined in the Oval Office by US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

Both Democrats and Republicans say they hope to reach an agreement on a long-term deal to raise the debt limit. However, Republicans also want to reduce excessive federal spending as part of an effort to balance the budget.

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Canada Announces Bid for Seat on UN Human Rights Council - Foreign Minister

(Updates with background in paras 5-7)

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Canada will pursue a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said on Tuesday.

"Today, I'm pleased that Canada will be seeking a seat at the UN Human Rights Council," Joly said during a press briefing.

Canada's candidacy is rooted in six priorities, including seeking justice for "frontline" human rights defenders, advancing gender equality, realizing the rights of indigenous peoples and striving for an inclusive future, Joly said.

Canada will also focus on protecting human rights online and addressing climate change, Joly added.

The UN Human Rights Council consists of 47 member states representing all regions of the world, elected for a three-year term by the General Assembly.

The seats designated to Western European and "other" states are currently held by the United States, Germany, Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg, France and the United Kingdom.

The General Assembly is said to take into consideration the candidate states' contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights in the selection process.

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Canada will also focus on protecting human rights online and addressing climate change, Joly added.

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Trump Says Has 'No Idea' Who E. Jean Carroll Is After US Jury Rules in Favor of Accuser

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he has no idea who E. Jean Carroll is, following a federal jury's decision earlier in the day to find Trump liable for battery and defamation based on Carroll's accusations of a 1996 sexual assault.

"I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHO THIS WOMAN IS. THIS VERDICT IS A DISGRACE - A

CONTINUATION OF THE GREATEST WITCH HUNT OF ALL TIME!" Trump said in a statement via social media.

A federal jury in New York found it more likely than not that Trump was liable for battery based on the sexual assault claims, determining he should pay Carroll approximately \$2 million in damages for the battery.

The jury also found Trump liable for defamation for publicly denying the accusations against him, for which they found that he should pay Carroll an additional \$3 million in damages.

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Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to Resume But Reduce Activities on Twitter - Statement

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC/Radio-Canada) announced on Tuesday it had decided to resume activities on Twitter but that the company would be reducing its footprint on the social media platform.

In mid-April, the CBC said it was suspending its activities on Twitter after the social media platform decided to label them as a government-funded news outlet.

"Today, we will resume some activity on a handful of umbrella Twitter accounts, including @CBCNews, but we will significantly reduce our overall Twitter footprint and continue to assess the platform against our strategy," the CBC said via twitter.

In an associated article, the media outlet explained that CBC had left the social media platform because the definition provided by Twitter about government-funded referred to various levels of governmental involvement in the editorial content of the company.

"[Elon] Musk has on several occasions linked government funding to state influence and media bias," CBC's article reads.

The media outlet emphasized that the Canadian government has never been involved or has influenced its editorial freedom, one that is inscribed in Canada's Broadcasting Act.

The CBC said that despite rising challenges from and outside Canada, it remains committed to independent, fact-based journalism.

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US Jury Rules in Favor of E. Jean Carroll in Trump Civil Rape, Defamation Case - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - A federal jury in the state of New York ruled in favor of E. Jean Carroll in a case involving accusations of rape by former US President Donald Trump, awarding her approximately \$5 million in damages, CNN reported on Tuesday.

The jury found that it was more likely than not that Trump was liable for battery based on Carroll's accusations of sexual abuse in a dressing room in 1996, the report said. The jury did not find Trump liable for rape.

The jury determined that Trump should pay Carroll approximately \$2 million in damages for the civil battery claim, the report said.

Moreover, the jury found Trump liable for defamation, finding that he should pay an additional \$3 million in damages for publicly denying the accusations against him, the report said.

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US to Manage Migrant Crisis in 'Humane Way' - White House

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration will deal with the crisis of surging illegal immigration in a "humane way," White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"We are going to do everything that we can and use every available tool to us as we have been to deal with this issue in a humane way, manage it humanely," Jean-Pierre told reporters.

A massive surge of illegal migrants is expected at the US border with Mexico after the Trump-era public health emergency order known as Title 42 - which allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19 - expires on Thursday.

Jean-Pierre said the Biden administration would address the situation by utilizing law enforcement, deterrence and diplomacy.

In addition, the administration is keeping close contacts with its regional partners, she said.

"Right now, we believe a robust plan, multiagency plan to do this in a humane way," Jean-Pierre said.

However, Jean-Pierre declined to discuss the possible numbers of migrants expected to enter the United States after Title 42 expires.

"I cannot get into hypotheticals about the numbers and what they are were going to be, or going to be," she said.

An all-time record number of migrants has arrived at the US southern border under the Biden administration, hitting two consecutive records in 2021 and 2022, exceeding 2.3 million people. In fiscal year 2023, the US authorities said they have encountered more than 1.2 million migrants.

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US Continues to Train Ukrainian Troops, Discussing With Kiev Maintaining Effort - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to train Ukrainian forces for as long as there is a demand, which is currently under discussion with Kiev, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said on Tuesday.

"We will be able to maintain that support and that capability to train Ukrainians, as long as the

demand is there," Ryder said during a press briefing. "So we continue to discuss that with our Ukrainian partners in terms of sending additional forces."

Ryder said the United States is currently training a couple of thousand Ukrainian troops.

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US Inflation Could Return to 2% in Next 2 Years - New York Fed Chief Williams

NEW YORK, May 9 (Sputnik) - US inflation could return to the 2% per annum level targeted by the Federal Reserve by 2025, but will remain uncomfortably high until then, encumbering the poorest of Americans, New York Fed President John Williams said Tuesday.

Interest rate hikes by the central bank's policy-making Federal Open Markets Committee, or FOMC, will take time to bring prices lower as jobs and wage growth since the end of the coronavirus pandemic have a greater impact for now, Williams said.

He projected that US unemployment will rise from current 50-year lows of 3.4% per annum to reach between 4.0% and 4.5% later this year.

"I expect inflation to ebb to 3.25% this year, 2% by 2025," Williams said. "Because of the lag between policy actions and their effects, it will take time for the FOMC's actions to restore balance to the economy and return inflation to our 2 percent target."

The FOMC has executed 10 hikes over the past 15 months, bringing rates to a peak of 5.25% from a previous 0.25%. Economists think the central bank may pause its rate hike cycle in June to determine the effect of its monetary tightening, though there is no certainty that it would.

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White House Says US Default Would Be 'Gift' to China, Russia

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The US defaulting on its debt would be a gift to China and Russia, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Tuesday.

The US government will begin defaulting on payment obligations beginning June 1 if Congress fails to lift the debt ceiling. President Joe Biden and top Republican lawmakers will square off later in the day to address the crisis.

