

**10/4/23 Wednesday**

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US Fines Major TV Provider \$150,000 Over Space Debris After Failed Satellite Deorbit

A major US television provider has been fined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for creating space debris after it failed to properly dispose of one of its retired communications satellites.

The FCC [announced on Monday](#) it was fining Dish Network \$150,000 for failing to properly remove a satellite from geostationary orbit, creating space debris that could pose a danger to other satellites or spacecraft.

Calling the decision a “breakthrough settlement,” the federal regulator said it had made it “very clear the FCC has strong enforcement authority and capability to enforce its vitally important space debris rules.”

According to the FCC, Dish had planned for nearly a decade to retire the EchoStar-7 satellite in May 2022, noting it had approved the plan in 2012. However, in February of last year, three months before the planned decommissioning, Dish said the satellite had insufficient propellant to make the required maneuver.

Dish was supposed to bring the EchoStar-7 down to an altitude of roughly 300 kilometers above the Earth from its distant geostationary orbit of 35,786 kilometers, a so-called “graveyard orbit.” Instead, Dish dumped the satellite just 122 kilometers away from its previous orbit, near to the orbital paths of other geostationary satellites.

“As satellite operations become more prevalent and the space economy accelerates, we must be certain that operators comply with their commitments,” the FCC said.

The FCC decision also requires the company to adopt new safety measures, such as better tracking of satellites’ propellant reserves, providing more details about how and when it will dispose of each satellite, and training employees on complying with space rules. Dish has 30 days to assign a new senior corporate manager to serve as compliance officer for the effort. There are currently 34,580 debris objects being tracked by the Space Surveillance Networks, although [according to the European](#) Space Agency (ESA), there are thousands of smaller objects that aren’t being tracked.

Orbital objects whiz through space at tens of thousands of miles per hour, making even very small pieces of kind into dangerous projectiles that could damage satellites, space stations, or even humans on spacewalks.

As the number of satellites has dramatically increased in recent years, the risk of space debris [has become greater](#), prompting regulators to crack down on its creation and prompting scientists to attempt to devise ways of controlling the waste.

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## US House Speaker's Power Should Be 'Slashed' to Ease Time-Sensitive Selection - Legal Expert

The battle for the US House speakership has become such a high-stakes game because both Republicans and Democrats have helped accumulate enormous power in the speaker's chair, a leading constitutional expert told Sputnik. They could avoid the endless debates and voting if they reversed that trend.

On Tuesday, the US House of Representatives broke historical precedent and [vacated the office of speaker](#) of the House, stripping US Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) of the third-most-powerful office in the United States.

The motion was initiated by dissident members of McCarthy's own Republican Party who were dissatisfied with his leadership, blaming him for compromising with Democrats during two key instances over the past year in which the GOP attempted to pressure Democrats into accepting budget cuts using a financial crisis.

Now, the House will have to [select a new speaker](#) before it can proceed with other business, which includes passing the fiscal year 2024 budget that lawmakers recently gave themselves an additional 45 days to do. There is no clear alternative to McCarthy, who took 15 rounds of voting in January to achieve a majority.

Bruce Fein, a former US associate deputy attorney general and a leading constitutional scholar, told [Radio Sputnik's Political Misfits](#) on Wednesday that while McCarthy's ouster was unprecedented, there had been several other attempts over the years to get rid of a House speaker with various degrees of success.

"I was involved myself in drafting a motion to vacate, [former US Rep.] John Boehner was the speaker. Now, John Boehner didn't wait for the vote," Fein said, noting that the Ohio Republican chose to resign first, on October 29, 2015. "He clearly resigned with the Sword of Damocles over his neck - same way that [former US President Richard] Nixon resigned rather than face an impeachment trial."

"And in 1910, then-House Speaker Joe Cannon had his powers stripped. Now, it's true they didn't vacate the chair, but his powers were enormously scaled back," Fein noted. "So, there have been revolts, but even two prior incidents doesn't make a pattern, because you are spacing it out over 123 years. So it's obvious this is unusual."

"The Constitution does not require that the House speaker be a member of the House, so it could be anyone else," Fein said.

On Tuesday, Vivek Ramaswamy, a candidate in the Republican presidential primary race, suggested that former US President Donald Trump should be chosen as speaker.

Fein noted that if Trump were to be found guilty of having participated in the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol, as he is presently accused in a federal criminal case, then he would be ineligible to hold any public office in the United States.

"There's another element involved here that the press has underplayed in my judgment, and that is: the House speaker, traditionally, until Newt Gingrich was sworn in in 1995, was a relatively minor power in the House. The vast majority of authority was entrusted to the chairs of committees of Congress," Fein explained. "The chairs and the committees, the Rules

Committee, they decided the order of the proceedings, what amendments would be entertained, what bills would get to the floor, what hearings would be held.”

“Now that changed with what you would call the ‘Gingrich Revolution’ or ‘counter-revolution’ against the legislative branch,” Fein said. “When Gingrich came in, he migrated virtually all power to the speaker. The speaker appoints the committees, the committee chairs, he regulates what gets to the floor, how much time there is for debate, regulates and stipulates what the Rules Committee should do, and also gets the lion’s share of money in campaign fundraising to fund other members.”

“So that was a rule change. The other thing that Newt Gingrich did to strengthen his hand was that he slashed the budget of all the committees so they couldn’t hire anybody, they couldn’t retain talent that would establish what you might call a professional core of aides who could challenge leadership because they had expertise,” he explained, adding that with the change, most staff stayed “no more than a year or two, so they basically have no more institutional memory.”

Fein noted that ever since Gingrich, no speaker has ever surrendered back the power he accumulated in the speaker’s chair.

“And now we have a vacuum here, there’s no leadership now, the acting speaker has got no authority to do anything other than hold votes for the successor to McCarthy and I think it would be much easier to find a consensus candidate if the power of the speaker was slashed,” he said, noting how much the speaker conducts private negotiations with the Senate majority leader on key legislation, which they then give lawmakers just 24 hours on which to vote.

“The deliberative process has been totally compromised. And if that is done, it’ll make the choice of a successor much easier, because the stakes have become much lower,” Fein argued.

