

**5/30/23 Tuesday**

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Photo: Astronomers Spot Erupting Water Geysers on Saturn's Moon Enceladus

Although most of the solar system's planets and moons are inhospitable places, a handful of worlds have been selected by astronomers as likely candidates for hosting life. Two of Saturn's moons, Titan and Enceladus, are on the list, despite their great distance from the Sun. Astronomers watching Saturn's moon Enceladus have made a rare discovery: a huge plume of water vapor erupting from its south pole. The geyser was reported to be more than 6,000 miles high, pumping an Olympic-sized swimming pool's worth of water into space in a couple of hours. Enceladus' water geysers are not themselves news: they have long been known to be the source of Saturn's diffuse E ring, the outermost of its famous ring system. However, this was the largest such eruption ever observed by humans. The plume was spotted in photos of the moon taken by the James Webb space telescope (JWST) last November.

"We were really impressed [by] how big and extended it was," said study co-author Geronimo Villanueva, a planetary scientist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. "We were not sure what to expect."

Enceladus is not the solar system's largest moon by any standard. At just 310 miles across, it's just 14% the size of Earth's moon. However, it's considered one of the prime candidates for hosting life because of its icy surface and liquid water ocean beneath. That ocean is believed to be six miles deep, as salty as the Dead Sea, and mixed with ammonia - all of which contribute to its liquid state, which only exists beneath some 25 miles of ice.

Its icy surface causes it to reflect most of the solar rays that strike it, giving it a surface temperature of just -198 degrees Celsius (-324 Fahrenheit).

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Beijing Vows to Put Taikonauts on Moon by 2030

China's space program has been a key part of the socialist country's high-tech revolution, with the government investing heavily in the myriad industries necessary to support space travel. In turn, a new generation of satellites has buttressed its rapidly growing economy as well as its military prowess.

Lin Xiqiang, the deputy director of the Chinese Manned Space Agency (MSA), told reporters on Tuesday that China would prepare for a "short stay on the lunar surface and human-robotic joint exploration" before 2030.

"The overall goals are to realize China's first manned landing on the moon before 2030, carry out scientific exploration and related technological demonstrations on the lunar surface, develop a commutation and short-term stay system for crews, and develop human-robot integrated testing and other key technologies," Lin said.

"Our astronauts will walk on the moon, collect samples around the landing site and perform some in-situ research. This will lead off our manned missions from low-Earth orbit to deep space and help deepen mankind's knowledge about the origin and evolution of the moon and the solar system," he added.

The announcement came as the MSA chalked up another accomplishment: launching its first civilian taikonaut into space. Gui Haichao blasted off with two other taikonauts on the [Shenzhou-16 mission](#) from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center early Tuesday. Unlike his crewmates, Jing Haipeng and Zhu Yangzhu, Gui is not enlisted in the People's Liberation Army's Astronaut Corps, he is an aerospace engineer and University of Beijing professor. The taikonauts will spend six months doing research on China's new Tiangong space station, being replaced in October by the Shenzhou-17 crew.

China's space program, which began with a satellite launch in 1970 and first saw a manned space mission in 2003, has leaped forward in recent years.

Tiangong is the country's third space station and by far its largest, and it has [sent robotics missions](#) to the moon and to Mars, including a first for humanity: putting a rover on the far side of the moon.

Its ambitions for manned missions to the moon have long been stated, although the timeline for them has been pushed back by snags such as problems with the Long March-5 Y2 rocket.

China isn't the only country that's pledged to put humans back on the moon: Russia's Roscosmos [has also pledged](#) to put cosmonauts on the lunar surface by 2030, and the United States has begun [testing its Orion](#) spacecraft for manned lunar missions. The US space agency NASA has said it hopes to return to the moon by 2025 at the earliest. All three countries have announced plans for permanently inhabited bases on the moon.

To date, only 12 humans have set foot on the lunar surface - all of them American, the last of whom visited our only natural satellite in 1972. The Soviet Union had plans for manned lunar missions, but its program also hit snags and was eventually canceled.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Elon Musk Tells Chinese FM Qin Gang He Opposes 'Decoupling' US From Beijing

At a meeting in Beijing on Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang sought to emphasize the nation's openness to foreign investors and Tesla CEO Elon Musk said his electric carmaker would continue to expand operations in China, the world's largest EV market.

"China will continue to unswervingly promote a high level of opening up to the outside world and is committed to creating a better market-oriented, rule of law and internationalized business environment for enterprises from all countries, including Tesla," Qin said, according to a ministry statement.

He added that "Chinese-style modernization," characterized by a huge population and "common prosperity" will create "unprecedented growth potential and market demand."

Qin, who until December was China's ambassador in Washington, spoke directly to the growing antagonism between the US and China as Washington continues to pursue what it calls "great power competition" with Russia and China. The foreign minister adopted the apt analogy of a car on the road for US-China relations.

"We need to keep the steering wheel in the right direction of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation," Qin Gang told Musk, adding that "we must also put the brakes on in time to avoid dangerous driving maneuvers."

Musk told Qin he opposed the US policy of "decoupling" from the Chinese economy through a legion of tariffs, blacklists, and other barriers to open trade. Earlier this month, Musk also compared China and the global economy to "conjoined twins," warning that attempting to separate them could be catastrophic for both.

After their meeting, Musk is expected to travel to Shanghai to visit Tesla's Gigafactory, its first overseas manufacturing plant for electric vehicles (EVs). Last month, he announced Tesla would also [construct a Superfactory](#) in Shanghai for making EV batteries.

China is the world's largest market for EVs, with nearly 6 million being sold in 2022 - almost double the previous year. Beijing has [set ambitious goals](#) for converting the majority of cars on the road from petroleum-powered to electric-powered or fuel cell-powered by 2035 alongside a wider push to convert heating and cooking in millions of homes from petroleum to electric, all in an attempt to mitigate the pollution causing climate change.

As a consequence, China's EV market is white-hot, with Tesla being [just one company among several](#) vying to be the choice of Chinese buyer.

After news of the Musk-Qin meeting broke, US markets reacted positively, with Tesla's stock increasing by nearly 5% on Tuesday.

Last week, Musk got praise from Beijing and aroused fury in Taipei for saying there was a "certain inevitability" to Taiwan's reunification with mainland China. The island has been autonomous since the end of the civil war in 1949 (when the People's Republic of China was established in Beijing) with the US funneling them weapons and aid sufficient to safeguard their autonomy. However, Beijing has laid out a plan for its eventual reintegration into the PRC under a "One Country, Two Systems" arrangement.

"The official policy of China is that Taiwan should be integrated," Musk told US media in a May 16 interview. "One does not need to read between the lines. One can simply read the lines. There's a certain inevitability to the situation."

Last October, Musk also laid out a peace plan for the Taiwan Strait, saying China should give Taiwan a "special administrative zone" that is "more lenient" than that given to Hong Kong when it was reintegrated into the PRC in 1997 after over a century of being a British colony. He conceded that it "probably won't make everyone happy."

Their meeting comes amid another attempt to sort out some economic disputes between the two superpowers: Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao [traveled to the US](#) last week to meet with US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, the latter of whom is of Chinese descent.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

### Up to One-Third of Planets in Small Stars' 'Goldilocks' Zones Could be Habitable

A new study has found that as many as one-third of planets found around the smallest type of star are likely to be able to host life.

Around each star in space, there is a distance at which the surface temperature on a planet is most likely to have water in a liquid state - that is, between 1 and 100 degrees Celsius - on its surface. Any planet orbiting at this distance, which is known as the "Goldilocks" zone because, like the temperature of the soup from the fairy tale, its conditions are "just right," would be capable of supporting life, assuming certain other factors don't also appear to create chaos. The bigger and brighter the star, the further that distance is, and the smaller and dimmer the star is, the closer this "Goldilocks" zone is to its surface. For the smallest stars, like brown dwarf stars, that is so close that other astrophysical issues can come into play.

According to new research by a group of University of Florida astronomers, that's likely the case on as many as two-thirds of planets found at that distance from their star. [Their research](#) is published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

That close to their star, planets are at risk of being subjected to extreme tidal forces by the star's immense gravitational pull. It could cause earthquakes or volcanic eruptions and it could even cause the planet to become tidally "locked," with one side always facing the star and the other side always facing away. In addition, the planet could be bombarded with powerful solar winds and bursts from its surface. Life would likely not be able to develop in such environments, despite existing in the "Goldilocks" zone.

Still, that means one-third of planets existing in that zone would be more stable, perhaps stable enough for life to evolve.

"I think this result is really important for the next decade of exoplanet research, because eyes are shifting toward this population of stars," said UF doctoral student Sheila Sagar, who co-authored the report. "These stars are excellent targets to look for small planets in an orbit where it's conceivable that water might be liquid and therefore the planet might be habitable." Pulling on data from the Kepler telescope designed to spot exoplanets, Sagar and UF astronomy professor Sarah Ballard looked at a sample of more than 150 planets orbiting the smallest type of star - the brown dwarf. Also called "failed stars," these stellar objects are a little bigger than Jupiter but have 13 to 80 times the mass; still they lack sufficient mass to trigger nuclear fusion of hydrogen atoms into helium, which powers main-sequence stars like our own, and instead produce less heat and light by fusing deuterium and lithium.

The duo looked at the eccentricities of planets orbiting those stars, since their habitable zone is so small that even slight deviations can cause devastating instabilities in climate.

"It's only for these small stars that the zone of habitability is close enough for these tidal forces to be relevant," Ballard said.

While the discovery opens up huge numbers of worlds to potential habitation by life, there's still a lot of [really weird planets](#) out there where life could never survive.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

#### North Korea Launches Alleged 'Space Launch Vehicle' to Counter Regional Threats

Japan previously warned that any launch from North Korea that violates its territory would be met with "destructive measures," with Japanese Prime Minister urging global leaders that any launch by Pyongyang is a "serious violation" to UN resolutions and a threat to Japan.

North Korea reportedly fired what is believed to be a "space launch vehicle" early Wednesday, prompting a string of sirens and emergency alerts to sound off in neighboring South Korea and Japan.

Citing South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, South Korean media reported the projectile traveled over the Yellow Sea but did not affect Seoul city, despite earlier warnings being triggered for the metropolitan area.

An early analysis of the launch indicates the projectile disappeared from radar tracking before it reached its "expected drop point," South Korea media reported, adding that the launch was conducted out of the Tongchang-ri area.

Emergency warnings calling for individuals to seek shelter had been earlier issued for residents in Japan's Okinawa region and Seoul; however, it was later reported by US media that the warning issued for Seoul had been done in "error."

Since-surfaced video footage captured sirens sounding off in both countries.

Preliminary reports suggested the launch was that of a ballistic missile before it was determined it was likely that of the "space launch vehicle" Pyongyang had earlier hinted at in response to ongoing regional threats from the US and its allies.

An unidentified source has relayed to media that officials are presently investigating the possibility that the space vehicle may have either crashed or exploded midair.

An emergency national security meeting has since been called by the South Korean government.

The launch comes after North Korea informed Japan and the International Maritime Organization on Monday that it planned to launch a reconnaissance satellite between May 31 and June 11.

Earlier, the US, Japan and South Korea held phone talks over Pyongyang's plan to put a satellite into orbit. Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada ordered to shoot down the rocket if it poses a threat to the country's territory.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

#### Photo: North Korea Vows New Satellite Launch as Seoul Recovers Suspected Rocket Debris

Prior to the launch, North Korea issued a warning that it would be launching a reconnaissance satellite in response to ongoing military drills begin carried out near the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea vowed Wednesday to conduct a second satellite launch after engine issues forced its earlier effort to crash into the sea.

State media specified the launch's demise was the result of a technical issue that took place when the second stage of the rocket failed to ignite and prompted the projectile to lose power and fall into the Yellow Sea.

"The new satellite vehicle rocket, Chollima-1, crashed into the West Sea as it lost propulsion due to an abnormal startup of the engine on the 2nd stage after the 1st stage was separated during normal flight," state media detailed.