"If there was a default, it would be a gift to China, to Russia, and to other competitors," Jean-Pierre told reporters. "China and Russia would look to take advantage of the opportunity if we were to default."

The spokesperson said Director of the US National Intelligence Avril Haines told Congress last week that both Moscow and Beijing would look to use default to demonstrate the chaos in the United States.

She also said a possible default would create global uncertainty about the value of the US dollar and the US institutions.

US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said that he will not support the extension of the national debt ceiling through September 30 ahead of his meeting with President Joe Biden in the afternoon, according to Fox News.

Jean-Pierre declined to comment on the upcoming meeting.

Earlier in May, the Treasury Department said the US government will likely begin defaulting on its debt by June 1 if the congressional limit on the country's debt servicing is not raised by then.

In late April, House Republicans passed legislation to raise the debt ceiling in exchange for cuts in federal spending and other measures to reduce the deficit. However, Senate Democrats and Biden rejected the proposal, saying it had no chance of becoming law. Inversely, McCarthy said that a "no-strings-attached" debt limit increase would not pass the lower chamber of Congress.

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Oil Benchmark Brent Seen at \$74 Per Barrel by 2024 From \$79 This Year, \$101 in 2022 - EIA (Updates with more details, background in paras 3-11)

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The global price of oil set by the UK-origin North Sea Brent crude is expected to slide to an average of \$74 a barrel in 2024 from \$79 this year and \$101 in 2022, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said in a forecast published on Tuesday.

"Beginning in 2Q24, we expect consistent global oil inventory builds over the rest of the forecast period as global oil production outpaces global oil demand, putting downward pressure on crude oil prices," the EIA said in its Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO). "We forecast global oil inventories will grow by 0.3 million barrels/daily in 2024, and we forecast the Brent crude oil spot price to average \$74/barrel in 2024, \$7/barrel lower than in last month's STEO."

Brent got to a 14-year high of above \$139 on March 7, 2022, as the countries of the collective West prepared to impose sanctions against major oil exporter Russia in the early days of the Ukraine conflict. US crude benchmark WTI also got to 14-year highs at that time, peaking at around \$130. Since then, both benchmarks have experienced significant volatility, with Brent nearly snapping the \$70-per-barrel support and WTI going below \$65 at one point.

The EIA said global liquid fuels production will likely increase by 1.5 million barrels daily in 2023 compared with 2022, primarily because of growth in supply from non-OPEC or oil producers outside of the OPEC cartel.

"Excluding production from Russia, which we forecast to fall by 0.3 million barrels/daily in 2023, we expect that non-OPEC liquid fuels production will increase by 2.2 million barrels/daily in 2023 and by an additional 1.1 million barrels/daily in 2024," it said. "We forecast Russia's crude oil and other liquid fuels production will decline from 10.9 million barrels/daily in 2022 to 10.6 million b/d in 2023 and to 10.5 million barrels/daily in 2024."

The EIA noted that Russia's production in March and April declined in part due to announced production cuts of 0.5 million barrels daily and maintenance at refineries in Russia, which it expected to end in June.

"Our assumption of a return to near-normal refinery operations contribute to a slight increase in Russia's liquids fuel production from 10.4 million barrels/daily in the second quarter of 2023 to 10.5 million barrels/daily through 2024," the EIA said.

Total OPEC crude oil output is forecasted to fall by 0.3 million barrels daily in 2023, in large part due to the April 3 OPEC+ announcement to cut production by a total of 3.7 million barrels daily. The OPEC+ groups the 13-member OPEC with independent oil producers, including Russia.

"In addition to the expected adherence to the voluntary production cuts, recent disruptions to crude oil exports in Iraq and a force majeure limiting crude oil exports in Nigeria have also reduced our near-term OPEC forecast in 2023. We forecast total OPEC liquid fuels production to increase by 0.6 million b/d in 2024 driven by the end of the current OPEC+ production cuts in 2023," the EIA said.

Although demand growth for liquid fuels faces downside risks through the end of 2024, the EIA also said it expected a seasonal rise in oil consumption and a drop in OPEC production to put some upward pressure on crude oil prices in the coming months.

Still, demand growth will bring the global oil market into balance between the third and fourth quarter of this year and the first quarter of next year to keep Brent at between \$75 and \$80 per barrel.

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UK Top Diplomat Declines Comment on Reported Plans to Send Long-Range Missiles to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly on Tuesday declined to confirm that London is readying to send long-range missiles to Ukraine.

The Washington Post reported this week, citing an International Fund for Ukraine (IFU) procurement notice, that London appears poised to supply Ukraine with long-range missiles, the weapons Kiev has long sought and the Biden administration has declined to provide.

"Anything to do with operational details about the nature, the timing, the scale of our support would be counterproductive for us to discuss publicly," Cleverly said when asked about the reports of the United Kingdom preparing to supply Ukraine with long-range missiles.

The IFU is a funding mechanism administered by the UK's Defense Ministry to procure arms for Ukraine. The fund brings together the UK, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.

In a notice posted on May 2, the UK's Defense Ministry asked for "expressions of interest" in providing strike capabilities with a range of up to 300 kilometers (nearly 200 miles), the report said on Monday.

No final decision has been made, a UK official told the newspaper, declining to confirm the type, timing or quantity of weapons in question.

The requested specifications and capabilities, however, closely match the UK's air-launched Storm Shadow cruise missiles, the report noted.

US intelligence also confirmed that the UK was planning to send Ukraine an unspecified number of Storm Shadow missiles, as well as UK personnel to assist in targeting, the report added, citing the recently leaked Pentagon documents.

The ability to strike "far behind Russia's front lines" would support Ukraine's expected counteroffensive, the report stated.

Western countries have been supplying Kiev with various types of weapon systems, including air defense missiles, multiple launch rocket systems, tanks, self-propelled artillery and anti-aircraft guns, since Russia launched its military operation in Ukraine over a year ago. The Kremlin has repeatedly warned against further arms deliveries to Kiev.

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UK Will Seek to Create Coalition of Nations to Help Ukraine Rebuild - Cleverly

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The United Kingdom will use an upcoming conference in London to form a coalition of nations to help Ukraine rebuild once the conflict with Russia is over, UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said on Tuesday.

"The UK is very pleased to host on behalf of Ukraine the recovery conference where we will seek to build a coalition that will enable Ukraine to rebuild its country after this conflict has been concluded, after they regain their country back," Cleverly said during a joint press conference with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington.

London will host the international Ukraine Recovery Conference from June 21-22.

The UK is the second largest donor of military assistance to Ukraine, after the United States.