Fein noted that, contrary to popular perception, it was the Democrats who secured McCarthy’s fate, as they all voted to oust him and were only joined by a handful of Republicans sufficient to tip their narrow majority into a minority. Thus, the Democrats could also have a major role in selecting the new speaker.

“So it’s possible - and we saw this kind of coalition emerge in passing the [interim budget bill] 11th hour last Sunday, there you had more Democrats than Republicans voting for the bill. And it may well be that the Democrats will collaborate with Republicans and find a new speaker. It won’t be simply someone who’s solely selected out of the Republican ranks,” Fein said, noting that “if that’s the case, it’s going to be a long, long day until there’s a consensus.”

“It’s going to be chaotic for a while. I think this is going to hurt the Republicans, because it suggests that they really don’t know how to manage themselves, even though it was really the Democrats that threw McCarthy out, I think the public perception is the opposite. So the Republicans are going to have to scramble, which might cause them to compromise, because all that they really care about in the long run is staying in power and not losing to the Democrats in 2024.”

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Biggest-Ever US Health Care Strike Begins as 75,000 Kaiser Permanente Workers Walk Out

After weeks of slowly degrading contract negotiations, tens of thousands of workers at health care giant Kaiser Permanente went on strike on Wednesday, beginning the largest health care-related strike in US history.

Last month, as the deadline for contract negotiations loomed and progress on talks looked grim, the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, representing about 85,000 of the health system's employees, [approved a three-day strike](#) in California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington state, and a one-day strike in Virginia and Washington, DC.

The strike represents about 35% of Kaiser's workforce of 213,000 employees who aren't physicians, but still marks the largest strike by health care workers in US history.

"They're not listening to the frontline health care workers," Mikki Fletchall, a licensed vocational nurse and Kaiser employee from California, told US media. "We're striking because of our patients."

Some of the worker categories on strike include: vocational nurses; techs from emergency rooms, radiology, ultrasound, respiratory therapy, surgery, and x-ray departments; certified nursing assistants; dietary services; behavioral health workers; and pharmacy technicians. According to the union, Kaiser has presented unacceptable demands in the contract talks, including slashing bonuses for frontline health care workers while giving executives bonuses; failing to raise wages in line with rising inflation; offering such little pay for entry-level positions that they're not competitive with service industry jobs; and have refused to address chronic understaffing issues.

The workers also accuse the company of leaning into subcontracting in order to circumvent unionized workers.

The company made it big off the COVID-19 pandemic, seeing its profits skyrocket, but the workers say they haven't seen the benefits, and that it's not just them who are suffering from the long waits and worn-out coworkers, but patients as well.

Michelle Gaskill-Hames, the president of Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Hospitals of Southern California and Hawaii, told US media the company still has a better worker retention rate than its competitors, all of whom are also facing difficulties from the pandemic-related health care crisis.

"Our focus, for the dollars that we bring in, are to keep them invested in value-based care," she said. "I think coming out of the pandemic, health care workers have been completely burned out. The trauma that was felt caring for so many COVID patients, and patients that died, was just difficult."

Among all professions, frontline health care workers suffered the highest death rate during the COVID-19 pandemic, [according to data](#) from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), followed closely by food service workers. Both groups were dubbed "essential workers" during the social lockdowns that predated the advent of SARS-CoV-2 vaccines and were exempted from the restrictions that kept millions at home in an effort to slow the spread of the virus.

The strike comes amid a year of energetic labor actions as tens of thousands of [automobile workers](#) and [actors remain on strike](#). Recently, some [53,000 Nevada hospitality workers](#) voted to authorize a strike.

US President Joe Biden, who has long cast himself as cut from the same cloth as blue-collar Americans, has called himself the “most pro-labor president” in US history. However, his record has wavered on the issue; while he joined United Auto Workers members [on the picket line](#) recently, last winter he approved legislative action to stop railway workers from striking for better safety conditions. Just weeks later, a massive derailment in Ohio caused an extensive chemical spill that [victims have compared](#) to the Chernobyl disaster in Soviet Ukraine in 1986.

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Russian Industry Tops Business Activity Index as Economy ‘Built Quite Well’ to Adapt to Sanctions

Russian industry has not just survived Western sanctions, but managed to thrive, recently reaching the top of an international metric of business activity. Experts said the Russian economy has unique properties and that the West overestimated its ability to isolate Russia from trade partners.

A recent [report by JPMorgan Chase](#) placed Russia first in the world in the manufacturing business activity index for September, despite nearly two years of Western sanctions aimed at strangling the Russian economy.

The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) report described global manufacturing as remaining “in the doldrums” in September, noting that aside from a handful of nations, all of which were in Asia except for Greece, no countries registered a growth in new trade orders. The nations included Russia, Kazakhstan, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Greece, and Myanmar. The US saw a very slight contraction, but some of the biggest losers were Eurozone members like Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands - nations that once imported Russian energy and other goods, but which have since adopted a boycott, driving up prices across the board and prompting mass protests.

Sputnik spoke with several experts about the report and the economic trends it describes. Anton Tabakh, the lead economist of the “Expert RA” rating agency, explained that the report gives a businessman’s-eye-view of the economy, looking at the same metrics they use to anticipate economic patterns.

“It is a highly respected survey that has been running for many years. Previously, it was carried out by IHS MARKIT, which was bought by S&P not so long ago. JP Morgan and S&P [Standard & Poor’s] publish the figures, which is data from surveys of suppliers. Financial markets are guided by this,” he explained, noting that it is not a rating, but a “kind of indicator. It is not objective in the same sense that, for example, an exchange rate is objective, but it is very respectable.”

“Therefore, it is impossible to talk about this as a ‘rating,’” he noted. “Thus, no indicators are included there - it is an indicator in itself.”

Tabakh explained that Russia was ahead of industrial giants like the US and China because of economic struggles in both countries driven by trends not playing out in Russia.

"In this case, this is the objective state of the economy. Interest rates are now rising in the United States, and economic activity is slowing. This is not a recession, but it is a slight slowdown in economic activity. So this impacts what companies see," he said.

"The same thing is happening in China, but for slightly different reasons," Tabakh said, noting it was "the crisis in the real estate market and the decline in economic growth."