Officials have underscored that a second launch would be held "in the nearest future" once authorities are able to correct the tech issue. South Korean military has suggested a launch would be undertaken sometime before June 11, as previously timelined by North Korea.

A spokesperson of North Korea's space agency said the launch mishap was believed to be caused by the lack of reliability and stability of the new engine system implemented in the Chollima-1 rocket and the instability of the fuel used, state media reported.

The launch, which took place at about 6:27 a.m. local time, was intended to deploy the Malligyong-1 military reconnaissance satellite as part of North Korea's larger effort to combat regional threats.

North Korea previously detailed that it would be carrying out said launch but that it would be conducted between May 31 and June 11.

Earlier Tuesday, the launch triggered a series of emergency alert systems and sirens in Japan and South Korea as residents of both nations were urged to seek shelter. However, not long after initial reports were aired, the South Korean Interior Ministry admitted to having issued warnings in Seoul in "error."

Since the launch, several parties - including the US, Japan and South Korea - have condemned the act.

"The United States strongly condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) for its launch using ballistic missile technology, which is a brazen violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions, raises tensions, and risks destabilizing the security situation in the region and beyond," National Security Council spokesperson Adam Hodge said in a statement, claiming the satellite launch appeared to use tech tied to Pyongyang's intercontinental ballistic missile program.

Echoing actions currently being taken by Japan and South Korea, the Biden White House has indicated it will be monitoring the situation.

"The door has not closed on diplomacy but Pyongyang must immediately cease its provocative actions and instead choose engagement," Hodge said. "The United States will take all necessary measures to ensure the security of the American homeland and the defense of our Republic of Korea and Japanese allies."

#### Debris Recovery

Hours after the incident was reported, the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff reported its forces were working to extract a suspected part of a North Korean rocket detected in the waters of the Yellow Sea.

"Today, on May 31, around 8:05 a.m. [local time, 23:05 GMT on Tuesday], the South Korean military identified in the sea about 200 kilometers [124 miles] west of Eocheong Island

presumably a part of what North Korea claims to be a 'carrier rocket' and is raising it," the military said in a statement.

Photos of what's believed to be debris from the launch has since been shared by South Korea officials.

Citing South Korea military, local media has reported that the debris is suspected of being a structure that connected the first and second stage of the rocket.

Although searches of the region are ongoing, officials have stated an analysis will be forthcoming to determine whether any foreign parts were used in the rockets construction.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Video: Probe Launched After Pack of Teens Attack US Marines During Holiday Weekend

The brawl is said to have unfolded after one of the Marines asked the group of teens to stop lighting fireworks after he'd been struck with debris. Officials have yet to identify any of the teenaged fighters.

An investigation by local authorities was recently launched in Southern California after a massive fight involving several US Marines and a crowd of teenagers broke out over Memorial Day weekend.

The brawl broke out Friday between three off-duty US Marines and a mob of teenagers at California's San Clemente Pier.

A since-viral video shows one teenager punching the back of a Marines' head, prompting the service member to turn and charge his attacker. Within seconds, the mob of teens appears to swarm the Marine and violently attack him and two other Marines on the scene.

The teens attacking the Marines in the clip can be heard yelling "get his a\*\*", "get that f\*\*\*\*\*" and "what's good n\*\*\*\*\*." In the clip, the Marines also appear to be curled in a fetal position while the mob attacks them.

Video footage of the incident shows the mob eventually stopping the attack after what appears to be two adults, one woman and one man, intervening and screaming for the attackers to end hostilities.

A [statement](#) released by the Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) confirms "several Marines" and "numerous juveniles and young adults" were involved in the Friday altercation. "Our deputies arrived on scene and investigated the incident. OCFA was on scene but all victims refused medical assistance," the release notes.

"The Orange County Sheriff's Department will continue investigating this matter until all individuals responsible are identified and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Deputies have increased patrol checks in and around the SC Pier area for the public's continued safety."

The OCSD believe at least 10 to 30 teenagers and young adults were involved in the attack.

"This is considered an assault with a deadly weapon because of the amount of suspects," Sergeant Frank [Gonzalez](#) explained to local media.

Hunter Antonino, one of the attacked Marines, claims he and his group were enjoying their time off, and had asked the teens to stop lighting fireworks after a piece of debris hit him in the face.

“They were being belligerent, they were being obnoxious and annoying other people, so I went up to them and told them to stop,” he explained, adding that he believes he may have a concussion.

The identities of those who attacked the Marines has not yet been revealed.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

#### Emerald Green Venetian Canal Water Explained

The city’s famous canals were so jaw-droppingly green that they nearly resembled the Chicago River during a St. Patrick’s Day celebration.

Authorities in Italy have officially narrowed down their investigation into why the canals in Italy turned green over the weekend.

The bright, emerald hue was first spotted on Sunday morning by the Rialto bridge before it began to spread, the Regional Agency for the Environment in Venice ([ARPAV](#)) said.

After environmental authorities conducted tests on the water they discovered its color was the result of Fluorescein, a non-toxic substance first invented by NASA, and most often used to test waterways. But it’s unclear to authorities how, or why, the tracer ended up in one of the world’s most famous waterway systems.

The ARPAV has argued that due to the amount released, it was unlikely an accident. But whether the green canals were the result of a political act remains unknown.

The green rivers resemble artist Nicolas Garcia [Uriburu’s](#) work, “Coloration of the Grand Canal, Venice,” in which the land artist dyed the Venice canals green during the Venice Biennale in June 1968. Uriburu also used Fluorescein in his work that hoped to raise viewers’ ecological consciousness.

No ecological rights groups have claimed responsibility for Venice’s green canals this weekend, and Uriburu was not tied to the incident as he died in 2016.

On May 21, a group of environmental protestors dyed the Trevi Fountain in Rome black as an attempt to draw attention to fossil fuels’ effect on the environment.

Further tests on the water will be performed later this week as local police continue to investigate how, and why, the canals turned green.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

#### The Cancel McCarthy Caucus - Cartoon

By - Ted Rall

It took 15 ballots and four days to elect Kevin McCarthy to the role of House speaker in January after days of negotiations within his own party. He was only able to sway fellow Republicans

after he made a commitment to rein in spending, a commitment posing significant challenges for him amid the debt ceiling crisis.

US Republicans are [grinding their teeth](#) at House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) over the debt ceiling deal he made with US President Joe Biden. Almost 12 members of the House Freedom Caucus - a group which consists of some of the most hard-line conservatives in the House of Representatives, criticized the long-awaited debt ceiling deal and have since sworn to vote no on the bill.

GOP lawmakers are now threatening to use the motion to vacate, which would force a vote to remove McCarthy, with Rep. Ken Buck (R-CO) first suggesting the idea. But not everyone is on board with the planned mutiny, as Scott Perry (R-PA), the chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, said it may be too early to take such action.

"I was asking my colleagues in the House Freedom Caucus whether they were considering a motion to vacate as a result of a broken promise," Buck said. "Scott Perry, the chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, told me it's premature: 'Let's get through this battle and decide if we want another battle.'"

Meanwhile, Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) has suggested using the motion as a political stunt in order to persuade McCarthy to allow members to make whatever changes they want to the bill, a move which could slow the deal's passage. Perry, who seemed to back the side of caution in his response to Buck's dramatic threats, has told reporters he is dedicated to "defeating" the recent debt deal, even as the country risks falling into default.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

#### Conservative US Lawmakers Eye Ousting McCarthy Over Debt Ceiling Deal With Biden

Though House Freedom Caucus (HFC) members have previously pledged to vote against the debt ceiling agreement, Tuesday marked the first day a GOP lawmaker called to remove the House speaker over it.

The Republican Party's most conservative members of Congress are considering removing House Speaker Kevin McCarthy after he made an agreement with US President Joe Biden to raise the debt ceiling.

On Tuesday, Rep. Dan Bishop (R-NC) said he "absolutely" supports a motion to oust McCarthy, suggesting a vote to do so "is inescapable."

"It has to be done," Bishop told a US outlet in an interview confirming his status as the first conservative in the lower chamber to publicly urge a revolt against the House speaker.

"I'm ready to go figure out how to fix this s\*\*\* sandwich. This can still be fixed but the road gets narrower to fixing it every time," Bishop said. "And Kevin McCarthy's been sitting there in leadership."

Asked whether he was worried about Bishop proposing a motion to oust him, McCarthy replied: "No, that's his choice."

Numerous conservative-leaning lawmakers have lambasted the deal, suggesting it doesn't do nearly enough to rein in spending. But so far representatives had refrained from publicly threatening to remove the leader over the agreement.

Bishop's announcement came after a Monday night conference call among members of the House Freedom Caucus at which US Rep. Ken Buck (R-CO) reportedly floated the idea of using a motion to vacate after the tentative deal between McCarthy and Biden.

The motion would allow a member of Congress to force a vote to remove the speaker.

Although Rep. Scott Perry (R-PA), who serves as the Freedom Caucus chairman, reportedly suggested it may be too soon to issue such a drastic threat, Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) stated the removal motion could help force McCarthy to let members amend the bill and use a so-called "open rule" to stall its passage, possibly indefinitely. Perry reportedly pledged to discuss the issue further when members return to Washington after the extended weekend break.

Buck confirmed Tuesday that he raised the question of considering a motion to vacate on Monday, but said he wasn't specifically calling for McCarthy's ouster.

"I was asking my colleagues in the House Freedom Caucus whether they were considering a motion to vacate as a result of a broken promise," Buck said, adding, "Scott Perry, the chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, told me it's premature: 'Let's get through this battle, and decide if we want another battle.'"

A spokesperson for Buck reportedly declined to comment on the call but said the representative is looking to solve the debt ceiling impasse in a way that seriously limits government spending.

"We don't comment on internal HFC discussions," Buck spokesperson Joe Jackson said.

"Congressman Buck is focused on finding a debt ceiling solution that doesn't give Democrats a blank check to add trillions of dollars to the debt in the next two years."

At a Tuesday conference held by conservative congressional members, Rep. Chip Roy (R-TX) warned GOP leaders they would face a "reckoning" if the measure was allowed to proceed. "The Republican conference right now has been torn asunder," he said, before ultimately suggesting "not one Republican" should vote for the deal.

The legislation managed to clinch its first win late Tuesday after the House Rules Committee voted in favor of allowing the measure to come for a full vote on Wednesday. The vote came down 7-6, with four Democrats and two Republicans voting against.

The House panel includes nine Republicans and four Democrats.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

**State Department Won't Say If It's Helping Free American Jailed for Criticizing Ukraine**

A spokesman for the State Department admitted the agency was aware of the detention of a US citizen facing nearly a decade in a Ukrainian jail for his public criticisms of the Zelensky regime – but wouldn't say if they plan to do anything about it.

The US State Department is refusing to say if it's willing to negotiate with the Ukrainian regime for the release of a US citizen facing up to eight years in prison for allegedly "justifying" Russia's special military operation.

Gonzalo Lira, a popular Chilean-American YouTube commentator based in Kharkov, was known to make videos highly critical of the Zelensky regime, which has consolidated control of the country over the past year and a half by enacting draconian laws which effectively banned opposition media and political parties.

Earlier this month, the former Business Insider contributor was arrested by Ukrainian SBU in a raid the country's secret service publicized on social media.

According to an SBU release, in [addition](#) to being charged with "producing and distributing materials justifying" Russian operations in Ukraine, Lira is also accused of denying alleged Russian "war crimes" and "discrediting the top military and political leadership."

If convicted, he could face up to eight years in prison.

On Thursday, when reporter Liam Cosgrove asked how the State Department feels "about our allies detaining US citizens for speech abroad," agency spokesperson Matthew Miller said simply that "in general... we're aware of the report."

"We obviously support the exercise of freedom of speech anywhere in the world, and I'll leave it at that," Miller concluded.

But when he was asked point-blank if the State Department was "working to get [Lira] released," the spokesperson refused to answer, telling the journalist: "I'm gonna leave my comments where I just left them."