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White House Says Biden Spoke With Mexican President Earlier on Tuesday

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke with his Mexican counterpart, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, in the morning, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"I can confirm that the President spoke to President AMLO [Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador]... earlier today this morning," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

The phone call took place amid a massive surge of illegal migrants on the US-Mexico border with the Trump-era public health emergency order known as Title 42 - which allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19 - set to expire on Thursday.

An all-time record number of migrants have arrived at the US southern border under the Biden administration, hitting two consecutive records in 2021 and 2022, exceeding 2.3 million people. In the fiscal year 2023, the US authorities said they have encountered more than 1.2 million migrants.

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

Blinken Says Believes Ukraine Has Support Needed to Regain Territory During Offensive

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that he believes Ukraine has the necessary support to take territory from Russia during an anticipated offensive operation later this year, following the delivery of billions of dollars in assistance from the United States and other countries.

"It's not only the weapons, it's the training... it's making sure that the Ukrainians can maintain the systems that we provide them, and it's important that they have the right plans to be successful," Blinken said during a press conference. "My own estimation is that they have in place, across all of those dimensions, what they need to continue to be successful in regaining territory that was seized by force by Russia over the last 14 months."

Earlier on Tuesday, the US announced a new \$1.2 billion military aid package for Ukraine, including additional air defense systems, munitions and satellite imagery services.

Ukraine is expected to launch an offensive in the spring or summer to take territory currently under the control of the Russian Federation. US media reported last month that Ukraine had hoped to launch its counteroffensive in April, but postponed the operation indefinitely due to a shortage of weapons.

Last week, US National Security Council Strategic Communication Coordinator John Kirby said Ukraine has "98%" of what it requested for its offensive.

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McCarthy Rejects Debt Ceiling Extension Ahead of Meeting With Biden - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said that he will not support the extension of the national debt ceiling through September 30 ahead of his meeting with President Joe Biden in the afternoon, Fox News reported on Tuesday.

McCarthy said he will not allow the debt ceiling to be increased without changes in public spending and wants to do it now rather than wait until the end of the fiscal year, the report said.

The House speaker said it took Biden 97 days to come back to the discussion on the issue of the national debt ceiling that began on February 1.

Biden is expected to meet with McCarthy, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell later on Tuesday to discuss the raising of the US debt ceiling.

Earlier in May, the Treasury Department said the US government will likely begin defaulting on its debt by June 1 if the congressional limit on the country's debt servicing is not raised by then.

In late April, House Republicans passed legislation to raise the debt ceiling in exchange for cuts in federal spending and other measures to reduce the deficit. However, Senate Democrats and Biden rejected the proposal, saying it had no chance of becoming law. Inversely, McCarthy said

that a "no-strings-attached" debt limit increase would not pass the lower chamber of Congress.

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UN Has Seen No Formal Response on Letter to Putin Regarding Grain Deal - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, May 9 (Sputnik) - The UN has received no formal response to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin regarding the grain deal, Spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Tuesday.

"There is no formal response so far," Haq told a briefing when asked about the letter.

The UN Secretary-General handed over a letter to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, addressed to Putin, with his ideas about the continuation of the UN-brokered grain deal. Russia is unsatisfied with the deal because it is not getting its ammonia exported onto the world markets, which is part of the whole agreement.

Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and the UN reached an agreement on July 22, 2022, to provide a humanitarian maritime corridor for ships carrying food and fertilizer exports from Ukrainian Black Sea ports. On March 18, Russia extended the deal for 60 days, until May 18.

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UN Says JCC Resumed Inspections of Vessels Loaded With Grain

UNITED NATIONS, May 9 (Sputnik) - The Joint Coordination Center (JCC) has announced that vessel inspections as part of UN-brokered grain deal have resumed today, United Nations Spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Tuesday.

"The JCC has confirmed that inspections have resumed today on outbound vessels," Haq told a briefing.

There are 62 vessels waiting to move to Ukrainian ports, he added.

Last week, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that the JCC was experiencing difficulties in inspecting ships as part of the grain deal and that it was solely due to the actions of Ukrainian and UN representatives.

Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and the UN reached an agreement on July 22, 2022, to provide a humanitarian maritime corridor for ships carrying food and fertilizer exports from Ukrainian Black Sea ports. On March 18, Russia extended the deal for 60 days, until May 18.

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Biden Revokes COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement for Air Travel – Proclamation

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden on Tuesday revoked his own proclamation from October 25, 2021, that introduced a COVID-19 vaccination requirement for international air travel.

“Considering the progress that we have made, and based on the latest guidance from our public health experts, I have determined that we no longer need the international air travel restrictions that I imposed in October 2021,” the new proclamation said.

According to Biden, COVID-19 cases and deaths are at their lowest levels since the start of the pandemic, while the United States now has tools to detect and respond to the potential emergence of a new variant of high consequence.

The proclamation will come into effect at 12:01 EST (16:01 GMT) on May 12.

As of today, non-US citizens, US nationals, or lawful permanent residents are required to show proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before boarding an aircraft to the United States.

Last week, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus officially declared an end to the organization’s assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic as a "global health emergency," but emphasized that the novel coronavirus still poses a threat.

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US Lawmakers Seek Info on Rise in Encounters With Suspected Terrorists at Border - Letter

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - A group of US lawmakers sent a letter to senior Biden administration officials requesting information on the increase of encounters between the US Border Patrol (USBP) and suspected terrorists in recent years, Congressman Patrick McHenry said on Tuesday.

McHenry and six other US House lawmakers sent a letter on Monday to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Acting Commissioner Troy Miller, requesting information on the situation and the Biden administration’s response.

"The spike in encounters with individuals who appear on the Terrorist Screening Dataset (TSDS) is alarming and highlights the dangers of the Biden Administration’s open border policy. That is why I am leading members of the North Carolina delegation in demanding answers from Secretary Mayorkas and CBP Acting Commissioner Miller," McHenry said in a statement on the letter.

The letter requests information on CBP’s protocol for individuals on the TSDS after apprehension. It also asks the officials to explain what they attribute the rise in encounters with individuals on the TSDS to and whether they have a plan to reverse the trend.

There have been 82 encounters with suspected terrorists year-to-date in fiscal year 2023 and 98 encounters in the previous fiscal year, the letter said.

The TSDS is the US government’s database containing sensitive information on terrorist identities, according to the CBP website. The TSDS has expanded since its inception to include

additional individuals who represent a potential threat to the United States, including known affiliates of individuals placed on the terrorist watchlist.

The lawmakers requested in the letter a "timely response" in the interest of transparency. "We need to know why this information is hidden from public view and what is happening to these suspects after they are apprehended. Our porous border is putting Americans at risk and they deserve to know the truth," the statement said.