"This is usually the PMI rating - and why do financial sharks look at it? Because it usually shows what will happen in the economy over a period of several months. This is the so-called leading indicator. Not the best, but good enough, that's why everyone is looking at it," he explained.

"That is, it does not show what happened - it is not a rear view mirror. On the contrary, it is an opportunity to look forward. Because it is clear that, as if they are suppliers to large companies, they look at what will be sold there in a few months. And they are purchasing for this purpose."

Andrey Kolganov, doctor of economics, head of the Laboratory of Socio-Economic Systems at the Faculty of Economics of the Moscow State University, told Sputnik that Russian industry was performing at its best in many years.

"I don't know the industry breakdown of JP Morgan's reporting data because detailed statistics are not disclosed, but according to domestic data, we can say that the manufacturing industry is showing the greatest growth, and it is in the manufacturing industry that the business activity index is now the highest in the last few years - you could say even a record since 2017, approximately. And it is higher than the services business activity index, which has been higher than manufacturing in previous months."

"This is due to the fact that output in the manufacturing industry is growing. And in general, the growth rate of the manufacturing industry is higher than the average for the economy," he said.

"The number of new orders is growing. It is possible to contain price increases, although there are certain difficulties with inflation. But, nevertheless, such a jump in prices has not yet occurred. The normal employment situation is increasing and, moreover, manufacturing employment continues to grow, albeit at a very slow pace," Kolganov explained. "But it is already at its highest level in a long time, so there are reasons for optimism."

He noted that as a consequence of the conflict in Ukraine and export deals with other nations, Russia's defense industry is booming, which has benefited several related economic sectors as well.

"As for industries, of course, we do not have statistics on the defense industry, but it is obvious that those enterprises that operate in the defense industry - orders for their products are expanding, output is growing, and accordingly, production is also growing in supplier enterprises that do not produce defense products themselves, but supply for defense products such as, metal blanks, cables, paint - you can list there a list of hundreds and thousands of items that are part of the defense products, which in themselves are not defense products. But the industries that supply these products are also growing in terms of output levels."

Kolganov said US sanctions have failed to crush the Russian economy as US President Joe Biden had predicted because they failed to completely isolate Russia from the world.

"The most obvious thing is that the US' bet on the complete isolation of the Russian economy within the framework of the world economy turned out to be untenable. The economic blockade of Russia, despite the sanctions imposed and the threats of sanctions against those who cooperate with Russia, this blockade could not be organized. This blockade, in general, turned out to be relatively easy to break through."

"We, of course, struggled with the problems of import substitution for a very long time, starting in 2014, when sanctions began to be imposed on us. But nonetheless, some work was done over the previous period and quite a lot of success was achieved in ensuring import substitution, mainly in those industries that were not high-tech. This is where we were able to quickly achieve a high level of supply of domestic products."

"But in some high-tech industries, the level of import substitution has increased slightly. Well, let's say, if by 2014 our machine-tool industry had a colossal dependence on imports, reaching 95-96%, now the dependence on imports in the machine-tool industry has decreased to 76%. This is, of course, a lot, but this is still less than it was before."

Tabakh also explained that the economic weight of the Group of Seven has declined from their domination of some 70% of the world economy 30 years ago, causing the West to overestimate its ability to isolate Russia.

"Accordingly, it is clear that depending on one's own control over the markets, that is, control over the global economy on a scale that would allow this has been lost, perhaps with the exception of the financial sector."

"The second reason is the same as why Russian analysts also looked poorly at the prospects: the scale of budget expenditures related to the SMO [special military operation] was not clear, nor the program for anti-sanctions measures. It was not clear how the economy would adapt to this. It turned out that the Russian economy was built quite well for this."

"That is, reasonable measures were taken. Plus, we kept open those markets that allowed us not only to overcome the decline, but even to ensure some growth," he said, noting that Biden "underestimated the resources of the Russian economy."

Jacques Sapir, director of studies at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris, told Sputnik that the PMI report was an indicator the Russian economy would perform well in the coming year.

"The leading rank of Russia, which is constant since fall 2022, is a clear indicator that the economy will grow in 2023. Of course, it doesn't tell us in what proportion. For precise figures it is better to use a paper written by a specialized research institute like the Institute for Economic Forecasting of Moscow. But it clearly shows that sanctions have had only a short-term impact on the Russian economy. Such a fast return to growth, and very probably to a massive growth, was unexpected by Western economists. The main reason is that existing factors of economic resilience and growth in Russia have been seriously undervalued," he explained.

"The comparison between Russia and some Western economies (Germany, Austria, France) is also extremely interesting as it shows that EU economies will enter a severe recession while Russia will achieve fast growth," he said, calling it an interesting case of the "'boomerang effect' of sanctions indeed."

When it comes to sanctions, Sapir said the main factor in this "boomerang effect" was energy exports.

"When EU countries decided on sanctions against Russia, they didn't figure out how much they were dependent on Russian furnished cheap energy," he explained. "This mistake is now having catastrophic consequences in Germany, and in most EU countries. Russia, to the contrary, has found new clients for its oil and gas."

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Report: US Air Force Tested Classified Cruise Missile Fitted With Mock Nuke in 2022

The United States Department of Defense has only deployed one new cruise missile in the past 30 years.

The US Air Force conducted a successful test in 2022 of a stealth cruise missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, government documents have revealed.

The secretive missile is classified as a Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) missile and is designed to replace the aging AGM-86 which was first used in the 1980s. Designed and produced by Raytheon, the US Air Force conducted eight successful tests of the missile as it carried a mock version of a new nuclear warhead named W80-4.

Details about the missile are sparse but the Air Force describes it as a stealthy and long-range upgrade to the AGM-86. The W80-4 is an upgrade to the W80 nuclear warhead, which is being retrofitted to make it compatible with the new missile.

The program is part of the Pentagon's \$1.2 trillion nuclear modernization program. The Pentagon's nuclear facilities are infamously out of date, having just ended its use of floppy disks in 2019.

The missile was fired from a B-52 bomber, which itself is an ancient plane, first coming into use in the 1950s. However, the B-52 has proven to be a reliable workhorse for the US military and has received some upgrades over the decades.