Cosgrove previously spoke with US Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA), who said he was unaware of Lira's plight but said "American citizens should have the ability to express their thoughts and views."

The California lawmaker said he "certainly would urge our State Department to engage their authorities."

US Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene later told the same reporter it's a "real problem" that the Ukrainian regime refuses to respect the speech of American citizens while taking US taxpayer money.

"America is funding and providing weapons, equipment for the defense of their country. But the Ukrainian government is not going to defend any American's freedom of speech. And that's a real problem. And that's something that everyone should care about," she said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

New Docs ID Big Names Who Maintained Ties With Epstein Long After Child Sex Conviction

New emails revealed another group of wealthy and influential celebrities who continued to dine with the disgraced pedophile alleged to have worked with US intelligence long after his conviction for sex crimes against children.

Explosive new findings have revealed that long after becoming a convicted sex offender, Jeffrey Epstein - the disgraced financier who reportedly worked with US intelligence - continued to successfully seek meetings with a variety of public figures

Among the big names identified in an [exclusive Tuesday report](#) were Bill Gates, Richard Branson, JPMorgan boss Jamie Dimon, Chris Rock, David Blaine, Woody Allen, and members of [multiple](#) royal families.

“A tranche of emails... reveal others who showed up on Epstein’s dance card as having included music industry titan Tommy Mottola, Wendi Murdoch, Russian supermodel Irina Shayk, late comedian David Brenner, artist Jeff Koons, the president of Mongolia, and not one, but two former Norwegian prime ministers,” [according](#) to the report.

It was also pointed out that “Epstein also often indulged in his infamous ‘appointments’ with longtime executive assistant Lesley Groff setting up multitudes of sessions with young women to service him.”

After being convicted in 2008 for soliciting an underage girl, Epstein received an unusually charitable sentence which meant he ultimately spent just 13 months in a Florida prison before spending another year under house arrest and serving probation until July 2010.

Before becoming Labor Secretary, Alexander Acosta, the former US attorney in Miami who cut Epstein a non-prosecution plea deal in 2007, reportedly explained his lenient sentence to the Trump transition team in 2019 by saying he was “told Epstein [‘belonged](#) to intelligence’ and to leave it alone.”

Although “the terms of his release required him to register as a Level III sex offender for the rest of his life... that didn’t stop him from palling around with the global elite,” it was pointed out by the US outlet that published the explosive new findings.

Instead, Epstein was apparently free to continue hob-nobbing with celebrities and otherwise leading the lavish lifestyle to which he’d grown accustomed.

However, that all changed in July 2019 when he was arrested in New York on federal sex trafficking charges. One month later, he was discovered dead in his cell, the victim of what authorities claim was a suicide by hanging. There is no video of the incident, and the guards responsible for jail security claimed to have been either sleeping or shopping online at the time. While Epstein’s death makes it difficult to gauge the true scope of his activities – and those of his associates – there was a rare bit of good news for 125 of his former victims earlier this month.

On May 17, Germany’s Deutsche Bank [agreed](#) to pay \$75 million in compensation to the victims of Epstein who argued in court that the firm turned a blind eye to the numerous signs their notorious client was trafficking young girls.

“The scope and scale of Epstein’s abuse, and the many years it continued in plain sight, could not have happened without the collaboration and support of many powerful individuals and institutions,” an attorney for the plaintiffs said in a statement.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

AI Poses Existential Threat to Humanity, Tech Leaders Warn

Unlike a previous message calling for a pause on AI development, the latest open letter to note how much damage the field could cause has been signed by some of the industry’s biggest players.

Hundreds of artificial intelligence researchers and technology executives have signed off on a stark warning that AI poses an existential threat to humanity, in the latest sign of widespread alarm within the industry over the potential threat posed by the new field.

"Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war," reads a Tuesday statement released by the nonprofit Center for AI Safety.

The release carried the signatures of some of the industry's top names, including ChatGPT creator and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, and nearly 40 members of Google's DeepMind artificial intelligence unit.

Dan Hendrycks, the computer scientist leading the Center for AI Safety, said the letter's brevity was intentional.

"We need widespread acknowledgment of the stakes before we can have useful policy discussions," Hendrycks told a US media outlet. "For risks of this magnitude, the takeaway isn't that this technology is overhyped, but that this issue is currently underemphasized relative to the actual level of threat."

It's not the first institutional effort to draw attention to the problem.

Another public letter published in March attracted the signatures of over 1,000 academics, businessmen, and technology specialists urging a pause in AI development until it can be regulated and run responsibly.

As US media [reported](#), "most of the field's most influential leaders didn't sign" that letter, "but they have signed the new statement, including Altman and two of Google's most senior AI executives: Demis Hassabis and James Manyika."

While the signatures of Microsoft Chief Technology Officer Kevin Scott and Microsoft Chief Scientific Officer Eric Horvitz both appear on the statement, "notably absent from the letter is Google CEO Sundar Pichai and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, the field's two most powerful corporate leaders," one outlet explained.

Earlier this month, Altman testified before Congress that AI could "cause significant harm to the world" either by spreading disinformation or by manipulating humans' emotions, and its potential to wreak havoc in people's lives is quickly becoming clear. A number of companies have already expressed a desire to replace human workers with the technology.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Ukraine Going on Offensive in Summer, US Prepares New Arms Deliveries - Kirby

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Ukraine is going to launch an offensive in summer, and the United States is preparing new arms deliveries for Kiev, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"We have been in touch with our Ukrainian counterparts as they have begun their planning for this counter-offensive. We remain in touch with them," Kirby told CNN.

Ukraine is planning to begin a counter-offensive in summer, and the US is preparing new arms

deliveries to Kiev, he added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Does Not Encourage Attacks on Russia, Does Not Want to See War Escalate – Kirby

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) – The United States does not encourage Ukraine to attack Russia and does not want to see the military conflict escalate, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday, following the recent drone attacks on Moscow.

"We do not want to encourage attacks inside Russia because we do not want to see the war escalate," Kirby told CNN.

At the same time that Kiev has the right to self-defense, he said.

Kirby pointed out that it is up to the Ukrainians to decide what to do with US-made weapons they are receiving. "They have given us assurances that they will not use our equipment to strike inside Russia, but once it goes to them, it belongs to them," he added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Leaders Should Not Have Violated Agreement With Gorbachev on NATO - Chomsky

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - None of the actions taken by the successors of former US President George H.W. Bush in violation of the agreements between him and then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on NATO should have taken place, renowned US academic and philosopher Noam Chomsky told Sputnik.

Chomsky noted that Bush and Gorbachev agreed that Germany should be unified and join NATO, but the military alliance should not extend "one inch to the East" of Germany.

"The documents, which are clear and unambiguous, are readily available on the website of the National Security Archive. President Bush lived up to the agreement," Chomsky said.

However, Chomsky said Bush's successor, Bill Clinton, violated the agreement, overriding the strong objections of high-level US diplomats and a wide range of political analysts, who warned that actions to expand NATO were reckless and provocative.

"His successors went further, also abrogating major arms control agreements that had significantly reduced the threat of war. None of these actions should have taken place, in my opinion," Chomsky said.

Ties between Russia and NATO remained strained after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The growing tensions were primarily driven by NATO's eastward expansion despite Russia's warnings that steps to include new states close or on its borders directly threaten its national security.

Bilateral relations reached an impasse in 2014, following the events in Ukraine and the

accession of Crimea to Russia. At that point, NATO announced the suspension of civil and military cooperation with Russia, while Moscow approved a new edition of its military doctrine, which specified the build-up of NATO's military potential and its expansion toward Russia's borders were declared to be the key military threats.

A significant new deterioration in relations took place in late 2021, when NATO started boosting its eastern flank along the borders with Russia and Belarus by dispatching additional troops and sending Western instructors to the Donbas region.

In response to Moscow launching a military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, NATO further reinforced its flanks by deploying more ships, planes and ground troops to the region and putting them on high alert. These events marked the highest point in tensions in the relations between the parties.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

China 'Already' World Leader, Signaling Erosion of US-Run Middle East System - Chomsky

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - China has already become a world leader and its entering the Middle East arms market shows the erosion of the system in the region that has been run by the United States for 80 years, prominent US academic and philosopher Noam Chomsky told Sputnik.

When asked whether he believes that China will become a world leader, Chomsky said, "It already is."

Chomsky explained that the programs based on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) extend throughout Eurasia and considerably beyond.

"In the past few months, Saudi Arabia joined the SCO, followed by the second regional heavyweight, the United Arab Emirates, which had already become a hub of China's Maritime Silk Road, reaching from Kolkata in Eastern India to the Red Sea and on to Europe," he said.

Chomsky pointed out that China is now entering the Middle East arms market.

"All of this signals a significant erosion of the Middle East system that the United States has pretty much been running for 80 years, taking over from Britain," Chomsky added.

Renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik earlier in May that China will become the next great country and most important nation of this century.

Last October, Chinese President Xi Jinping said the country's leadership considers it necessary to accelerate the process of turning China into a leading world industrial power, including in the development of manufacturing industry, astronautics, transport and network technologies.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## Prospects for Ukraine Peace Talks Dim Despite Most of World Calling for Diplomacy -Chomsky

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Chances for peace talks to end the Ukrainian conflict look dim at present despite the fact that most of the world is calling for diplomacy, but that situation may change, prominent US academic and philosopher Noam Chomsky told Sputnik.

"Most of the world is calling for diplomacy," Chomsky said. "Right now the prospects look dim. But that may change as a clearer understanding of the available options develops. Small steps might prepare the way for broader settlement. Diplomacy often works that way."

Chomsky noted that proposals for a diplomatic settlement have been offered and peace initiatives started - primarily by China, South Africa, the Vatican and the Kiev government - and most of them follow the general outlines of the Minsk agreements.

"China has offered its proposals, based on the principle that 'the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries must be effectively upheld,' including Ukraine, as high Chinese officials have emphasized," he said.

Chomsky also said that two leading international relations scholars, Benjamin Schwarz and Christopher Layne, outlined their suggestions in Harper's Magazine.

"Others have been proposed. Most follow the general outlines of the Minsk agreements, which - it should be recalled - were unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council," he said.

Chomsky said he cannot predict with any confidence how long the Ukraine conflict will last and what will be its outcome because there are "too many imponderables."

"All I can try to do is lay out the options. Either there will be a diplomatic settlement or there will not," he said. "If not, there are two possibilities. Either the war will enter a stalemate, perhaps with mutual butchering as in Bakhmut, or one side will capitulate. Russia has unlimited ways to escalate if facing defeat. The United States, of course, has so as well. The rest is conjecture with little solid basis. It depends on human decisions."

In February, China released a 12-point document dubbed "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis," which underscores respect for the sovereignty of all countries, the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of peace talks between Moscow and Kiev.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said some provisions of the Chinese plan could be a basis for a peace settlement "if the West and Kiev are ready for it."

Russia has been conducting a special military operation in Ukraine since February 24, 2022. Putin has said the operation aims to "protect people subjected to genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years." According to the Russian president, the ultimate goal of the special operation is to liberate the Donbas region and create conditions that guarantee Russia's security.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## US Strategy Represents 'Extraordinary Gamble With Fate of Ukrainians' - Chomsky

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The United States arming Ukraine until it is in a strong position to negotiate peace with Russia represents a risky gamble with the fate of Ukrainians, prominent US academic and philosopher Noam Chomsky told Sputnik.

When asked to comment on the current rhetoric of Moscow and Washington on Ukraine, Chomsky said: "Russia's current position is that its conquests in Ukraine are non-negotiable." "The official position of the United States is that the war should continue to severely weaken Russia and to place Ukraine in a better negotiating position," he said. "That stand is based on two assumptions: that continuing the war will improve Ukraine's position, and that Russia, if facing severe setbacks, will not escalate the conflict. Neither assumption is supported by any credible evidence.

Both assumptions constitute an "extraordinary gamble with the fate of Ukrainians," Chomsky said.

"Under these conditions, it is likely that the war will go on and probably escalate with severe human costs," Chomsky concluded.