The letter comes days ahead of the end of a Trump administration policy that allows the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the country's borders due to public health concerns. A massive surge of migrants is expected to overwhelm the southern border on May 11 when the policy ends.

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US Justice Dept. Says Busted Russia's Alleged Years-Long Malware Spying Operation

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department announced on Tuesday that it has disrupted a years-long cyber espionage campaign allegedly run by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) with the help of sophisticated malware Snake to access sensitive documents from computer systems in countries across the world.

Russia has repeatedly rejected hacking allegations, pointing to the lack of evidence to corroborate its alleged involvement.

"The Justice Department today announced the completion of a court-authorized operation, codenamed MEDUSA, to disrupt a global peer-to-peer network of computers compromised by sophisticated malware, called 'Snake', that the United States Government attributes to a unit within Center 16 of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB)," the department said in a statement.

The alleged unit, referred to as "Turla," has used versions of the Snake malware to infect computer systems in at least 50 countries, including NATO members, journalists, and other targets from as early as 2004, the Justice Department stated.

The members of the unit purportedly conduct their daily operations from a "known FSB facility" in Ryazan, Russia, the statement said.

Using a warrant this week from a Brooklyn federal judge, the Justice Department conducted a high-tech operation called MEDUSA with the help of a specialized tool that caused the malware on infected computers to self-destruct without affecting the host machine or its applications, the release said.

Despite this, victims should take additional steps to protect themselves from further harm, the department stated.

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Oil Benchmark Brent Seen at \$74/Barrel by 2024 From \$79 This Year and \$101 in 2022 - EIA

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The global price of oil set by the UK-origin North Sea Brent crude is expected to slide to an average of \$74 a barrel in 2024 from \$79 this year and \$101 in 2022, the US Energy Information Administration, or EIA, said in a forecast published Tuesday.

"Beginning in 2Q24, we expect consistent global oil inventory builds over the rest of the forecast period as global oil production outpaces global oil demand, putting downward pressure on crude oil prices," the EIA said in its Short-Term Energy Outlook, or STEO. "We forecast global oil inventories will grow by 0.3 million barrels/daily in 2024, and we forecast the Brent crude oil spot price to average \$74/barrel in 2024, \$7/barrel lower than in last month's STEO."

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US Sanctions Son of Mexican Drug Kingpin 'El Chapo' Guzman - Treasury

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The United States sanctioned Joaquin Guzman Lopez, son of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, as part of an effort to disrupt the Sinaloa Cartel's trafficking network of illicit fentanyl, the US Treasury Department said on Tuesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Joaquin Guzman Lopez - a son of Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman Loera and the fourth member of Los Chapitos - as well as three Sinaloa Cartel members and two Mexico-based entities pursuant to Executive Order 14059. Those sanctioned today are part of a Sinaloa Cartel network overseen by Los Chapitos and responsible for a significant portion of the illicit fentanyl and other deadly drugs trafficked into the United States," the Treasury said in a press release.

Guzman Lopez, according to the Treasury, is responsible for overseeing different aspects of the Sinaloa Cartel's vast drug trafficking network.

All four members of Los Chapitos, which includes Guzman Lopez and his three other siblings, already have indictments on US federal drug trafficking charges in one or more jurisdictions in the United States, the release said.

The Sinaloa Cartel smuggles multi-tons of illegal drugs into the United States, including fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine, the release said.

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US Urges World Health Organization to Allow Taiwan to Observe Annual Meeting - Blinken

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The United States urges the World Health Organization (WHO) to allow Taiwan to participate in its decision-making body's annual meeting, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

The WHO's World Health Assembly (WHA) will hold its annual meeting May 21-30 in Geneva,

Switzerland, to discuss global public health priorities.

"We strongly encourage the WHO to invite Taiwan to participate as an observer at this year's WHA meeting so it may lend its expertise to the discussions," Blinken said in a statement.

Inviting Taiwan as an observer would exemplify WHO's commitment to an inclusive approach to international health cooperation, the statement said.

Taiwan is a "highly capable, engaged and responsible" member of the global health community and has been invited to participate as an observer in previous WHA meetings, the statement also said.

The United States will continue to advocate for Taiwan's return to an observer at the WHA, as well as its participation throughout the United Nations system, the statement added.

The United States support for Taiwan's participation in appropriate international fora is consistent with its One China policy and other US-China-Taiwan relational standards, according to the statement.

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Lockheed Martin Making Next Generation Missile Defense Command, Control System - Statement

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin is creating a next generation upgrade for the Missile Defense Agency's (MDA) integrated command, control and battle management systems, the company announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"Lockheed Martin, the lead contractor for the MDA Command and Control, Battle Management and Communications (C2BMC), is developing next generation technology that aims to further upgrade the system," the release said.

Lockheed Martin plans to enhance C2BMC networking, data analysis and recommended actions through the integration of hypersonic defense, ballistic missile defense and cruise missile indication and warning, the release said.

"As part of Lockheed Martin's 21st Century Security vision, C2BMC delivers unparalleled speed, accuracy and coordination among partner and ally systems," the release added.

C2BMC is currently operationally-fielded across 17 time zones in 33 locations with more than 48,000 miles of communication lines that combine all sensors and threat data into a single missile defense architecture, according to the release.

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Trudeau Says Canada 'Will Not be Intimidated' by China in Latest Diplomats Expulsion Row

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday that Canada "will not be intimidated" by China after Beijing decided to expel Ottawa's Consul to

Shanghai in reciprocity for declaring persona non grata a Chinese consular official in Toronto. Earlier today, the Chinese government said that in a tit for tat move, it had decided to expel Canada's Consul to Shanghai Jennifer Lynn Lalonde.

"This is a decision we took seriously, that we took with careful consideration in order to do the right thing and expel the Chinese diplomat. We understand there is retaliation, but we will not be intimidated. We will continue to do everything necessary to keep Canadians protected from foreign interference," Trudeau said from Parliament Hill.

Trudeau noted the decision was made after considering the potential economic repercussions of retaliation from Beijing, but that the government decided to go forth with the move as it was the "responsible" thing to do, and that Canada would stand up for its "values and principles."

Yesterday, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that Ottawa had decided after "careful consideration" that it would move to expel Zhao Wei over his alleged involvement in an intimidation campaign on Conservative Lawmaker Michael Chong after he sponsored a motion accusing Beijing of genocide against Uighurs.

The decision was met with strong condemnation from the Chinese embassy in Canada, which had vowed to take countermeasures over the move, which was seen by the diplomatic mission as a violation of international law and bilateral agreements.