The US Air Force tested the missile's ability to safely separate from the B-52, the deployment of the missile's slight surfaces, engine operations and flight control actuations, as well as its controlled flight after deploying from the B-52.

"The missile successfully released from the aircraft, powered its engine, and executed all in-flight maneuvers. A Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) and Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) team developed the warhead test asset, an Environmental Test Unit. The Environmental Test Unit successfully executed all pre-arm/pre-release criteria and collected environmental data for the duration of the flight. This is a significant milestone for the joint program and first collection of representative LRSO free flight data, used to populate the W80-4 STS, define environmental specifications, inform design decisions, and validate computational models," the report said.

One issue that was found with the missile was that when four or more missiles were loaded in the B-52's rotary launcher "the stores clash with the fuel tank." The Air Force said at the time it expected the issue to be resolved by May 2023.

The US Air Force was originally tasked with making a version of the new LRSO missile that was capable of delivering a conventional warhead, "within five days" of completing the nuclear version, but Congress removed that requirement in the fiscal 2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

The decision on whether the missile should enter full scale production is expected in late 2027.

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Who Are the Contenders for House Speaker & What's Their Stance on Ukraine Aid?

US Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) was removed as House speaker on Tuesday after fellow Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) filed a motion to vacate the position. As McCarthy has announced he won't seek the speakership again, the question now becomes: who will replace him?

While it is still in the early stages, a few early front-runners have emerged as potential replacements. Who are they, what do they stand for and will they have any effect on Russia's special military operation? Sputnik examines each of them.

Jim Jordan

Elected to the US House of Representatives in 2006, US Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH) was the first Republican to throw his hat in the speakership ring. He is a founding member of the powerful House Freedom Caucus, which is largely credited with forcing former Speaker John Boehner to resign from the post and Congress in 2015.

As the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, Jordan is already one of the most established figures in the lower congressional chamber. He was nominated by US Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) for the speaker position during McCarthy's election, though he said at the time he had no interest in challenging McCarthy.

He has also taken several steps to endure himself among conservatives, including launching probes into two district attorneys who launched indictments against former US President Donald Trump, as well as the Justice Department over its investigation of the president's son, Hunter Biden.

Ukraine:

Jordan told US media after announcing his bid that he would not support continued funding for Ukraine. After his initial vote to approve the Ukrainian Lend-Lease Act of 2022, he has consistently voted against further aid, opposing the Ukraine supplemental appropriations bills in 2022 and 2023, and voting for amendments that stripped Ukraine funding from the National Defense Authorization Act.

"[Ukrainian President Volodymyr] Zelensky doesn't get to define how America's tax dollars are spent, and that's the fundamental question," Jordan said in September.

Steve Scalise

The second Republican to officially declare their intention to seek the nomination was US Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA), who also serves as the House majority leader. The number two Republican in the chamber, Scalise is a part of multiple conservative caucuses, including the House Pro-Life Caucus, the Republican Israel Caucus, the Republican Study Committee and the Second Amendment Task Force.

Scalise nearly saw his political career end in late December 2014 when it was revealed he gave a speech in 2002 to a group founded by KKK Grand Wizard David Duke; however, he managed to survive that controversy after issuing an apology in January 2015.

Two years later, in June 2017, Scalise was one of four people who sustained gunshot wounds after a gunman targeted members of the Republican baseball team at a practice field. Scalise had sustained serious injuries and was considered in critical condition in the aftermath. He wouldn't return to Congress until late September that year.

The Louisiana lawmaker more recently faced health issues. In August, he revealed he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma and had begun chemotherapy. After announcing his bid, reporters asked him about his diagnosis, to which he replied that he "feels great."

Scalise was [name-checked](#) by Gaetz as a potential candidate to serve as House speaker.  
Ukraine:

One of the most staunch supporters of Ukraine, Scalise has voted in favor of every Ukrainian funding appropriation and against every attempt to limit funding to the country.

While the pro-Ukrainian Defending Democracy Together Group looked down at Jordan's opposition to Ukraine funding, the group's only complaint against Scalise appeared to be that he has not been vocal enough in his support.

Tom Emmer

As the House Majority Whip, US Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN) was tasked with keeping the Republican party together and moving in lockstep, a job he appeared to fail at in recent months. Nevertheless, his name has been floated as a potential replacement for McCarthy.

However, Emmer has not announced whether he will run for the speaker role, indicating to reporters on Wednesday that he would vote for Scalise if given the chance. Emmer was elected in 2014 and sits on the House Financial Services Committee.

Ukraine:

To date, Emmer has voted in favor of every Ukraine funding provision and against every provision intended to limit that funding.

In March 2022, he also encouraged companies in his district to donate ammunition to Ukraine. "I was proud to work [...] so that we can get Minnesota-made ammunition in the hands of Ukrainian forces," Emmer said at the time.

Kevin Hern

US Rep. Kevin Hern (R-OK), is the third Republican to announce he is running for speaker. A member of the House and Ways Committee and the Chair of the Republican Study Committee, his name was initially floated as a possibility by members of the House Freedom Caucus.

A former McDonald's franchisee, Hern is a staunch conservative, holding many bellwether Republican views including on abortion, climate change, guns, same-sex marriage, and the corporate tax rate.

He also received some votes during McCarthy's election as House speaker.

Ukraine:

Hern is among the most vocal opponents of Ukraine aid in Congress. After voting for the initial funding bill and calling for more aid early on in the Ukraine conflict, he has since voted against continued funding.

Last week, he posted on X (formerly Twitter) that "we need peace in Ukraine NOW! Not war!" while touting his votes against additional funding.

Byron Donalds

Only a two-term congressman, US Rep. Byron Donalds (R-FL) entered the national conversation in January when he received a peak of 20 votes during McCarthy's lengthy 15-vote road to the speaker position.

Without any leadership positions within the Republican party, Donalds is undoubtedly a longshot for the position. Nevertheless, Gaetz and other so-called "hardline" Republicans have shown a lot of respect for him and is considered a quickly rising Republican star. He also did not publicly support the removal of McCarthy, possibly making him more palatable for traditional Republicans.