Russia has been conducting a special military operation in Ukraine since February 24, 2022. The United States and its allies have since provided more than \$65 billion in security assistance to Ukraine, including Abrams and Leopard main battle tanks, artillery and armored vehicles, Storm Shadow long-range cruise and other missiles, air defense systems and have also committed to providing F-16 fighter jets as well as pilot training to operate them.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Chomsky Says Hopeful Europe Will Follow Gorbachev Vision 'From Lisbon to Vladivostok'

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Renowned US academic and philosopher Noam Chomsky told Sputnik that he is hopeful Europe will be inclined toward the vision of former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev 'From Lisbon to Vladivostok' before it gets worse.

"I also think there is considerable merit in Gorbachev's proposal for a 'common European home' from Lisbon to Vladivostok with no military alliances and common efforts to move toward a social democratic future," Chomsky said.

The United States chose to pursue the Atlanticist option, based on NATO, which has recently been expanded to the Indo-Pacific region in a Washington-led effort to enlist Europe in its confrontation with China, Chomsky said.

"I hope that the future will tend towards Gorbachev's vision, before it is too late," Chomsky added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly called for building a united peaceful Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

Last October, Putin said that he considers it possible to create a common humanitarian and economic space in Eurasia, stating that "hope dies last."

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## Europe Likely to Face Decline, Deindustrialization if Within US-Dominated System - Chomsky

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Europe will experience a likely decline and deindustrialization if it chooses to stay within the system dominated by the United States, renowned US academic and philosopher Noam Chomsky told Sputnik.

"Europe has a major decision to make: Will it stay within the US-dominated system, facing likely decline and even, some predict, deindustrialization?" Chomsky said. "Or will it accommodate in some fashion to its natural economic partner to the East, rich in mineral resources that Europe needs and a gateway to the lucrative China market?"

Chomsky noted that these questions have arisen in one form or another since World War II.

"The Gaullist concept of Europe linking with Russia as an independent force in world affairs found echoes in Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik and other initiatives, and more broadly in Gorbachev's proposals after the collapse of the Soviet Union," he said. "Again, we can only speculate."

When asked whether he thinks that we are on the threshold of a new world order and if the Ukrainian conflict can be a catalyst for major changes, Chomsky said, "There is much controversy about the shape of the emerging world system."

Chomsky explained that the basic alternatives are a multipolar United Nations-based system or a unipolar "rules-based" system, where the United States sets the rules and as the record reveals, disregards them when it chooses to.

"The former is largely supported by most of the world. The latter is adopted by the Anglosphere, Europe, Japan and a few others. The Russian invasion of Ukraine provided the United States with a most welcome gift, driving Europe into Washington's pocket and thus strengthening its demand for a unipolar 'rules-based' order. There are many uncertainties as to how these tensions will be resolved," Chomsky said.

Earlier in May, US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik that political unions like the European Union have never survived in history and this bloc is already experiencing problems.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## US Condemns Violence Against NATO-Led KFOR Troops in Kosovo, Calls for De-Escalation

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The United States condemns the recent violence against NATO-led KFOR troops in Kosovo and Metohija and calls on Prishtina and Belgrade to de-escalate tensions and refrain from further violence, the US State Department said.

"We call on all parties to take immediate actions to de-escalate tensions. The United States condemns the unacceptable violence yesterday against NATO-led KFOR troops, law enforcement and journalists," the State Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

The release also calls on Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti to withdraw the police forces from the areas in the north of Kosovo and Metohija where violence took place.

It also urges Serbian President Aleksander Vucic to lower the security status of the Serbian military and limit further challenges to KFOR in areas where Serbs are protesting ethnic

Albanian mayors forcefully taking office in Serb-majority areas of Kosovo and Metohija.

"Prime Minister Kurti and his government should ensure that elected mayors carry out their transitional duties from alternate locations outside municipal buildings and withdraw police forces from the vicinity," the release said.

On Monday, hundreds of Serbs gathered outside local administration buildings in the municipalities of Zvecan, Leposavic and Zubin Potok, demanding the withdrawal of police and the removal of ethnic Albanian mayors, who took office and displaced the Serbian flags.

Troops from the KFOR mission equipped with crowd dispersal devices were also deployed in an apparent attempt to intimidate the protesters. The Kosovo police, consisting of Albanians, used tear gas to break up the protests and escort the mayors into the town halls.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter Has Dementia - Carter Center Statement

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, 95, has been diagnosed with dementia, the Carter Center said in a press release.

"The Carter family is sharing that former First Lady Rosalynn Carter has dementia. She continues to live happily at home with her husband, enjoying spring in Plains and visits with loved ones," the release said on Tuesday.

Carter has been the nation's leading mental health advocate for much of her life and has urged improved access to care and decreased stigma about issues surrounding mental health, the release said.

One in ten older Americans have dementia - "a condition that affects overall mental health," the release said.

Former President Jimmy Carter, 98, has, for the past three months been receiving end-of-life care at their home in Plains, Georgia. After several stays at the hospital, he announced in February that he would no longer seek additional medical intervention and would spend the rest of his life at home.

Carter was the 39th US president, serving from 1977-1981.

"We do not expect to comment further and ask for understanding for our family and for everyone across the country serving in a caregiver role," the release said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Oil Prices Sink 4% On Fears of Another US Rate Hike

NEW YORK, May 31(Sputnik) - Oil prices fell 4% on Tuesday on fears that the US labor market might have had another rip-roaring month that could trigger another rate hike by the Federal Reserve.

Uncertainty on whether OPEC+ will decide on new production cuts when it meets this weekend, along with preliminary data suggesting moderate fuel demand in the kickoff to the US summer driving season, also weighed on energy markets.

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, crude settled down \$3.21, or 4.4%, at \$69.46 per barrel.

London-traded Brent crude, the global benchmark for oil, settled at \$73.54 — down \$3.53, or 4.6%, on the day.

Speculation is mounting that the Fed will raise rates for an eleventh time in 16 months when its policy-makers meet on June 14. The biggest signal for the central bank's action will be in U.S. jobs data for May, due on Friday, that could show higher-than-expected payrolls growth that forces the Fed against pausing on rates.

Ahead of the Fed action will be the June 4 meeting of OPEC+, which groups the 13-nation Saudi-led OPEC, or Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, with 10 other oil producers steered by Russia.

“Yes, the US debt drama might have gone off traders' radar but you have these two major things that are a bugbear for the oil market: What the Fed will achieve and what OPEC+ might not,” John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital, said in a text message to Sputnik.

Economists believe US non-farm payrolls grew by 180,000 in May. They predicted a similar payroll growth in May, against the 253,000 reported by the Labor Department.

Should the department report another jobs growth number above 200,000, it could influence the Fed to raise rates again in June instead of pausing them. The Fed has identified job and wage growth as the two key contributors of inflation.

All key readings of the so-called Personal Consumption Expenditures, or PCE, Index that the Fed closely watches rose higher than expected last month.

From an economics standpoint, stronger labor numbers are good for oil as more Americans moving about for work means higher fuel consumption. For gold, stronger economic numbers are usually a negative as less money will flow to safe-havens.

But in an environment of Fed rate hikes, job numbers exceeding expectations typically drive up the dollar, weighing across the board on commodities priced in the US currency. In Tuesday's session, the Dollar Index, which pits the greenback against six other major currencies led by the euro, jumped to a near one-week high at 104.38. The index is due to settle higher in May, the first time in two months, since sliding on a US banking crisis that erupted in March.

The Fed has added 500 basis points, or 5%, to rates since the end of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2022, bringing them to a peak of 525 basis points, or 5.25%.

Fed Governor Chris Waller said last week the central bank may skip a rate increase on June 14, but still lean towards a July hike depending on inflation data. St. Louis Fed President James Bullard, one of the more aggressive advocates for tighter monetary policy, has suggested two more rate hikes this year, totaling 50 basis points, that would bring rates to a peak of 5.75%.

Also weighing on crude prices Tuesday was preliminary data showing that the long Memorial Day weekend heralding the start of the US summer driving season did not see as much fuel demand as thought. According to figures from GasBuddy, an app that tracks gasoline prices, demand for fuel paid for with the GasBuddy fuel card dropped by 1.3% last week.

OPEC+, meanwhile, has had limited success of late in trying to push crude prices up with

production cuts.

The 23-nation alliance announced a 1.7 million-barrel-per-day cut in April, on top of an October undertaking to shed 2M barrels daily.

After the April cut was announced, crude prices only went up for two weeks, before turning lower over four weeks, erasing some 15%. The earlier pledge to cut 2M barrels fared worse, resulting in just a few days of gains before prices tumbled to 15-month lows in March.

Last week, Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman short sellers in oil that the alliance could resort to further output cuts. But Russian President Vladimir Putin later said oil prices were approaching "economically justified" levels, indicating that more output reductions might not be necessary.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Reviewed 5,064 Export, Reexport License Applications on China in 2022, Denied 26%

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The US government reviewed more than 5,000 export and reexport license applications related to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2022 and denied or returned more than a quarter of them, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration Thea Rozman Kendler said.

"For items, including commodities, software and technology (including domestic technology transfers, known as deemed exports), BIS [Bureau of Industry and Security] and our interagency partners reviewed 5,064 export and reexport license applications. Of these, approximately 26 percent were denied or returned without action," Rozman Kendler said in prepared remarks before the US Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday.

In total, China-related license applications comprised approximately 13% of all applications reviewed by BIS last year, Rozman Kendler said.

She noted that the Commerce Department maintains comprehensive controls on the exports of sophisticated technologies to China.

Rozman Kendler also mentioned controls related to China's military activities and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.

"In addition, BIS prohibits certain US person activities that would support WMD-related activities or military-intelligence end use or end users in the PRC, even if no items subject to our jurisdiction are involved, absent authorization," Rozman Kendler said.

The United States is considering license applications from exporters and reexporters who want to send items to China more seriously than in other cases, Rozman Kendler also said.

In 2022 an average processing time for such documents was about 90 days, against 43 days for other countries, she added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## IAEA to Reinforce Presence at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant - Director General

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will reinforce its presence at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Director General Rafael Grossi said.

"We will continue and reinforce our presence to avoid what must be avoided at all costs," Grossi told the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## US House Oversight Committee to Hold FBI Director Wray in Contempt of Congress - Chairman

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The US House Oversight Committee will take steps to hold Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray in contempt of Congress after the agency refused to provide unclassified records pertaining to an alleged criminal scheme involving then-Vice President Joe Biden, committee chairman James Comer said.

"Today, the FBI informed the Committee that it will not provide the unclassified documents subpoenaed by the Committee. The FBI's decision to stiff-arm Congress and hide this information from the American people is obstructionist and unacceptable," Comer said in a statement on Tuesday. "[T]he Committee has been clear in its intent to protect Congressional oversight authorities and will now be taking steps to hold the FBI Director in contempt of Congress for refusing to comply with a lawful subpoena."

Comer added that he will speak with Wray over the telephone on Wednesday to discuss the FBI's refusal to comply with the subpoena.

Earlier this month, Comer subpoenaed Wray and requested a document that allegedly contains information about a scheme involving then-Vice President Biden and a foreign national relating to an exchange of money to secure policy decisions. The subpoena asked Wray to provide the requested document by May 30.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## REVIEW - Biden-McCarthy Debt Deal Faces Barriers to Passage as US Default Deadline Approaches

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The US House Rules Committee began consideration on Tuesday of a tentative deal negotiated by US President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy to raise the United States' debt ceiling in exchange for limited spending cuts and financial reforms.

On Wednesday, lawmakers will resume consideration of the proposal, dubbed the Fiscal Responsibility Act, amid opposition by some Republican members of Congress, who have

pitched alternatives or entirely opposed the Biden-McCarthy deal.

#### STRIKING A DEAL

The Biden-McCarthy deal emerged following days of negotiations between the leaders' teams, as well as several face-to-face meetings. The negotiations took place with a looming deadline of June 5, at which point the US risks defaulting on its financial obligations, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned earlier this month.

Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer entered the negotiations advocating for a no-strings-attached raise of the debt ceiling, while McCarthy started talks with House Republicans having passed legislation to raise the debt ceiling in exchange for spending cuts and other economic reforms.

Biden characterized the deal as a "compromise" in which neither side gets everything they want. The proposal would raise the debt ceiling for two years in exchange for limited reforms proposed by Republicans, including reclaiming unspent COVID recovery funds and cutting some Internal Revenue Service funding.

"The American people elected House Republicans to stop the out-of-control inflationary spending that has broken family budgets," McCarthy said in a joint statement with other House Republican leaders. "The Fiscal Responsibility Act does what is responsible for our children, what is possible in divided government, and what is required by our principles and promises."

Schumer has also expressed his support for the Biden-McCarthy deal, urging senators to act urgently to deliver Biden a final agreement.

#### REPUBLICAN OPPOSITION

However, the Fiscal Responsibility Act faces several barriers to hasty passage by the US Congress, including opposition by the House Freedom Caucus and an amendment proposed by Senator Rand Paul.

On Tuesday, members of the House Freedom Caucus, led by Congressman Scott Perry, held a press conference to express opposition to the Biden-McCarthy plan. The proposal "fails" to achieve what Republicans in Congress set out to do, Perry said, promising that the caucus would do everything in its power to stop the bill's passage.

Freedom Caucus members criticized the plan for reducing reforms included in the Limit, Save, Grow Act, which House lawmakers passed earlier this year; the bill raises the debt ceiling in exchange for spending cuts and other fiscal reforms, with exceptions for the military and veterans.

Prior to consideration on the House floor, the House Rules Committee must first vote on the rule for debate on the bill. Lawmakers have proposed dozens of amendments to the legislation, including an amendment by Perry to strike the entirety of the bill and insert the House-passed Republican Limit, Save, Grow Act.

Congressman Dan Bishop said on Tuesday that a motion to vacate, which would remove McCarthy as speaker, is not off the table if a new deal is not struck. A spokesman for House Freedom Caucus member Congressman Andy Biggs told Sputnik that the lawmaker is "focused on voting against the McCarthy-Biden plan first."

McCarthy on Tuesday appeared unconcerned by the threats to remove him as speaker, telling a reporter who asked whether he expected to keep his post, "You guys ask me all the time. I'm still standing. ... You know what, keep underestimating me. You'll go far that way,"

The bill also faces proposed changes in the upper chamber by Senator Paul, who on Tuesday

announced an amendment overhauling the Fiscal Responsibility Act. Paul's amendment, which he characterized as a "conservative alternative," would replace a two-year blanket suspension of the debt ceiling with a \$500 billion increase, the senator said in a statement.

The amendment replaces caps on discretionary spending with caps on total spending that cuts five percent each year as well, the statement said. The amendment also creates a mandate that growth in federal outlays may not exceed growth in revenue from the previous fiscal year, the statement added.

#### PATHWAY TO PASSAGE

Despite the hurdles to passage, McCarthy told reporters on Tuesday that he is confident the House will pass the legislation. McCarthy said he is "not quite sure" where fellow Republicans are opposed to the bill.

McCarthy likewise expressed confidence that the bill would make it through the Rules Committee process.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said on Tuesday that Democrats are committed to making sure that Republicans "keep their promise" to garner at least 150 votes in support of the bill.

If the Rules Committee advances the legislation, the full House could vote on the bill as early as Wednesday. Schumer told Senate Democrats that the upper chamber will begin immediate consideration following passage by the House, warning them to prepare for possible Friday and weekend votes.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

#### SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) -

#### DRONE ATTACK IN MOSCOW

\* The drone attack against civilian infrastructure in Moscow is the result of terrorist activities, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday.

\* The drone attack on Moscow was Kiev's response to Russia's successful strikes on one of the Ukrainian decision-making centers on Sunday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

\* The European Union is unaware of details of drone attacks on Moscow on Tuesday, and calls on Russia to not use this as a pretext to escalate the conflict, spokesman for EU foreign affairs Peter Stano said.

\* The United States is still gathering information into the latest drone attacks that occurred in Moscow, a White House National Security Council spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik.

\* The United Nations condemns any attack against civilians and civilian infrastructure, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said, commenting on the recent drone attacks on Moscow.

#### ELECTIONS IN TURKEY

\* The People's Alliance led by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and

Development Party has won 323 out of 600 seats in the parliamentary elections, the Supreme Election Council chief Ahmet Yener said on Tuesday.

\* The list of foreign leaders who will take part in the inauguration of the reelected Erdogan has not yet been finalized, the spokesman for the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party, Omer Celik, said.

\* The inauguration ceremony of Erdogan may take place on June 3, presidential adviser Mehmet Ucum said.

#### PUTIN-ERDOGAN TALKS

\* Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that he discussed supplying countries in need with food during a recent phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

\* Putin and Erdogan have confirmed during phone talks their political will to work on all projects, but did not touch upon any details, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

#### KOSOVO TENSIONS

\* Fifteen Hungarian soldiers who serve in the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) have been taken to hospitals after clashes between Serbs and the security forces in northern Kosovo, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said on Tuesday.

\* KFOR said that it had strengthened its presence in four municipalities in northern Kosovo to reduce the risk of escalation.

\* Serbs continue to protest in northern Kosovo, the police said.

\* Decisive steps are necessary to deescalate tensions between Serbs and Kosovars, and not "half-measures" proposed by Western countries, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

\* Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic told Russian Ambassador Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko that Belgrade will try to maintain peace and stability in Kosovo and demands safety guarantees for Serbs in the region.

#### CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

\* Ukraine lost more than 16,000 military in May as a result of the military operation, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Tuesday.

\* The Western support to Kiev only prolongs the conflict but will not affect the outcome of Moscow's special military operation, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said.

\* There is no doubt that Ukraine has long switched to terrorist methods using Western weapons, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

\* The Russian armed forces carried out missile strikes on decision-making centers in Ukraine, where terrorist attacks on the territory of Russia were being prepared under the guidance of Western specialists, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

\* The Ukrainian armed forces targeted a temporary accommodation center for residents of the Shebekinsky district in Russia's Belgorod region, Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

#### ZAPORIZHZHIA NPP

\* Ukraine is making attempts to disorganize the work at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant

(ZNPP), Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday.

\* The security situation at the ZNPP remains very fragile amid a looming escalation in the hostilities in the region, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said.

\* Grossi proposed five principles to protect the ZNPP, including a ban on shelling toward and from the site.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Air National Guard Suffering 3,000-4,0000 Pilot Shortfall - Commanding General

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The US Air National Guard is currently suffering from a shortfall of 3,000 to 4,000 pilots caused primarily by disruptions to recruiting caused by the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, force commander Lieutenant General Michael Loh said on Tuesday.

"We have a fighter pilot shortage in the Air National Guard right now," Loh told a meeting at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). "The deficit is between 3,000 to 4,000 pilots."

Air National Guard recruiters were being successful in attracting new volunteers but the problem had been increased by delays in the introduction of a new medical system which meant that it took up to three times as long - 90 days as opposed to previously 30 days - to fully integrate and clear new recruits into the force, Loh said.

"They want to stick with us but we have got to get them in through the door," he said.

Also, Air National Guard recruiters were not able to operate in schools and colleges during the years of the pandemic shutdowns to seek to attract new potential volunteers from them, the general added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Air Force to Become Partially Pilotless in 10-15 Years - Milley

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force will become partially pilotless in the next 10-15 years amid the ongoing fundamental change in technology, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley said on Tuesday.

"We already use robotics in the military. You see unmanned aerial vehicles as a form of a robot. We are experimenting today with surface and subsurface vessels in the Navy. I would submit to you that within ten or 15 years, you're going to have a partially pilotless Air Force, that most of your airplanes are likely to be robots of some kind with the man-machine interface between them," Milley said during a commissioning ceremony at Princeton University.

The United States will be equipped in the future with robotic unmanned ground vehicles that will nullify casualties during convoy movements as was the case in Afghanistan and Iraq, Milley

said.

Artificial intelligence, robotics, precision fires and enhanced monitoring ability will provide for the next fundamental change in the conduct of war in a highly dynamic world.

Earlier in May, President Joe Biden tapped current US Air Force Chief of Staff Charles Brown to serve as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instead of Milley, who will retire in four months.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Pleased That Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks Continued - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The United States welcomes the continuation of negotiations between Yerevan and Baku and is hopeful that the planned talks between the parties later this week will resolve the issues, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a readout of the conversation on Tuesday.

"We are pleased to see that talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan have continued," Miller said. "Armenia and Azerbaijan's leaders will meet later this week in Chisinau with our European partners, and we hope that will be a productive step to resolving these issues at the negotiating table and not through violence. Aggressive rhetoric can only perpetuate the violence of the past; constructive dialogue—both public and private—can create peace, opportunity, and hope."

Miller added that Washington stands ready to support the efforts of both parties to reach a durable peace agreement.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Debt Ceiling Deal Not Expected to Interfere with Future Ukraine Funding - White House

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The partisan budget agreement is not expected to curtail the administration's ability to provide funds for the conflict in Ukraine, the White House said on Tuesday.

"I do not," said Director of the United States Office of Management and Budget Shalanda Young, when asked if she expected the bipartisan deal to have any impact on the Biden Administration's ability to acquire more funding for the conflict in Ukraine.

The deal, which would increase the US debt by 4 trillion, will be voted on by the House Rules Committee later on Tuesday where lawmakers on the Republican-dominated committee will vote on the rule of debate for the bill.

Since the start of the conflict in Ukraine, the US has delivered \$36.9 billion in security assistance to Kiev.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise**

**Rossiia Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Blinken Reiterates to Cavusoglu Sweden Ready to Join NATO Now - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a telephone conversation with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and emphasized the need for NATO unity as well as the belief that Sweden is ready to become part of the alliance now, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a readout of the conversation on Tuesday. "Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu today to offer his congratulations on President Erdogan's re-election," Miller said. "Secretary Blinken emphasized the value the United States places on the U.S.-Turkiye bilateral relationship. Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Cavusoglu highlighted the importance of NATO unity, and Secretary Blinken reiterated his strong belief that Sweden is ready to join the Alliance now."

Blinken also expressed gratitude to the Turkish government for its ongoing efforts to ensure the continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Miller added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiia Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

WFP Will Be Forced to Suspend Operations in Palestine by August Without Financing – UN

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – The World Food Programme (WFP) will be forced to completely suspend its operations in Palestine by August unless it receives sufficient funding, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"Without the necessary financial support, WFP will be forced to suspend its operations entirely by August. That means that 350,000 of the most vulnerable and food-insecure Palestinians will be deprived of assistance that allows them to feed their families," Dujarric told reporters.

He said that the situation is critical, and the WFP will have to suspend its assistance to more than 200,000 people in June. That will worsen the situation for the most vulnerable families, he warned.

Dujarric said it is "imperative" to provide vital assistance to the people in need.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiia Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Russia Never Deployed Soldiers, Heavy Weapons at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, May 30 (Sputnik) - Russia has never deployed troops, heavy weapons or ammunitions on the territory of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) and will do everything to ensure its safety and security, Moscow's envoy to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said

on Tuesday.

"The plant has never seen any heavy weapons or their munitions placed on its territory, nor is there any military personnel present at the power plant that could be used to carry out an attack from the plant's territory," Nebenzia said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

Russia would take all the necessary measures to ensure the safety and security of the plant in accordance with its legislation and obligations to international legal instrument to which the country is a party.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Rand Paul Says Offering 'Conservative Alternative' to Biden-McCarthy Debt Ceiling Deal

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - US Senator Rand Paul said on Tuesday that he is offering a conservative alternative to a tentative deal between President Joe Biden and House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy, which would raise the United States' debt ceiling in exchange for limited spending reforms.

"Today, I announced the conservative alternative to the Biden-McCarthy debt deal. Bold actions must be taken to defeat our mounting national debt, and my conservative alternative gives us a real opportunity to get our fiscal house in order," Paul said in a statement via Twitter.