Sino-Canadian relations have considerably worsened in the past years, notably, since China imprisoned the two Michaels (Spavor and Kovrig) on espionage charges, a move seen as politically motivated in Ottawa, and Beijing's response to the detention of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou.

In addition, the Canadian media and political establishments have been increasingly targeting Beijing and its embassy in Ottawa over their alleged meddling in the country's elections of 2019 and 2021, accusations repeatedly denied by Chinese Ambassador Cong Peiwu.

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NATO Members Risk to Replace Dependency on Russia With One on China - Geoana

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - NATO member states risk replacing the dependency on Russian natural resources with dependency on China in terms of critical supply chains, Deputy Secretary-General Mircea Geoana said on Tuesday.

"We should be aware of the fact that we risk now to replace one dependency on Russian natural resources with another dependency on China on many critical supply chains," Geoana said during a discussion hosted by the Atlantic Council.

The deputy secretary-general underscored that NATO members should be very careful and pay special attention to not create any dependencies on China in the national security area.

Geoana also said that the alliance's member states in Eastern Europe should be more proactive in reaching out to their Western allies, including the United States, to make sure they are included in ongoing reshoring efforts.

Earlier in May, the EU statistical office Eurostat said that imposing sanctions against Russia along with adopting green energy policies resulted in a 61% decrease in Russian fuel shipments

to Europe in 2022.

After Russia began its special military operation in Ukraine, the West actively searched for ways to limit Moscow's energy-related income, notably from oil and gas. Moreover, the Ukraine conflict also stopped the flow of Russian gas to Europe, which led to a spike in energy prices and shortages, forcing countries to look for alternatives, in particular, the United States and its liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports.

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US Announces \$1.2Bln in New Military Aid for Ukraine - Pentagon

(Updates with a background in para 4)

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The United States will provide \$1.2 billion in new military aid for Ukraine to bolster its air defenses and sustain its artillery ammunition needs, the Department of Defense said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Today, the Department of Defense (DoD) announced a new security assistance package to reaffirm the steadfast U.S. support for Ukraine, including bolstering its air defenses and sustaining its artillery ammunition needs. This package, which totals up to \$1.2 billion, is being provided under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI)," the statement said.

The package includes additional air defense systems and munitions; equipment to integrate Western air defense launchers, missiles, and radars with Ukraine's air defense systems; ammunition for counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems; 155mm artillery rounds; commercial satellite imagery services; and support for training, maintenance and sustainment activities.

According to US officials, the provision of security assistance under the USAI authority means that the security equipment will not be drawn directly from the Defense Department stocks, but will be procured from respective manufacturers and the process may take up to several months.

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US, Cote d'Ivoire Host Over 40 African Land Forces Chiefs for Summit in Abidjan - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) – The United States and Cote D'Ivoire are hosting more than 40 land force chiefs from Africa for a summit in Abidjan, the Pentagon said on Tuesday.

"On behalf of the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, the summit brings together over 40 land force chiefs from across Africa, other partner nations, academic thought leaders, and government officials for candid dialogue to discuss and develop cooperative solutions to shared challenges," the statement said.

The summit runs from May 8-12.

On May 9, participants observed a demonstration by the Ivorian Armed Forces at the International Academy for the Fight Against Terrorism.

The summit will also see plenary sessions focused on fostering cooperation between senior

military leaders from the US and African countries, the Pentagon added.

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Clashes Impact Political Progress in Sudan Despite Earlier Positive Momentum - UN Official

UNITED NATIONS, May 9 (Sputnik) - Fighting in Sudan may significantly impact the chance for achieving political progress on border and other issues despite the positive momentum created earlier, Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, assistant to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said on Tuesday.

"Despite the positive momentum created earlier in the reporting period, the outbreak of violence in the Sudan may deeply impact the chance for political progress on Abyei and border issues," Pobee said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

Despite the deteriorated situation, the United Nations will continue its support for Sudan and South Sudan, Pobee added.

On April 15, violent clashes broke out between the Sudanese military and the so-called rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum and its vicinity. The military accused the RSF of mutiny and issued a decree disbanding the RSF while launching strikes against its bases. The parties have since introduced a number of temporary nationwide ceasefires but the conflict has not been settled yet.

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US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides to Resign for Personal Reasons - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides has informed the Biden administration that he will be resigning for personal reasons this summer, Axios reported on Tuesday, citing US officials.

Nides, a former Morgan Stanley executive, informed Secretary of State Antony Blinken and White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan of his plans to step down during a working visit to Washington last week, the report said.

Nides is expected to be replaced as acting charge d'affaires by his current deputy chief of mission Stephanie Hallett, a veteran Department of State diplomat with extensive experience in other Middle East countries, Axios said.

The ambassador in recent months delivered tough messages from Washington to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about his government's plans to strip oversight powers from the country's Supreme Court, a move that has provoked continuing protests by hundreds of thousands of Israelis, the report noted.

Nides was close to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and served as her deputy secretary

of state for management and resources during the first Obama administration.

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Texas Mall Shooter Purportedly Posted Ties to Nazi, 'Incel' Beliefs - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The gunman who killed eight people and wounded at least seven others in a shooting at a mall in the US state of Texas over the weekend purportedly expressed to Nazi and so-called incel beliefs online, CNN reported on Tuesday.

On Saturday, 33-year-old Mauricio Garcia killed eight people and hospitalized seven others during a shooting at a shopping mall in Allen, Texas, located approximately 25 miles north of Dallas. Police killed Garcia at the scene of the shooting.

An account discovered on the Russian social media site Odnoklassniki included posts with identifying information linked to Garcia, as well as posts displaying an interest in Nazism and the "involuntarily celibate" movement, the report said, citing law enforcement sources.

The account posted several receipts and an airline ticket with Garcia's name, along with a matching birthdate, the report said. The account also shared an image from Google Maps dated a few weeks before the shooting that showed what times the mall was busiest, the report said.

Investigators believe the account, which goes by the username "PsycoVision5," belonged to Garcia, a law enforcement source reportedly said.

The account listed no friends or groups, indicating it may have been used as a personal diary, Bellingcat researcher Aric Toler reportedly said. However, the posts are accessible to anyone with an account on the site, the report said.

The account posted on the day of the shooting, claiming that psychiatric care would not be "able to fix" their problems, the report said. The account also posted pictures of various firearms, the report said.

In addition, the account posted a photo of a shirtless man with a swastika tattoo over his heart, although it is unclear whether the man is Garcia, the report said.

Garcia wore a patch with the acronym RWDS, meaning "Right-Wing Death Squad," during the shooting, a law enforcement source reportedly said. The account also echoed the "replacement theory" that alleges a conspiracy to reduce the white population, the report said.