It's worth noting that much would have to go wrong in the coming days for Republicans to back such an inexperienced lawmaker as speaker, but his growing popularity suggests he should not be counted out.

He previously said he may consider a run for governor of Florida in 2026, when Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will be forced to leave office due to term limits.

Ukraine:

Like Hern, Byron voted for the initial funding package for Ukraine, but has since voted against every major funding bill. Despite his short time in office, he has emphatically opposed party leadership on the Ukraine issue, arguing that money is better spent on domestic matters.

"The American people are sick and tired of their needs being neglected, while we take care of the rest of the world," Donalds said in September. "And that's one of the reasons why you have members who have issues with Ukraine funding."

Donald Trump

Although former US President Donald Trump is currently embroiled in various legal issues while also serving as the Republican presidential front-runner for the 2024 election, his name is still being thrown around as a potential contender.

Trump is also, notably, not a member of the House; however, that doesn't necessarily prevent him from being considered a valid option. In fact, House rules do not require the speaker be a member of Congress.

On the other hand, the former president's multitude of federal indictments do make him ineligible under [House Rule 26](#), but the GOP could change that rule if most of them vote to do so.

While Trump's legal issues and presidential campaign likely mean he would be too busy to serve in the role, he has not ruled out the possibility. "If I can help them during the process, I would do that. But we have some great people in the Republican Party that can do a great job as speaker," he told reporters earlier.

Several Republicans have already said they would support his nomination, including Reps. Majorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), Greg Steube (R-FL) and Troy Nehls (R-TX).

Ukraine:

Trump has been a vocal critic of current President Joe Biden's handling of the Ukraine situation and said he would end the conflict as soon as he returned to office.

"I would tell Zelensky, no more. You got to make a deal. I would tell [Russian President Vladimir] Putin, if you don't make a deal, we're going to give him a lot. We're going to [give Ukraine] more than they ever got if we have to. I will have the deal done in one day. One day," he told US media in July.

A timeline for when a vote for the next House speaker will be scheduled has not yet been set.

Congress has until November 17 to pass another funding bill to avoid a partial government shutdown. No progress is likely to come on that until after a new speaker is selected.

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Eleven Activists Arrested Outside Bernie Sanders' Office After Demanding End to Ukraine Conflict

US Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) once said during a 2020 Democratic primary debate that the "two great foreign policy disasters of our lifetimes" occurred with the Vietnam and Iraq wars as both were "based on lies." At the time, he also noted he feared the then-sitting president would "drag us into a war that is even worse than the war in Iraq."

Eleven protesters were arrested during a sit-in at US Sen. Bernie Sanders' office on Wednesday after they demanded that the senator issue calls for peace and diplomacy in Ukraine.

Among those arrested was an 89-year-old woman.

The group, organized by Code Pink, was joined by the Green Party presidential candidate Dr. Cornel West, who campaigned with Sanders during his 2016 and 2020 bids for US president. West did not participate in the sit-in but did join the peace advocates in the Senate lobby for a prayer vigil.

Both the vigil and sit-in were part of a week of action organized by the group that included an anti-war rally on Tuesday, where West gave a speech along with the Party for Socialism and Liberation Presidential candidate Claudia De la Cruz and activist and comedian Lee Camp. Sanders was once one of the most vocal critics of US foreign policy, having spoken out against wars in Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere. But since his 2020 campaign flamed out, he has been a consistent supporter of US President Joe Biden and the continuous flow of US weapons and money into Ukraine.

"We just had 11 people arrested in [Senator] Bernie Sanders' office, because Bernie Sanders was supposed to be a champion for peace. He helped us out in Yemen," Code Pink co-founder Medea Benjamin told a Sputnik reporter. "Then why is he saying it's okay to spend \$114 billion and this other \$24 billion that now the administration is asking for to keep an unwinnable war that is going to lead us into World War Three, or a nuclear holocaust?"

Benjamin said in Code Pink's [news release](#) that she is "appalled that NO Democrats are saying what the American people are saying: We need peace talks, not more war. This is NOT a MAGA issue or a Republican issue but an issue of human survival."

The group, which numbered in the several dozens, also demanded meetings with Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), among other figures.

Omar was one of 30 progressive lawmakers who signed a letter in October of last year, requesting the Biden administration start a "proactive diplomatic push" to create a "realistic framework for a ceasefire," without condemning the transfer of weapons to Ukraine. However, that letter was withdrawn less than 24 hours after it was issued.

A representative for Omar reportedly spoke to the advocates and no one was arrested outside of her offices. There have been no reports on what happened when the advocates approached Warren's office.

Sanders has not yet commented on the protest.

One protester who was arrested carried a sign that included a quote from Sanders shortly before the Ukraine conflict broke out.

"We must work hard to achieve a realistic and mutually agreeable resolution - one that is acceptable to Ukraine, Russia, the United States and our European allies. So let's sit down. Let's negotiate. And let's come up with a diplomatic solution," the sign read, quoting Sanders. Russia has repeatedly condemned the transfer of weapons and aid to Ukraine by its Western benefactors, saying that doing so will only escalate the conflict.

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Biden's Canine Commander Banished from White House – First Lady

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) – The First Dog, US President Biden's two-year-old German shepherd named Commander, has been banished from the White House after a series of biting incidents, according to the First Lady's spokesperson on Wednesday.

"Commander is not presently on the White House campus while next steps are evaluated," spokesperson Elizabeth Alexander said in a statement widely circulated by US media.

"The president and first lady care deeply about the safety of those who work at the White House and those who protect them every day. They remain grateful for the patience and support of the U.S. Secret Service and all involved, as they continue to work through solutions," she added.

America's top dog joined the Bidens at the White House in December 2021 after his predecessor Major, another German shepherd, was similarly banished for biting people. Major was rehomed with a Biden family friend in Delaware

Commander is known to be partial to Secret Service agents. E-mails obtained through a freedom of information lawsuit filed in January by a conservative watchdog group found that he had bitten agents on ten occasions since October 2022. He is also known to have bitten an agent as recently as September 25.

Commander's current whereabouts are unknown.