Over the weekend, Biden and McCarthy struck a tentative deal, dubbed the "Fiscal Responsibility Act," which raises the debt ceiling for two years in exchange for limited cuts to government spending.

The alternative plan will be offered as an amendment to the Biden-McCarthy deal, Paul's office said in a statement. The amendment would replace existing language with "responsible reforms and necessary cuts," the statement said.

The amendment would replace a two-year blanket suspension of the debt ceiling with a \$500 billion increase, the statement said. The amendment also replaces caps on discretionary spending with caps on total spending that cuts five percent each year, the statement said.

The amendment also creates a mandate that growth in federal outlays may not exceed growth in revenue from the previous fiscal year, the statement added.

Earlier this month, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned that the US government could default on its financial obligations as early as June 5 if leaders fail to raise the debt ceiling.

The Biden-McCarthy plan must pass the House of Representatives, where it faces opposition by members of the Freedom Caucus, as well as the Senate, which will weigh Paul's alternative. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Tuesday that he supports the Biden-McCarthy plan, calling on senators to act urgently to send a final product to Biden before the deadline.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## US Military Accuses China of 'Aggressive Maneuver' During Intercept Over South China Sea

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – The US Indo-Pacific Command said on Tuesday that a Chinese J-16 fighter jet pilot performed an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" while intercepting a US Air Force RC-135 aircraft over the South China Sea last week.

"A People's Republic of China J-16 fighter pilot performed an unnecessarily aggressive maneuver during the intercept of a U.S. Air Force RC-135 aircraft, May 26, 2023. The PRC pilot flew directly in front of the nose of the RC-135, forcing the U.S. aircraft to fly through its wake turbulence," the command said in a statement.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## IAEA Chief Puts Forth 5 Principles to Protect Zaporizhzhia NPP

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi on Tuesday proposed five principles to protect the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, including a ban on shelling toward and from the site.

"I have identified the following concrete principles to help ensure nuclear safety and security at ZNPP in order to prevent a nuclear accident and ensure the integrity of the plant," Grossi told a UN Security Council. "There should be no attack of any kind from or against the plant, in particular targeting the reactors, spent fuel storage, other critical infrastructure, or personnel; ZNPP should not be used as storage or a base for heavy weapons (i.e. multiple rocket launchers, artillery systems and munitions, and tanks) or military personnel that could be used for an attack from the plant."

Off-site power to the plant should not be put at risk either, and every effort should be made to ensure that off-site power remains available and secure at all times, he added.

"All structures, systems and components essential to the safe and secure operation of ZNPP should be protected from attacks or acts of sabotage," Grossi stated. "No action should be taken that undermines these principles."

The IAEA chief also reiterated the seven pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security that he laid out a year ago, including effective on-site and off-site radiation monitoring systems, as well as emergency preparedness and response measures at the Zaporizhzhia NPP.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

## Nuclear Safety at Zaporizhzhia NPP 'Extremely Fragile' as Military Escalation Looms - IAEA

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The security situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) remains very fragile amid a looming escalation in the hostilities in the region, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said on Tuesday.

"The nuclear safety and security situation at the Zaporizhzhya NPP continues to be extremely fragile and dangerous. Military activities which may well increase very considerably in the near future," Grossi said during a UN Security Council. "We are fortunate that a nuclear accident has not yet happened. As I said at the IAEA Board of Governors in March - we are rolling a dice and if this continues then once day our luck will run out."

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US to Announce \$300Mln Ukraine Aid Package on Wednesday - Official

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The United States on Wednesday will announce a new security assistance package for Ukraine worth \$300 million, a US official told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"We expect to announce it sometime tomorrow," the official said.

The new aid package is expected to consist mostly of additional ammunition such as Guided Multiple Launch Rockets for HIMARS launchers, media reported.

Moreover, according to reports, the United States will provide Ukraine with the military equipment from its own stockpiles through the presidential drawdown authority.

The United States has provided Ukraine with some \$36 billion worth of security assistance since Russia launched its special military operation in February 2022.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

UN Chief Congratulates Erdogan on Re-Election, Hopes to Strengthen Cooperation - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, May 30 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has congratulated Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his re-election and expressed hope to strengthen the partnership with Ankara, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"The Secretary-General congratulated President of Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his re-election as president of Turkey," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The UN secretary-general looks forward to further strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and Turkey, Dujarric added.

On Sunday, Turkey's Supreme Election Council said that Erdogan won the second round of the presidential election with 52.14% of the vote. The final results will be announced on June 1 at the earliest.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file**

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

Iron Dome Scores 5,000 Missile Interceptions Since 2011 - Israel Missile Defense Chief

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - Israel's Iron Dome air defense system has carried out more than 5,000 successful interceptions of incoming short range missile attacks, mainly from Hamas forces in Gaza, over the past 12 years, Israel Missile Defense Organization (IMDO) Director Moshe Patel said on Tuesday.

"Iron Dome [has recorded] up to 5,000 successful interceptions up to today," Patel told a meeting at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Iron Dome is the air defense system that Israel deploys to defend its population centers against very short range, relatively low-technology missiles fired over its borders from southern Lebanon and Gaza. It is integrated with other longer range systems, primarily David's Sling, Arrow 2 and Arrow 3, Patel said.

"All of our systems need to be interoperable. We need to be ready for mass attacks. We are watching and predicting and trying to be ahead of what they are building up and up to today we have succeeded," he said.

Israel is working on massively expanding the numbers and volume of its anti-ballistic missile interceptors to deal effectively with mass attacks and is using Artificial Intelligence (AI) overseen by human directors to maximize the effectiveness of these weapons, Patel said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Canada Natural Resources Minister Says Proposing Joint Regulation of Offshore Wind Energy

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - Canadian Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson said on Tuesday that he introduced legislation in parliament to assign regulatory authority for offshore wind energy to boards jointly managed by the federal and provincial governments.

"This morning, I was very pleased to introduce into the House of Commons amendments to the offshore accords to enable the offshore energy boards," Wilkinson said during a press conference.

The amendments to the accords with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador would broaden the regulatory scope of existing boards currently used to regulate offshore hydrocarbon extraction to include renewable energy, Wilkinson said.

The proposal would enable the provinces to seize the "enormous economic opportunities" that come with the global energy transition, Wilkinson said.

The global wind energy market is expected to increase 15-fold and attract \$1 trillion in investment by 2040, Wilkinson also said.

The effort would make "meaningful contributions" to Canada and its allies' climate change goals, Wilkinson added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

UN Urges De-Escalation in Kosovo, Ready to Coordinate With International Presence There

UNITED NATIONS, May 30 (Sputnik) – The United Nations calls for de-escalation in connection with the unrest in Kosovo, where the Serb minority is protesting ethnic Albanian mayors taking office in Serb-majority areas, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"[Special Representative of Secretary General Caroline Ziaideh] is urging a de-escalation and calls for responsible leadership and actions to defuse tensions and move toward a sustainable political solution as soon as possible. She said the UN interim administration mission in Kosovo will continue to coordinate closely with the international presence on the ground," Dujarric told reporters.

He also noted that Ziaideh "strongly condemned" actions resulting in serious injuries to KFOR military personnel and civilians.

On Monday, hundreds of Kosovo Serbs gathered outside local administration buildings in the municipalities of Zvecan, Leposaviq and Zubin Potok, demanding the withdrawal of police and the removal of ethnic Albanian mayors who took office after elections boycotted by the Serbs. Troops from the NATO-led Kosovo Force mission (KFOR), equipped with crowd dispersal devices, were also deployed. Police used tear gas to break up the demonstrations and escort the mayors into town halls.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Future of Missile Defense Lies in Lasers, Beams, Not in Kinetic Systems - Israeli Official

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The future of missile defense lies in laser and other beam systems and not in kinetic, or missile-delivered, physical interception warheads, Israel Missile Defense Organization (IMDO) Director Moshe Patel said on Tuesday.

"The future will be based on directed energy," Patel told a meeting at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Directed energy is the direction that [we] all need to invest in."

Patel explained that such development will be dictated by considerations of volume capabilities of energy as opposed to the much more limited and costly kinetically-delivered defense systems.

"We need to go into new technologies elsewhere," Patel said.

Israel was also preparing development systems to protect its population centers against attack by hypersonic weapon-delivered warheads, Patel also said.

Whatever the threat, Israel's missile defense systems would be ready, Patel added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file**

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

US-Israel Missile Defense Team-Up Confirmed Through 2033 - Patel

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The memorandum of understanding between the US Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and the Israel Missile Defense Organization (IMDO) has been extended to confirm the close partnership through 2033, IMDO Director Moshe Patel said on Tuesday.

"We are having good discussions with the MDA," Patel told a meeting at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Every lesson learned is being fully shared with the MDA because they are our partners both operational and technical."

Patel characterized the MDA-IMDO relationship as excellent and noted that without US help "we would not be where we are."

Patel also said that part of the road map defining the detailed collaboration over the next ten years has already been approved by Israeli officials and is being studied by the MDA.

The sharing of combat operational experience in missile defense was an ongoing process that was carried out with immediate updates in real time, Patel added.

In July 2022, the US Marine Corps successfully carried out a live-fire test of an air-defense prototype adapted from Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system. The Medium-Range Intercept Capability (MRIC) prototype successfully hit multiple targets representing cruise missiles, according to an official statement.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US to Announce New Russia-Related Sanctions on Wednesday - Blinken

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The United States is going to announce new Russia-related sanctions on Wednesday in response to Iran's alleged drone supply to Moscow and purported Russian disinformation efforts, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"Tomorrow, we'll announce new actions that build on the export controls on the technology that's found in Iranian drones used to target Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure, to counter Russian misinformation and disinformation, to protect human rights defenders online," Blinken said during a press conference in Lulea, Sweden.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Sweden's NATO Bid Process Can, Should Be Finalized in Weeks Ahead - Blinken

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - Sweden's accession process to join the NATO alliance can and should be completed in the weeks ahead, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"We look forward to this process being completed in the weeks ahead. We have no doubt that it can be and it should be and we expect it to be," Blinken said during remarks in Sweden alongside Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson.

Blinken urged both Turkey and Hungary to ratify Sweden's NATO bid as soon as possible. He added that the alliance would like the process to be completed before the Vilnius Summit in early July.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Seeks 12-Month Authorization of All Syrian Border Crossings - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, May 30 (Sputnik) - US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the United Nations is seeking a 12-month authorization for all Syrian border crossings to facilitate humanitarian assistance.

"Going forward, the UN must have multiple access options available. For this reason, the United States will work with the pen holders to seek a 12-month authorization of all border crossing points; Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salam and Al-Rai through a Security Council resolution this July," Thomas-Greenfield said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The ambassador pointed out that Syria's decision to extend the permit for another three months was not enough and the border crossings should remain opened at least until August 2024 or as long as required by the humanitarian situation.

Thomas-Greenfield backed UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' prior statements on the necessity of extending the authorization for a period of 12 months, pointing to the dire humanitarian situation in Syria.

The ambassador also called on all UN Security Council members to back the 12-month extension to ensure confidence, predictability and much needed support for humanitarian workers, the United Nations and the Syrian population.

The United States supports all modalities that can ensure the efficient and safe delivery of humanitarian aid to Syrians in need, Thomas-Greenfield said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

We Condemn Any Attacks on Civilians - UN on Drone Attacks on Moscow

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – The United Nations condemns any attack against civilians and civilian infrastructure, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday, commenting on the recent drone attacks on Moscow.

"Of course, we condemn any attack on civilians and civilian infrastructure anywhere those may occur. But I think it is also important to point out that there is no comparison between the recent attacks in Moscow and massive strikes that we have continuing seeing on Ukrainian cities,"

Dujarric told reporters.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Prosecutors Would Drop Charges Against Bankman-Fried if Requested by Bahamas - Filing

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - Prosecutors in the United States would drop charges against FTX cryptocurrency firm founder Samuel Bankman-Fried if The Bahamas denies a US request to try him on charges brought post-extradition, according to a court document filed in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York.