Moreover, the account self-identified in some posts as an incel, complaining about family members who "mocked" attempts to be more masculine, the report said.

Garcia entered the US Army after graduating high school in 2008, Army spokesperson Heather Hagan reportedly said. Garcia was terminated after three months, prior to completing basic training, due to concerns about his mental health, a law enforcement source also said.

Authorities have yet to announce their theory on a possible motive for the shooting, the report noted.

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

Boeing Says Ryanair Orders Up to 300 737 MAX Airplanes

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The Irish low-cost air carrier Ryanair has ordered up to 300 737 MAX aircraft, Boeing said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Boeing [NYSE: BA] and Ryanair announced Europe's leading low-cost airline has selected the largest 737 MAX model to power its future growth with an order for up to 300 airplanes," the statement said.

The deal is the biggest in Ryanair's history and includes a firm order for 150 Boeing 737-10 airplanes with an option to purchase an additional 150 jets, the statement said.

Ryanair uses Boeing's 737-NG airplanes and the addition of the 737 MAX jets will provide the company additional capacity, the statement said.

Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary said the new, fuel efficient, greener technology aircraft offer 21% more seats, burn 20% less fuel and are 50% quieter than 737-NG airplanes.

"We expect half of this order will replace older NGs while the remaining 150 aircraft will facilitate controlled, sustainable growth to just over 300m guests per annum by 2034," O'Leary said in the statement.

The deal will enable an additional 10,000 jobs to be created, the statement said.

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Biden to Make First Trip by US President to Papua New Guinea After G7 Summit - White House

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden will travel to Papua New Guinea following the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Japan later this month, marking the first time a sitting US president has visited any Pacific Island country, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. will make a historic stop in Papua New Guinea while traveling from the G7 Leaders' Summit in Hiroshima, Japan to the Quad Leaders' Summit in Sydney, Australia later this month," Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

Biden will meet with Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape and other Pacific Island Forum leaders to follow up on the US-Pacific Island Summit held in Washington last autumn, the statement said.

The leaders will discuss ways to deepen cooperation on areas including climate change and economic growth, the statement said.

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Discussion Underway to Open NATO Liaison Office in Japan - Ambassador to US

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Discussions about opening a NATO liaison office in Japan are ongoing, but no final decision has been made, Japanese Ambassador to the United States Koji Tomita said on Tuesday.

"I understand there has been discussion taking place, you know, how to strengthen our partnership with NATO," Tomita said at a US National Press Club event, when asked whether he can confirm reports of NATO seeking to open a liaison office in Japan. "The point you mentioned is one of the things that we are working on, to strengthen our partnership but I really have not heard any final confirmation of that but we are working in that direction."

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Two-Thirds of Americans Say Abortion Pill Should Remain on Market - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) – Two-thirds of Americans believe that the abortion pill mifepristone should continue to stay on the market, a Washington Post-ABC poll revealed on Tuesday.

Twenty-four percent, however, said the drug should be taken off the market.

About half, 47%, think that access to the pill should remain as is. However, 12% see the need for more restrictions.

In April, US District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk suspended the federal license for mifepristone, which has been on the US market for more than 20 years. However, the US Supreme Court rejected the ruling. Mifepristone is approved to at least some degree in 94 countries.

The survey also showed that two-thirds of Americans oppose the Supreme Court's decision to remove the constitutional right to an abortion. Fifty-four percent oppose it "strongly." Liberals and Democrats express the strongest opposition, 86% and 82%, respectively, according to the findings.

The poll was conducted over the telephone from April 28-May 3 among 1,006 adults.

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US Announces \$1.2Bln in New Military Aid for Ukraine - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) – The United States will provide \$1.2 billion in new military aid for Ukraine to bolster its air defenses and sustain its artillery ammunition needs, the Pentagon said on Tuesday.

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under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI)," the statement said.

The package includes additional air defense systems and munitions; equipment to integrate Western air defense launchers, missiles, and radars with Ukraine's air defense systems; ammunition for counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems; 155mm artillery rounds; commercial satellite imagery services; and support for training, maintenance, and sustainment activities.

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Fewer Than 40% of Americans Have Confidence in US Economic Leaders – Poll

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) – Fewer than 40% of Americans have confidence in major US economic leaders in the face of a looming deadline to increase the nation's debt limit and the threat of an economic recession, according to a Gallup poll published on Tuesday.

"Gallup finds between 34% and 38% of U.S. adults expressing a 'great deal' or 'fair amount' of confidence in President Joe Biden, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and congressional leaders in both major parties to do or recommend the right thing for the economy," the pollster said.

The Republican leaders in Congress top the list with 38% of Americans having a "great deal" or "fair amount" of confidence in them. They are followed by Yellen (37%), Powell (36%), Biden (35%) and the Democratic leaders in Congress (34%).

"Confidence in all leaders is at least marginally lower than a year ago, including significant declines for Biden and Powell," the poll said, noting that the two lost 5 and 7 percentage points, respectively.

Along partisan lines, 77% of Democrats are confident about Biden, while 67% and 60% have confidence in Yellen and Powell, respectively. Only 5% of Republicans said they have confidence in the president when it comes to the economy.

The poll was conducted from April 3-25, among 1,013 adults from all 50 US states and the District of Columbia.

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UK Prepares to Send Long-Range Missiles to Ukraine - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The United Kingdom appears poised to supply Ukraine with long-range missiles, the weapons Kiev has long sought and the Biden administration has declined to provide, The Washington Post reported, citing an International Fund for Ukraine (IFU) procurement notice.

The IFU is a funding mechanism administered by the UK's Defense Ministry to procure arms for Ukraine. The fund brings together the UK, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.

In a notice posted on May 2, the UK's Defense Ministry asked for "expressions of interest" in

providing strike capabilities with a range of up to 300 kilometers (nearly 200 miles), the report said on Monday.

No final decision has been made, a UK official told the newspaper, declining to confirm the type, timing or quantity of weapons in question.

The requested specifications and capabilities, however, closely match the UK's air-launched Storm Shadow cruise missiles, the report noted.

US intelligence also confirmed that the UK was planning to send Ukraine an unspecified number of Storm Shadow missiles, as well as UK personnel to assist in targeting, the report added, citing the recently leaked Pentagon documents.

The ability to strike "far behind Russia's front lines" would support Ukraine's expected counteroffensive, the report stated.

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RPT - Russian Diaspora in New York Visits WWII Veterans to Commemorate Victory Day - Activist

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Members of the Russian diaspora in the New York City area visited over 65 veterans of World War II to congratulate them ahead of the May 9 Victory Day holiday, President of the Russian Youth of America Igor Kochan told Sputnik.