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US Imports From Russia Up to \$298Mln in August - Census Bureau

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The United States imported \$298.1 million worth of goods from Russia in August, up from \$241.7 million a month earlier, according to data published by

the US Census Bureau on Thursday.

US exports of goods to Russia decreased by \$3.5 million to \$32.1 million in August.

In total, the US imported over \$3.4 billion worth of goods from Russia in the first eight months of the year. Exports of goods to Russia over the same period amounted to \$396 million.

The US trade deficit with Russia for 2023 reached almost \$3 billion.

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Multi-Layered Putin-Biden, Russia-Ukraine Talks Needed to End Conflict - US Activist

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - Multi-layered talks that include the US and Russian presidents and top diplomats along with NATO officials are required to stop the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Co-founder of women-led peace group CODEPINK Medea Benjamin told Sputnik.

"We know there have been attempts at negotiation in the past that the US and the UK have sabotaged," Benjamin said. "So... we want to see multi layered and simultaneous negotiations going on."

The group wants to see top US and Russian officials talking, including President Vladimir Putin and counterpart Joe Biden along with Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Benjamin said.

The activist also said they want to see Ukrainians talking to the Russians and the Russians talking to the US and NATO.

Benjamin also stressed that the continued military assistance to Ukraine by Washington will not help end this conflict.

"We condemn all wars, we don't want to see Ukrainian soldiers dying or Russian soldiers dying. But we know that this has to go to a negotiated solution. And every day that we delay in that, more soldiers are dying, more civilians are dying, infrastructure is being blown up. It's insanity. War is insane. War is the lowest level of human activity, and we have to stop it," Benjamin said.

Benjamin made her comments during the peace action at the US Congress earlier on Wednesday.

Several dozen peace activists gathered on Capitol Hill on Wednesday morning in an effort to have meetings with US lawmakers including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Ilhan Omar among others to discuss the need to end military assistance to Ukraine and launch peace talks.

Moscow has repeatedly said that it is open to peace negotiations as long as Kiev recognizes the territorial gains Russian forces have made since the launch of its military operation in Ukraine in February 2022.

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McCarthy Ousting 'Another Crack in the Wall,' Not Enough to Stop Aid to Ukraine - Activist

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - While the ousting of US Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker of the House is yet another crack in the wall, it is still not enough to end Washington's assistance to Ukraine, co-founder of a women-led peace group CODEPINK Medea Benjamin told Sputnik .

"I think this [Ukraine] military assistance is going to go through. Because there's enough representatives on the Republican side and the Democratic side who are all going to vote for it, so I think it's another crack in the wall, but it's not big enough to stop the assistance," Benjamin said.

On Tuesday, the House of Representatives passed a motion to vacate McCarthy as speaker, leaving the lower chamber leaderless amid attempts to pass full government funding legislation before short-term spending measures expire.

US Congressman Matt Gaetz opposed the passage of a short-term measure backed by McCarthy and alleged that the former speaker made a secret deal with President Biden on Ukraine aid as part of government funding negotiations. McCarthy denies having made such a deal.

Benjamin made her comments during a peace action at the US Congress earlier on Wednesday.

Several dozen peace activists gathered on Capitol Hill on Wednesday morning in an effort to have meetings with US lawmakers including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Ilhan Omar among others to discuss the need to end military assistance to Ukraine and launch peace talks.

"We've been going to the offices of the people in the Democratic Party, who call themselves progressive, have been champions of progressive movements like issues around workers' rights, around health care, education, and yet they're supporting this war," Benjamin explained. "We feel that they should be the ones to question where is this money going? Why are we spending \$114 billion on this war? Is this war winnable? Where is it going? What's the result going to be? Aren't we moving ourselves into a wider war or even a nuclear confrontation?"

Benjamin went on to say that they are stressing that the only way to end the Ukraine conflict is through negotiations.

"But yet you're [lawmakers] following in the footsteps of the Biden administration because he's a Democrat. And this is life and death issues. It's too important to be left to party politics. And that's where we're going to these democratic offices," she added.

Benjamin also underscored that currently there is no accountability for the US funds sent to Ukraine.

"There are Republicans who are asking for audits, we're asking for inspector general. And Democrats are saying no, we don't want that," she said. "So there is no accountability when you have billions of dollars like that, going into already corrupt country of course, there's going to be a lot of misappropriation of funds and weapons. And just like in the past when US weapons, went into Afghanistan and Iraq, and ended up in the hands of groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS (both banned in Russia), who knows who's going to end up with these weapons."

According to the Department of State, the US, since 2014, has channeled security assistance exceeding \$46.7 billion to Ukraine, aiding its military with training and equipment to defend Ukrainian territory, strengthen its border security, and improve its collaborative efforts with NATO.

Overall, the US has spent more than \$100 billion on the conflict in Ukraine, the White House's

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) confirmed last month in documents sent to Congress posted by Fox News.

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Florida Sues Biden Administration Over Funding Tied to Labor Law - Attorney General

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - Florida filed a lawsuit against President Joe Biden's administration, asserting unconstitutional retaliation tied to the state's new public workers' union law and safeguarding critical federal funding, Attorney General Ashley Moody said in a statement.

"Florida passed laws to protect workers from being strong-armed by unions. Biden, intent on driving our country into the ground, continues to try to force states to implement his bad policies. As long as I am Florida's Attorney General, Washington will never decide how we run our state. We're pushing back against this overreach to protect our state's autonomy and Florida workers," Moody said on Wednesday.

According to the statement, Senate Bill 256 (SB 256), sanctioned by the Florida Legislature earlier this year, introduced several policies, facilitating more precise and deliberate union membership decisions by public employees, including teachers, while also prohibiting unions from compelling direct paycheck withdrawals for dues.

Additionally, SB 256 instigated several changes to Florida's collective bargaining mechanisms: necessitating a membership authorization for union representation, eliminating the government's role as a financial intermediary between unions and public employees, and altering the Public Employees Relations Commission's approach to evaluating a union's eligibility to represent a group of employees exclusively, the statement said.

The lawsuit largely hinges on the Biden administration's condition that Florida retract the adjustments implemented through SB 256 or face the loss of substantial federal funding, posing a potential risk to financial resources, notably those assigned to transportation workers, the statement added.