The document, filed by prosecutors on Monday, comes in response to a motion by Bankman-Fried to dismiss certain charges based on alleged violations of the extradition treaty between the US and The Bahamas.

Although the US prosecutors maintain that the charges brought after Bankman-Fried's extradition do not violate the terms of the treaty, they said they will drop the charges if The Bahamas disagrees with their assessment.

"The [United States'] response will be dispositive: the Government will proceed on the new charges in the S5 Indictment if The Bahamas consents to trial on these charges, and will not proceed on those counts if The Bahamas denies the Government's request," the filing said.

Bankman-Fried faces a number of charges for allegedly misusing investors' money for activities that went beyond running FTX. Bankman-Fried also faces charges of violating US campaign finance laws and defrauding the US Federal Elections Commission.

In addition, Bankman-Fried has been charged with bribing Chinese government officials.

Authorities arrested Bankman-Fried in The Bahamas in December at the request of the US Justice Department. Bankman-Fried's trial is expected to begin in October. Defense attorneys have requested separate trials – one for the fraud-related charges and one for the campaign finance and foreign bribery charges.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Nebenzia Met With IAEA Chief Grossi on Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant - Source to Sputnik

UNITED NATIONS, May 30 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia has met with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi, a source at the Russian diplomatic mission to the United Nations told Sputnik.

"Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN Vasily Nebenzia met with IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi [today]," the source said on Tuesday.

Grossi also met with the US and Ukrainian ambassadors to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield and Sergiy Kyslytsya, according to their respective statements.

The meetings took place ahead of a UN Security Council meeting on ways to protect the

Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) that will take place later on Tuesday.

Grossi will deliver a report to the UN Security Council on the current situation at the ZNPP.

Russia, which gained control of the ZNPP amid its special military operation in Ukraine last year, is expected to present proposals to ensure the security of the facility in compliance with IAEA's principles.

The meeting will be chaired by Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

House Freedom Caucus Says Debt Ceiling Deal 'Fails,' Calls for All Republicans to Oppose

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - House Freedom Caucus members on Tuesday urged their fellow Republicans to oppose a tentative deal between US President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy to raise the United States' debt ceiling, calling the agreement a failure. "This deal fails, fails completely," Freedom Caucus Chair Scott Perry said during a press conference. "That's why these members and others will be absolutely opposed to the deal, and we will do everything in our power to stop it and end it now."

Biden and McCarthy struck a tentative deal over the weekend to raise the US debt ceiling. Biden characterized the plan as a "compromise," in which neither side gets everything they want. The deal came following days of negotiations between the two leaders' teams.

The Republican conference has been "torn asunder" by the Biden-McCarthy plan, Representative Chip Roy said. The Freedom Caucus is attempting to reunite the party in opposition to the plan, he said, adding that all Republican members of Congress should vote against the bill.

The lawmakers criticized the Biden-McCarthy plan for removing many of the spending cuts and reforms included in the House-passed Limit, Save, Grow Act. The plan would provide Biden a "blank check" instead of reducing spending, Representative Lauren Boebert said.

The plan also weakens work requirements for federal aid, reduces permitting reform, upholds Biden's student loan bailout, keeps the majority of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) expansion, and fails to reclaim large portions of unspent COVID recovery funding, the lawmakers said.

The US debt would increase by approximately \$4 trillion under the Biden-McCarthy plan, compared to approximately \$1.5 trillion under the House-passed bill, the lawmakers said.

The proposal faces its first hurdle later on Tuesday in the House Rules Committee, where lawmakers will vote on the rule for debate on the bill. The panel, which is split between nine Republicans and four Democrats, could block the bill if all Democrats and three Republicans vote to oppose it.

Last week, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the US could default on its financial obligations as soon as June 5 if leaders fail to reach a deal to raise the debt ceiling.

Perry said Yellen comes to the discussion with "zero credibility" as Republicans are skeptical of her economic figures.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Spain Becomes 25th Nation to Sign Artemis Accords - NASA

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - Spain became the 25th country to join the Artemis Accords after a signing ceremony in Madrid featuring Spain's science and innovation minister Diana Morant and NASA administrator Bill Nelson, NASA said in a release on Tuesday.

"The United States and Spain's partnership in space has been on display for decades, but today we bring it to new heights," Nelson said in the release. "As the newest member of the Artemis Accords family, Spain will safeguard our shared ideals by helping ensure that humanity's rapid expansion into space is done peacefully, safely, and transparently."

Established in 2020, the Artemis Accords is a multilateral agreement between the United States and 24 other countries that establishes a framework for cooperation in the civil exploration and peaceful use of the Moon, Mars, and other astronomical bodies.

The Accords also reinforce key elements of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which forms the basis of international space law, the Rescue and Return Agreement, which sets forth obligations of states regarding the rescue of persons in space, and asserts best practices and norms of responsible behavior espoused by NASA and its partners, the release said.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, US Ambassador to Spain and Andorra Julissa Reynoso, and NASA Associate Administrator for International and Interagency Relations Karen Feldstein were also in attendance, the release added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Creating 'Army of Free Syria', Aims at Destabilizing Situation in Syria – Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, May 30 (Sputnik) – Russia has information indicating that the US is creating an "Army of Free Syria" whose goal would be removing the legitimate Syrian authorities, Moscow's envoy to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

"According to our information, Washington has started creating the army of free Syria in Raqqa with the participation of the local Arab tribes, ISIL fighters and other terrorist organizations. The goal here is clear. It is to use these fighters against the legitimate authorities of Syria, so as to destabilize the situation in the country," Nebenzia told the UN Security Council.

The Ambassador further added that western states are attempting to exert pressure, sometimes forcefully, on Syria and its neighbors so to hamper dialogue with Damascus, noting that the current US behavior on the normalization of relations between the Syrian government and their regional counterparts is "destructive".

Amid increasing attempts at destabilizing Damascus, Nebenzia also expressed Russia's concern over the intensification of Israeli airstrikes on Syria, which in some instances are violating the airspace of neighboring states.

The Ambassador noted that in April alone, over 10 airstrikes were carried by Israel on Syria's regions of Aleppo and Latakia, destroying civilian infrastructure, and causing casualties among the population.

Nebenzia further condemned Israel's use of force in violation of Syria's sovereignty and lamented that the UN's leadership had not issued any statement on the issue.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

House Speaker Threatens to Hold FBI Chief Contempt of Congress If Misses Subpoena Deadline

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy on Tuesday said he is prepared to move contempt charges in Congress if FBI Director Christopher Wray does not meet a deadline to provide records related to a Biden probe.

Earlier this month, House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer subpoenaed Wray, requesting a document that allegedly contains information about an alleged scheme involving then-Vice President Biden and a foreign national relating to the exchange of money for policy decisions.

"If he misses the deadline today, I am prepared to move contempt charges in Congress against him. We have jurisdiction over this," McCarthy told Fox News in an interview. "If he does not follow through with the law, we will move contempt charges against Christopher Wray and the FBI. They are not above the law."

Comer's subpoena asked Wray to provide the requested document by May 30.

McCarthy said lawmakers have a right to review the document, adding that he personally called Wray and told him to send the document by the deadline.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Kansas Man Indicted for Issuing Death Threats, Racial Slurs to Blacks - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - A Kansas man has been indicted by a federal grand jury for using guns, death threats and racial slurs to intimidate African Americans as well as for interfering with the victims' rights, the US Justice Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

"The indictment alleges that, on July 27, 2022, Austin Schoemann, 30, of Wichita, brandished a firearm and used racial slurs in order to threaten two Black juveniles, Victims 1 and 2, while they were entering a QuikTrip gasoline station," the release said. "In addition to intimidating and interfering with the two young men, Schoemann used his firearm to threaten a Black adult, Victim-3, who intervened in support of the juveniles' federally-protected right to be free from racial discrimination when visiting a gasoline station."

The Justice Department said Schoemann was also charged with using a firearm while committing these crimes, the release said.

From January through August 2022, Schoemann interfered with the federally-protected housing rights of a white woman, Victim-4, by threatening to harm or kill any Black people who visited her home, the release said.

Many of the threats were made in-person, as Schoemann would also stand outside of Victim-4's house and scream racial slurs and threats whenever he thought the woman had Black visitors in her house or planned to do so, the release said.

Schoemann is charged with two violations of using the internet to send videos and messages to Victim-4's family members and for repeatedly threatening to shoot and kill her Black visitors, the release added.

Schoemann could serve up to ten years in prison for the firearms charges, a maximum of five years for distributing threatening messages online and a mandatory minimum of seven years for brandishing a firearm while committing acts of violence, according to the release.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Canada's Joly to Attend NATO's Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting in Oslo – Global Affairs

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly will personally NATO's informal foreign affairs ministers meeting in Oslo from May 31 to June 1st, Global Affairs Canada said on Tuesday.

“The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, will be in Oslo, Norway, from May 31 to June 1, 2023, to attend an informal meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Minister Joly will also participate in a ceremony to honour the victims of the July 22, 2011, acts of terrorism on Utøya Island, Norway,” the ministry's statement reads.

Joly is expected to reaffirm Canada's commitment to Ukraine's fight for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the statement said, and highlight the necessity for further coordination among NATO member states and bolstering Kiev's defence capacities.

Additionally, the issue of Sweden's accession to NATO with the shortest possible delays will also be addressed by Joly, the statement continued, adding that Canada “strongly supports” the admission of the country which will help strengthen Euro-Atlantic Security.

The statement added that Joly will take part in the discussion around the upcoming July's NATO's Vilnius Summit, and its priorities.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Russia, China, 3 African States Abstain on UNSC Resolution Extending South Sudan Sanctions

UNITED NATIONS, May 30 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council adopted on Tuesday a resolution to extend sanctions on South Sudan, with Russia, China, Ghana, Gabon and Mozambique abstaining, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

"Madam President, the Russian Federation abstained from voting on the US-prepared draft on extending the sanctions regime against South Sudan. We think that the sanctions easements in the document are insufficient, and we regret the American sponsors' overfocus on the sanctions paradigm," Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia told a UN Security Council meeting.

The ambassador expressed regret that the resolution failed to meet South Sudan halfway on reviewing the arms embargo.

Nebenzia noted the importance of enabling South Sudan to strengthen its developing armed forces so that they would be able to address issues related to inter-communal violence and ensure the viability of the 2024 elections.

The diplomat said that South Sudan has made significant progress in meeting the UN sanctions relief benchmark and that using the current turmoil in Sudan to block progress on the issue was unjust.

Instead of keeping African nations under long-lasting sanctions regimes, priority should be given to helping them address security challenges, Nebenzia continued.

"This is impossible without effective trade, and well-equipped national law enforcement entities," the ambassador said.

The sanctions on South Sudan were extended until May 31, 2024.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Gathering Info on Moscow Drone Attacks, Doesn't Back Attacks Inside Russia - NSC

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The United States is still gathering information into the latest drone attacks that occurred in Moscow, a White House National Security Council spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik on Tuesday.

"We saw the news and are still gathering information about what happened. As general matter, we do not support attacks inside of Russia," the spokesperson said.

Earlier in the day, the Russian Defense Ministry said that Ukraine attacked the Russian capital with eight unmanned aerial vehicles, all drones were shot down.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Targets 2 Exchange Companies, 3 Individuals in New Sanctions on Syria – Treasury

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – The United States imposed sanctions on two exchange companies and three affiliated individuals in Syria for their alleged roles in the facilitation of

Damascus', Hezbollah's, and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force's (IRGC-QF) access to the international financial system in violation the existing sanctions regime, the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Tuesday.

"Today, ... [OFAC] designated two Syrian money service businesses that have secretly helped the Syrian regime under Bashar al-Assad and its Hizballah and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) allies maintain access to the international financial system in violation of international sanctions. OFAC is also designating three brothers who own and operate Al-Fadel Exchange," OFAC said in a press release.

Since 2021, both Damascus-based Al-Adham Exchange Company and Al-Fadel Exchange have allegedly moved millions of dollars to accounts at the Central Bank of Syria and in this way benefited the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad, the release said.