Victory Day is a major Russian holiday that commemorates the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in 1945.

"We visited over 65 World War II veterans who still live in the New York tristate area. We were bringing them little gifts - chocolates, candies, a bottle of champagne, flowers," Kochan said.

He noted that this is just a small tribute for what these people have done for the whole world.

"Without them, without their heroism, there would not be us," he added.

About 25 people participated in the ceremony of laying flowers at the Cadman Plaza World War II Memorial in Brooklyn. A priest from the Russian Orthodox Church in the state of New Jersey served a memorable service.

Kochan said New York City authorities allowed the memorial walk, which the Russian diaspora is traditionally holding. However, organizers could not set it up because of technical reasons, he added.

Traditional picnic in commemoration of the Victory Day this time was organized with traditional dishes of soldiers' food, including canned pork prepared with the recipe of 1941, as well as with dances and songs of war time.

"We were singing songs of that period, danced, people shared their memories of their relatives who served in World War II," Kochan said.

He also said similar events were going on around the entire United States, including Seattle, Chicago and other American cities.

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

RPT - US, Russia Have to Remember They Were Allies, Can Be Allies Again - Veteran

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The United States and Russia have to remember that they were allies during World War II and can restore their historic partnership again, US war veteran Frank Cohn told Sputnik.

"While it is probably a false hope, I am an optimist and I hang onto the time when things looked bright for all of us - back in May 1945. Yes, there was terrible devastation all around us, but the spirit was correct. We were going to go forward and repair the world, we were allies, we were friends," Cohn said.

The 97-year-old retired US Army colonel said it is his obligation to remind people about those times when the United States, Russia, along with the United Kingdom and France, were on the same side and fought Nazism.

"Now, I go and participate to bring back that moment. It is not an easy thing to do at my age, but I must do it as long as I can, because someone young might catch that simmering glow of a short-lived peaceful world surrounded with friendship and in remembrance, perhaps years far in the future, say with the political power that he or she might have attained: 'We can do this again!'" he said.

Cohn, along with three other US World War II veterans - George Arnstein, Dixon Hemphill and Harry Miller - participated in the ceremony at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, located just several blocks from the White House.

In April 1945, Cohn was one of the US soldiers who was part of the historic meeting with their Soviet allies at the Elbe River in Germany.

Cohn emphasized the necessity of keeping the lessons that were learned in World War II, but expressed concern about them slipping away.

"On our side, we find upticks in antisemitism and other hate against minorities and even an attempted coup against our democratically elected government," he said.

Cohn also said there was no need for Russia to start the special military operation in Ukraine given that it has plenty of territory.

In addition, Cohn pointed out that the Cold War started soon after the world achieved peace in 1945.

"The lessons of the Cold War have also been forgotten since we find ourselves in another cold war - and if we are not careful on either side, this could break out into a hot war, which neither side could survive, considering the new weapons presently at our disposal," he said.

Cohn noted that the period of friendship between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1945, when the two sides were brothers-in-arms, was very short.

"There are probably only a few of us left, on both sides, who have retained that memory," he said.

The United States and its European allies are commemorating the 78th anniversary of defeating Nazi Germany on May 8. Since the document on Germany's unconditional surrender was signed in 1945 when the new day had already begun in Moscow, Russia and almost all of the former Soviet republics celebrate Victory Day on May 9.

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California Regulator Admits Underestimating Risk of SVB's 'Unusually' Rapid Growth

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - A California regulator in a self-review said it failed to adequately assess the risks of the unusually rapid rise of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) before the financial institution collapsed, and vowed to look more closely at entities with over \$50 billion in assets.

SVB, the first of three major US banks to collapse within two months, saw deposits rise 220% since Q1 2020, far surpassing the industry average growth rate of 25%, according to a Capital Advisors Group analysis.

"SVB's unusually rapid growth was not sufficiently accounted for in risk assessments," the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation (DFPI) said on Monday. "Although SVB had initiated remediation efforts, the regulators did not take adequate measures to ensure SVB did so with enough speed."

The DFPI, the report added, will review internal processes and ensure additional staff are assigned for banks with assets above \$50 billion in line with accelerated growth and increased risk profile.

New York's Signature Bank failed two days after the SVB collapse and First Republic Bank of San Francisco had to be rescued last week. In a review of the US banking crisis published last month, the Federal Reserve took the rare step of conceding that it was a catalyst of the problem, including by failing to see SVB vulnerabilities before it was too late.

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China Condemns Expulsion of Diplomat from Canada, Will take Countermeasures - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The Chinese embassy in Canada has issued a strong condemnation of Ottawa's decision to declare persona non grata a consular official and vows to take resolute countermeasures, the embassy spokesperson said in a statement.

"On 8th May, the Canadian side blatantly declared one consular official from the Chinese Consulate General in Toronto persona non grata based on rumors of the so-called 'China Interference' hyped up by some politicians and media. This has seriously violated international law, basic norms governing international relations and the related bilateral agreements and sabotaged the China-Canada relations. The Chinese side strongly condemns and firmly opposes this and has lodged stern protest with the Canadian side. The Chinese side will take resolute countermeasures and all consequences arising therefrom shall be borne by the Canadian side," the spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik on Monday.

The embassy urged Ottawa to refrain from further degrading bilateral relations noting that if

Canadian authorities act "wantonly and arbitrarily," Beijing will strongly react.

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Florida Governor Signs Law Limiting China Acquiring Land Near US Military Bases - Office

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed legislation that limits Chinese purchases of farm land or other land near US military bases, his office said in a press release.

"Today, Governor DeSantis signed three bills to counteract the malign influence of the Chinese Communist Party in the state of Florida...With the legislation signed today to limit Chinese purchases of agriculture land and land near military bases and critical infrastructure, to protect digital data from Chinese spies, and to root out Chinese influence in Florida's education system, Florida has once again taken the lead in protecting American interests from foreign threats and has provided a blueprint for other states to do the same," the release said on Monday.

Last week, the US Treasury Department's Office of Investment Security proposed a new rule that would require foreign individuals and companies to seek government approval to buy land near eight military bases in the United States, following an attempt by a Chinese firm to build a plant near an Air Force base. The proposed rule, published in the Federal Register, would require the US government to approve attempts by foreign entities to purchase property within 100 miles of eight military bases.

In September 2022, a group of US lawmakers sent a letter to the Biden administration expressing concerns about attempts by China-based manufacturer Fufeng Group to purchase land approximately 12 miles from Grand Forks Air Force Base in the state of North Dakota.