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FBI Denies Targeting Trump Supporters for Political Reasons - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The FBI told Sputnik allegations of spying on supporters of President Donald Trump for political reasons are categorically false, the agency is focused on investigating those who commit or threaten extremist violence.

Earlier, Newsweek reported, citing more than a dozen current and former government officials, that the FBI developed a new extremist designation subcategory to cover the violent activities of people who support Trump. The description of the designation - anti-government, anti-authority

violent extremism (AGAAVE-Others) - does not explicitly mention Trump, but is intended to apply to political violence linked to the former president, the report said.

"Any allegation that the FBI targets individuals solely for their political beliefs is categorically false. The FBI investigates those who commit acts of violence or threaten violence, and we do not take action based on political belief or any First Amendment protected activity," the agency spokesperson said on Wednesday.

The FBI, the spokesperson added, is committed to protecting the safety and constitutional rights of all Americans.

These violent extremists, the FBI official added, have targeted both Republican and Democratic members of Congress.

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US Peace Activist Says Calls to End Ukraine Aid, Launch Peace Talks Starting to Be Heard

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - Peace group CODEPINK co-founder Medea Benjamin told Sputnik the calls of peace activists for the United States to stop providing military assistance to Ukraine and begin peace talks are starting to be heard.

"I think our voices are starting to be heard," Benjamin said. "We have presidential candidates like Cornel West, who was with us this morning, and who are definitely calling for ceasefire and negotiations. We have more members of the faith-based communities who are joining us, environmentalists who are seeing the catastrophic effects of war on the environment."

Benjamin also said mayors of large cities in the United States are now pointing out that many residents are not properly fed or housed and yet the US government is spending tremendous amounts of money on somebody else's war.

"We're fighting big odds because there is such a huge military industrial complex in this country," she said. "Those companies are making so much money... they want to see this war go on. And they give money to the campaigns of these Congress people. They have lobbyists that were in the halls of Congress, not walking around like us trying to get meetings, but actually having meetings with their congressmen and senators. So it's a big uphill battle."

Benjamin said that there has been a big shift in society on the issue and it is remarkable that a CNN poll indicated 55% of the American people do not want more money going to Ukraine despite what they hear from the White House, Congress and the corporate media.

"So, the American people really are seeing through this and recognizing it is just taking their tax dollars and throwing them into a black hole. And that it would make a lot more sense to go to the negotiating table," she said.

Benjamin said she wishes the views of Americans were more represented in the halls of Congress because there should be at least 55% of lawmakers calling for ceasefire and negotiations, but "we're not seeing that yet."

According to the State Department, the US government has channeled security assistance exceeding \$46.7 billion to Ukraine since 2014 to train and equip its military to defend Ukrainian territory, strengthen its border security and improve its collaborative efforts with NATO.

Overall, the US government has spent more than \$100 billion on the conflict in Ukraine, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) confirmed last month in documents sent to Congress.

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US to Begin Soon Funding for Chips Program to Cut Reliance on Taiwan - Raimondo

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The United States plans to roll out in the next few weeks the first round of funding awards for its semiconductor, or chips, program to decrease reliance on Taiwanese supplies, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said in a congressional testimony.

"I am moving as fast as I can," Raimondo said on Wednesday when asked how quickly she expected the disbursement of the \$39 billion semiconductor subsidy program.

Raimondo said it is more important to "get it right" than to move fast and the result would depend on companies applying and having good applications.

"Having said that, I think I hope in the coming weeks we will have some chip funding announcements for this fall," Raimondo said in reference to autumn, which began on September 23.

Media reports have suggested that the US Commerce Department has received more than 500 statements of interest from chip makers in 42 US states.

Last August, President Joe Biden signed the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, committing the government to invest tens of billions of dollars in the US semiconductor industry and strengthen supply chains.

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US Deputy Attorney General Announces Mergers & Acquisitions Safe Harbor Policy - Statement

\*WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - Deputy US Attorney General Lisa Monaco unveiled a new Mergers & Acquisitions Safe Harbor Policy at the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics with a focus on voluntary self-disclosure extensions.

"And this brings me to the next step on this path of voluntary self disclosure innovation: our new Mergers & Acquisitions Safe Harbor Policy," Monaco said on Wednesday.

The Safe Harbor Policy allows companies to openly communicate any misconduct discovered post-acquisition, fostering a collaborative effort toward maintaining corporate integrity and accountability amid mergers and acquisitions activities.

Monaco said she has given instructions for the Safe Harbor Policy to be applied

"department-wide," whereby each part of the department will tailor its application of the policy to fit specific enforcement regime and will consider how this policy will be implemented in practice.

Companies seeking to qualify for the Safe Harbor Policy must disclose misconduct at the

acquired entity within six months from the date of closing regardless of whether the misconduct was discovered pre- or post-acquisition, Monaco said.

"Finally, misconduct disclosed under the Safe Harbor Policy will not affect any recidivist analysis at the time of disclosure or in the future. Put another way, any misconduct disclosed under the Safe Harbor Policy will not be factored into future recidivist analysis for the acquiring company," Monaco said.

The policy would only apply to criminal conduct identified in legitimate, arms-length merger and acquisition transactions, Monaco added.

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#### FBI Developed New Extremism Subcategory to Cover Trump Supporters - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The FBI developed a new extremist designation subcategory to cover the violent activities of people who support former US President Donald Trump, Newsweek reported, citing more than a dozen current and former government officials.

In October 2022, the FBI developed a new designation: anti-government, anti-authority violent extremism - other (AGAAVE-Other), the report said on Wednesday. Although the description for the subcategory does not explicitly mention Trump, sources familiar with the designation reportedly said it is intended to apply to political violence linked to the former president.

The FBI defines AGAAVE-Other as domestic violent extremism fueled by motivations not covered by other designations, such as a motivation to commit violence due to real or perceived association with a particular political party, the report said.

The report comes following frequent accusations by Trump that he and his followers are being unfairly targeted by federal law enforcement. However, the FBI reportedly said that it cannot and does not investigate based on ideology.