Additionally, OFAC believes that the Syrian government and Hezbollah used Al-Fadel Exchange and Al-Adham Exchange to transfer hard currency collected in cities outside of Syria to the Central Bank of Syria.

The new sanctions also affected three Balwi brothers, Fadel Ma'ruf, Mut'i Ma'ruf, Muhammad Ma'ruf, who, according to OFAC, have owned and managed Al-Fadel Exchange and were the only individuals authorized by the Central Bank of Syria to work on the behalf of Hezbollah, the release noted.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

TikTok Stored Sensitive Financial Data of US Users on Servers Based in China - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The social media platform TikTok stored sensitive financial information about content creators on the application in China, despite previously claiming to only store Americans' data on servers outside of Beijing's purview, Forbes reported on Tuesday.

The personal financial information of thousands of TikTok creators, including social security numbers, was stored on servers in China and made accessible to employees there, the report said, citing records obtained from multiple sources across different parts of the company.

The report draws on internal communications, audio recordings, screenshots, and documents marked "Privileged and Confidential" as well as several people familiar with the matter.

TikTok uses internal tools and databases from the parent company ByteDance to manage payments to creators who earn money through TikTok, including many of the biggest creators in the United States and Europe, the report said.

Earlier this year, TikTok CEO Shou Chew told US lawmakers that American data has always been stored in Virginia and Singapore, amid concerns about protecting user privacy in the United States. US officials have pointed to alleged ties between TikTok's China-based parent company, ByteDance, and the Chinese government as a source of concern.

TikTok spokesperson Alex Haurek reportedly said that the company remains confident in Shou's statement to Congress. However, neither TikTok nor ByteDance answered questions about whether sensitive information of US citizens is stored and accessible in China, the report said.

The Chinese government has been accused in the past of stealing sensitive financial information from US citizens, including social security numbers used for identity theft, the report said.

Even if TikTok were not a subsidiary of a Chinese company, storing sensitive US data on Chinese servers would constitute an "alarming IT security malpractice," former White House and CIA national security lawyer Bryan Cunningham reportedly said.

The report comes following efforts across the US government to restrict the application on official devices, as well as amid a legal battle between TikTok and the state of Montana over a law set to ban application stores from offering the platform in the state.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Sanctions 17 Individuals, Entities in Mexico, China for Ties to Drug Trade - Blinken

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The United States has issued sanctions against 17 individuals and entities based in China and Mexico for their alleged ties to the production of narcotics headed for US markets, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"Today, the Department of the Treasury sanctioned 17 individuals and entities involved in the production of illicit drugs, 13 of which are based in the People's Republic of China (PRC), and four of which are based in Mexico," Blinken said in a statement.

The US government has closely coordinated with the Mexican government on the sanctions action, the statement said.

The sanctioned individuals and entities were allegedly involved in the production of counterfeit pills, which are often laced with fentanyl and bear the markings of legitimate pharmaceuticals, and were "likely bound" for markets in the United States, the statement said.

The sanctions are part of a whole-of-government approach by the Biden administration to disrupt illicit fentanyl supply chains around the world, the statement said.

Sanctions targets included China-based pill press supplier Youli Technology Development Co., which allegedly shipped machinery to US individuals involved in the production of counterfeit pills, the US Treasury Department said in a statement.

The sanctions also targeted Mexpacking Solutions, a pill press business in Chihuahua, Mexico, with alleged ties to the Sinaloa Cartel, the statement said.

Three-fifths of fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills analyzed by the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) laboratory in 2022 contained a potentially lethal dose of the narcotic, according to a DEA study.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Envoy to Discuss Energy Security on Trip to Azerbaijan – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – US Assistant Secretary of State Geoffrey Pyatt will travel to Azerbaijan on May 30-June 2 to discuss energy security, the Department of State said on Tuesday.

"He will meet with Azerbaijani government officials to discuss energy security and opportunities to increase use of renewable energy sources," the statement said.

During the trip, Pyatt will participate in the 28th annual Baku Energy Week.

He also plans to meet with energy officials from other countries and organizations to promote international cooperation to stabilize global energy supplies while accelerating the clean energy transition, the statement added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

IMF Says Reached Agreement With Ukraine Paving Way for \$900M In Disbursement

(Updates with more details in paras 4-7)

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday that it has reached a staff-level agreement with the Ukrainian authorities, paving the way for a \$900 million disbursement.

"The International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff and the Ukrainian authorities have reached staff-level agreement on an updated set of economic and financial policies for the first review under the four-year Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Arrangement," the statement said.

If approved by the IMF Executive Board, the staff-level agreement would enable the disbursement of about \$900 million to Ukraine, the statement said.

IMF team chief Gavin Gray confirmed to journalists that the Executive Board is expected to decide whether to approve the agreement within several weeks.

"This is a staff-level agreement, which is subject to approval by IMF executive board, which we anticipate in the next few weeks," Gray said during a press briefing.

Gray noted that the agreement is based on the performance of the Ukrainian authorities since the program was approved in March.

The IMF has committed to providing Kiev with \$15.6 billion through its four-year program, which is part of a wider international support package for Ukraine, Gray said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

One Soldier Killed, 3 Injured in Vehicle Collision at Alaska Base – Reports

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – At least one soldier was killed and three others injured when two vehicles collided over the weekend at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Stars and Stripes reported on Tuesday, citing the US Army.

At 11:30 p.m. local time on Sunday (7:30 GMT on Monday), a vehicle with five soldiers on

board collided with a second vehicle carrying another soldier along with his wife and child, according to the report. The collision resulted in the ejection of two soldiers from the first car. One of the soldiers was later confirmed dead at Alaska Native Medical Center.

The name of the deceased soldier, who was a member of the 11th Airborne Division, is currently being withheld until his relatives are notified, the report said.

The Army Criminal Investigation Command is investigating the incident, the report noted.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

RPT - Biden to Host UK's Prime Minister Sunak for Talks in Washington on June 8 - White House

(Repeats to fix day of the week)

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden to host UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in Washington on June 8 to discuss a range of bilateral issues, including support for Ukraine and energy security, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"President Biden looks forward to welcoming Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of the United Kingdom for an Official Working Visit to the White House on Thursday, June 8... Building on their recent engagements, the two leaders will review a range of global issues, including their steadfast support for Ukraine as it defends itself against Russia's brutal war of aggression, as well as further action to bolster energy security and address the climate crisis," Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

The two leaders will also discuss developments in Northern Ireland as part of their shared commitment to preserving the gains of the Good Friday Agreement, the statement added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Trump Says Would End Birthright Citizenship to Curb Illegal Immigration to US if Reelected

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that if he is reelected in 2024, he would sign an executive order on his first day in office to end the policy of automatically providing citizenship to children of persons who illegally enter the United States.

"As part of my plan to secure the border on day one of my new term in office, I will sign an executive order making clear to federal agencies, under the correct interpretation of the law, going forward the future children of illegal aliens will not receive automatic US citizenship," Trump said in a video statement.

Trump noted that millions of immigrants arrive in the United States illegally in part because of existing policies such as birthright citizenship.

The goal is to curb illegal immigration by eliminating one of its major incentives thus deterring

them from coming to the United States and encouraging those already in the country to return in their countries of origin, Trump said.

The former president also said he would also end the practice of birth tourism where foreigners come to the United States during the women's last weeks of pregnancy to acquire US citizenship.

Trump characterized the practice as being "unfair," given that it allows some to jump the "migration lines" and obtain permanent residency cards.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

NDP Calls for Public Probe Into Election Interference Claims, Says Trudeau Ignoring Issue

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - New Democratic Party (NDP) Leader Jagmeet Singh said on Tuesday that the Canadian government ought to conduct a public inquiry into allegations of foreign interference in the country's politics, accusing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of ignoring the issue.

"We also know that there are clear allegations of foreign interference in our electoral system, and that's something we take seriously, unlike Mr. Trudeau, who wants to ignore this, sweep it under the rug," Singh said during a press conference.

Singh also reiterated calls for a public inquiry into allegations of foreign interference in Canadian politics. A public process would have enough "rigor" to restore Canadians' confidence in their electoral system, Singh said.

Earlier in the week, the NDP also introduced a motion in parliament that calls on special rapporteur David Johnston to step down from his position at the head of the government's foreign interference probe.

Although Singh noted that the motion was not an attack on Johnston personally, he claimed that a perception of bias "undermines" the work he can do as special rapporteur. Members of parliament have questioned Johnston's personal ties to Trudeau, pointing to ski trips between their families in past decades.

The calls for a public inquiry in place of Johnston's probe come following the release of the special rapporteur's first report on foreign interference in Canadian elections last week. The final report is set to be delivered by the end of October.

The probe arose from allegations that Liberal Party lawmakers received support from Chinese sources in an attempt to influence election outcomes in Canada. Other members of parliament have also purportedly been the target of foreign governments based on their political stances.

NDP member Jenny Kwan said the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) briefed her on Friday about the Chinese government targeting her for her stances on democracy in Hong Kong and China's treatment of its Uyghur population.

Singh said he will receive a special briefing with confidential information regarding what CSIS knows.

Following the release of his first report, Johnston also recommended against a public inquiry into the matter, arguing it would not deliver the transparency expected by Canadians, given the

sensitive nature of information involved.

The report concluded that claims about China's alleged interference lacked context and were "misconstrued by media." However, the report found that China and Russia are "particularly active" in foreign interference activities in Canada.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

Biden to Host UK's Prime Minister Sunak for Talks in Washington on June 8 - White House

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden to host UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in Washington on June 8 to discuss a range of bilateral issues, including support for Ukraine and energy security, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Monday. "President Biden looks forward to welcoming Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of the United Kingdom for an Official Working Visit to the White House on Thursday, June 8... Building on their recent engagements, the two leaders will review a range of global issues, including their steadfast support for Ukraine as it defends itself against Russia's brutal war of aggression, as well as further action to bolster energy security and address the climate crisis," Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

The two leaders will also discuss developments in Northern Ireland as part of their shared commitment to preserving the gains of the Good Friday Agreement, the statement added.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

US Releases New Framework for Space Diplomacy, Boosting Artemis Accords - Blinken

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) - The Department of State has released its first ever Strategic Framework for Space Diplomacy which it describes as a "groundbreaking initiative to advance US Space Leadership," Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced in a statement on Monday.

"Today the Department of State is releasing our first-ever "Strategic Framework for Space Diplomacy," a groundbreaking initiative to advance US global space leadership," Blinken said. "Through this Framework, we will expand international cooperation on mutually beneficial space activities, including through the Artemis Accords."

The new framework also calls for efforts to create and extend international commitments against destructive anti-satellite missile tests, Blinken continued.

"We will encourage responsible behavior, strengthen understanding and support for US national space policies, and promote international use of U.S. space capabilities," he said.

The State Department is also working to build and extend international partnerships to support current major US space projects including the James Webb Space Telescope, NASA's Artemis

missions, and the Department of Commerce's Space Traffic Coordination System, Blinken said.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

IMF Upgrades Ukraine's 2023 GDP Growth Forecast to Range of 1% to 3%

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday it has upgraded the 2023 GDP growth forecast for Ukraine to a range of 1% to 3%, but acknowledged that the outlook remains highly uncertain.

"IMF staff have therefore upgraded real GDP growth for 2023 to a range of 1 to 3 percent (from the previous range of -3 to +1 percent when the EFF [Extended Fund Facility] was approved), although the outlook remains highly uncertain as the war continues," IMF team head Gavin Gray said in a statement after the conclusion of discussions with Ukrainian officials in Vienna.

**This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.**

IMF Says Reached Agreement With Ukraine, Paving Way for \$900Mln Disbursement

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday it has reached a staff-level agreement with the Ukrainian authorities, paving the way for \$900 million disbursement.

"The International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff and the Ukrainian authorities have reached staff-level agreement on an updated set of economic and financial policies for the first review under the 4-year Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Arrangement," the statement said.

The staff-level agreement is subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board. If approved, it would enable disbursement of about \$900 million, it added.