In February, the Grand Forks city government revoked support for the project after the Air Force claimed the plant posed a threat to national security. Fufeng officials have denied allegations that their proposed \$700 million wet corn milling plant would be used for espionage.

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One-Fifth of Asians Living in US Conceal Aspects of Their Culture - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - One-fifth of Asians living in the United States have concealed aspects of their culture and heritage from people who are not Asian due to various reasons, including for fear of discrimination, a new Pew Research Center poll revealed.

"Some of the details that Asian Americans choose not to share include ethnic food or clothing as well as cultural and religious practices," a release on the poll said on Monday. "When asked why they had hidden some aspects of their culture, Asian Americans mentioned a number of reasons from fear of being embarrassed to wanting to avoid awkward questions or having to explain themselves and even concern of potential discrimination."

About 30% of Asians born in the United States have hidden their culture, compared with 15% of Asian immigrants, the report said.

Younger Asian adults were more likely to hide their culture and about 39% in the 18 to 29 year-old bracket said they have done it, compared with 5% of Asians who are 65 and older, the release said.

Pew data shows that Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the United States with the fastest growth rate from 2000 to 2019. The Asian population grew 81% in those 19 years, from about 10.5 million to a record 18.9 million. Experts have said the number of Asians in the United States is projected to increase more to 35.8 million by 2060.

At present, Asians number 23 million in the United States and the community is marked by vast, ethnically and culturally rich background from more than 20 countries, the report said.

The six largest origin groups - Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese - account for 79% of all Asian Americans, the report said.

Nearly 90% of respondents said Asians in the United States have many different cultures while 9% said they believe they share a common culture, the report added.

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Sullivan Discusses Ukraine, NATO Membership With Swedish Counterpart - White House

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan during a visit in London discussed with his Swedish counterpart matters related to Ukraine and Sweden's ascent to NATO, the White House said in a press release.

"National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with National Security Advisor Henrik Landerholm of Sweden in London, United Kingdom," the release said on Monday. "Mr. Sullivan reiterated the United States' strong support for Sweden joining NATO as soon as possible. Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Landerholm reviewed the security situation in Europe, including their commitment to continue supporting Ukraine in the face of Russia's ongoing aggression."

Sullivan and Landerholm also discussed ways both countries can further cooperate on shared global challenges.

On Saturday, Unal Cevikoz, a foreign policy adviser to Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the presidential candidate from the Turkish opposition alliance, said that the Turkish opposition plans to approve Sweden's NATO bid before the alliance's summit in Vilnius in July, if it wins the upcoming elections in Turkey.

Sweden, together with Finland, submitted its NATO bid in May 2022, several months after Russia launched a military operation in Ukraine. Finland's application has been ratified by all 30 members of the alliance. Sweden's bid is still pending approval by Hungary and Turkey, with the accession process stalled due to the recent Quran-burning protests in Stockholm.

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Shaken But Not Shattered: Federal Reserve's View of US Financial Stability

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Worries about inflation and interest rate hikes form the biggest concerns about financial stability in the United States, with a new crisis of confidence in banks adding to the anxiety, the Federal Reserve said in its Financial Stability Report.

"A financial system is considered stable when banks, other lenders, and financial markets are able to provide households, communities, and businesses with the financing they need to invest, grow, and participate in a well-functioning economy - and can do so even when hit by adverse events, or 'shocks,'" the report said on Monday. "Frequently cited topics in this survey included persistent inflation and tighter monetary policy, banking-sector stress, commercial and residential real estate and geopolitical tensions."

The report was previously published by the Fed in November before the implosion about two months ago of several prominent mid-sized banks, including Silicon Valley Bank, which was an important funding source for technology companies.

In a review of the banking crisis published last month, the Fed took the rare step of admitting much blame for being the catalyst for the problem. The central bank's supervisors did not fully appreciate the extent of the vulnerabilities as Silicon Valley Bank grew in size and complexity, the review said. When supervisors did identify vulnerabilities, they did not take sufficient steps to ensure that Silicon Valley Bank fixed those problems quickly enough, it added.

In the latest Financial Stability Report, which surveyed market experts, economists, academics and others, the Fed said it found confidence in the US banking system shaken but not shattered.

"Overall, the banking sector remained resilient, with substantial loss-absorbing capacity," the report said. "Policy interventions by the Federal Reserve and other agencies helped mitigate these strains and limit the potential for further stress."

Still, the central bank identified several sectors of the economy as having elevated potential for trouble. These include money market funds, stablecoins and hedge funds, particularly of the larger kind. Leverage is also generally low across household and business debt, including commercial real estate, the Fed said.

In a separate survey of senior loan officers at US banks, the Fed said it saw tighter lending standards in the wake of the banking crisis, which could lay the path for lower credit demand.

Lending officers at banks voiced concerns about deposit outflows, a weakening economy and reduced liquidity. Commercial and industrial loans, along with lending to commercial real estate, were likely points of significant stress, it added.

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Iran Used Earthquake Aid Conveys to Smuggle Weapons Into Syria - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Iran has used humanitarian aid shipments to disguise the smuggling of weapons and military equipment into Syria during the aftermath of February's earthquake, CNN reported, citing US and Israeli defense officials.

The information suggests that the Quds Force, a faction of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) specializing in unconventional warfare, used convoys headed from Iraq to surreptitiously transport arms and ammunition into Syria to aid Iranian proxy groups in the country, the report said.

The information, obtained after a leak of classified US intelligence by Air National Guardsman Jack Teixeira, suggests that Iran may have been smuggling small arms, ammunition and drones in Syria to attack the US troops there, the report said, citing an earlier article by the Washington Post.

The US has approximately 900 troops stationed in Syria as part of an ongoing effort to defeat the Islamic State terror group (outlawed in Russia).

The Syrian government has said the US forces are in Syria illegally and are stealing the country's oil and other natural resources.

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US Extends National Emergency on Syria for Another Year, Sanctions Remain - White House

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden extended for another year the US national emergency declared with respect to Syria, maintaining sanctions against Syrian President Bashar Assad's government, the White House said in a press release.

"Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency declared with respect to the actions of the Government of Syria," Biden said in the release on Monday.

Biden extended the US national emergency on Syria a few days after Syria returned to the Arab League.

On Sunday, the Arab League states' foreign ministers announced that Syria, whose membership was suspended in 2011, would return to the organization.

The 22-nation Arab League suspended Syria's membership in 2011 after war broke out in the country. Several member states then recalled their ambassadors from Syria in protest of Assad's policies, accusing his government of cracking down on protesters in the country. More recently, some of those nations have begun taking steps to reengage with Syria and reopen their respective embassies.