The FBI could investigate Democrats who resort to violence as AGAAVE-Other cases as well, a bureau official reportedly said. The subcategory is defined using "carefully constructed language" to remain nonpartisan but refers to Trump supporters in "practical terms," the report quotes the official as saying.

The report also comes amid a 2024 re-election bid by Trump, who currently leads the pack of Republican presidential hopefuls in the polls, despite several criminal indictments.

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#### Federal Indictment Shows Menendez Failed to Meet Standards of US Senate - Schumer

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The federal indictment against Senator Robert Menendez documents that his actions failed to meet the standards required of any member of the higher chamber of Congress, US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said.

"When I read the indictments, I was deeply disappointed," Schumer said during a press conference on Wednesday. "Senators must rise to a certain standard and Senator Menendez's actions are way below that standard."

Menendez, a Democrat from New Jersey, was indicted last week on federal corruption charges. According to prosecutors, Menendez allegedly used his official position to benefit three New Jersey businessmen and the Egyptian government in exchange for gold bars and cash, a luxury convertible and other gifts.

Menendez's wife Nadine Menendez, also known as Nadine Arslanian, acted as a go-between in the transactions, the federal prosecutors said.

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Bipartisan Majorities in Senate, House Will Approve Ukraine Aid Package - Schumer

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The overwhelming majority of Republicans and Democrats will join together to ensure the approval of a more massive US military and financial aid package to Ukraine despite the current upheavals on Capitol Hill, US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced.

"We have large bipartisan majorities for aid to Ukraine and we are going to work together to get that done," Schumer said during a press conference on Wednesday. "I have spoken to [Republican Minority Leader Mitch] McConnell and we are going to work together to get a big package done."

Schumer said the overwhelming majority consensus in both major political parties remained committed to pushing the Ukraine aid package through.

"There are strong bipartisan majorities in both the Senate and the House for aid to Ukraine," Schumer added.

On Tuesday, eight Republican lawmakers opposed to sending further aid to Ukraine joined with the minority Democrats in a vote that ousted House Speaker Kevin McCarthy from office. They opposed McCarthy agreeing to approve further aid to Ukraine in coming appropriations legislation.

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Speaker McCarthy's Ouster Likely to Boost Democrats in Next Election - Experts

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The Democrats will likely end up gaining an edge at the polls in 2024 from Republican infighting that led to the ousting of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, experts told Sputnik.

Earlier on Wednesday, prominent House members Congressmen Steve Scalise and Jim Jordan both announced they would run for the position of speaker a day after eight MAGA

Republicans joined the united minority Democrats to force McCarthy out of his position.

He secured the speakership in January after a long fight that ended in a deal with the ultra-conservative wing of the Republican party, whose members claim McCarthy violated the pact. They alleged he had a "secret deal" with President Joe Biden to pass legislation recently to avoid a government shutdown. McCarthy rejected the allegations and said the motion to vacate him was personal.

Independent Institute Center for Peace & Liberty President Ivan Eland said the tiny Republican rebellion against McCarthy in the almost equally divided House would be a lasting blow to the national credibility of their party.

"The Democrats win because they can claim unity in the midst of Republican chaos, both organizationally and policy wise by keeping the government open," Eland said. "At election time, it may fit into the Democratic narrative that the Democrats are the adults, and the chaotic Republicans are unable to govern."

Former President Donald Trump was also deeply involved in the maneuvers that toppled McCarthy from office, Eland observed.

"For the time being at least, the Republicans cannot control about 8 MAGA members. And it's not ideological since it's MAGA vs MAGA and maybe at Trump's behest - certainly with his approval," he said.

Business will likely grind to a halt, Eland predicted, until a new speaker is approved.

"This could take a long time, especially if McCarthy doesn't run again, as he asserts," Eland said. "He could still be drafted, if they can't reach agreement on someone else."

Former Pentagon analyst Winslow Wheeler recalled that McCarthy as well as his Democratic opponents in the House had both waged fierce partisan political warfare with each other.

"Not only do the Dems personally detest McCarthy, they relish the self-imposed chaos the Republicans are experiencing, and they are tired of being double crossed by him and his ultra partisan swipes. His non-charismatic personality makes it both easy and painless to undermine him," he said.

None of these behaviors are going to change unless and until both sides see it in their self-interest to co-operate, Wheeler said.

"That is to say, it helps fundraising and shows off well in internal one-party polls of the Democratic and Republican base - making it safe to not be 'primaried,'" Wheeler said.

George Mason University Professor of Law Francis Buckley predicted Scalise would probably become the next Speaker and would be the long-term beneficiary of McCarthy's fall.

The entire procedure had delivered "a big black eye" for the Republican Party, Buckley added.

Former hedge fund manager and political commentator Charles Ortel believes established leaders in the Democratic Party as well as the Republicans would lose from McCarthy's defeat.

"The entrenched status quo, with Deep State con artists in both parties, lose. And all of us who expect Congress and our bloated government to run finances and conduct operations responsibly win," Ortel told Sputnik.

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## Oil Prices Drop Most in a Year, Falling 6% on Global Economic Worry, US Fuel Demand

NEW YORK, October 5 (Sputnik) - Oil prices saw their biggest one-day drop in a year, falling 6%, as worries over the global economy and weakening US fuel demand usurped a long-running rally sustained by OPEC production cuts.

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, crude for delivery in November settled down \$5.01, or 5.6%, at \$84.22 per barrel on Wednesday. The US crude benchmark hit a one-month low of \$84.17 earlier and was down 7% on the week.

"If WTI at \$84 doesn't attract buyers, the decline can extend to \$81," said Sunil Kumar Dixit, chief technical strategist at SKCharting.com.

London-traded Brent for the most-active December contract settled down \$5.11, or 5.6%, at \$85.81, after a one-month low at \$85.77. The global crude benchmark was down 10% on the week.

Prior to this, oil had rallied with little break since June, largely on OPEC production cuts and fears about short supply that often bypassed demand factors. Crude prices ultimately rose almost 30% for the third quarter.

OPEC and its allies at a meeting on Wednesday reaffirmed the joint Saudi-Russian pledge to continue removing a total of at least 1.3 million barrels a day from the daily production of the two countries until the end of the year. The OPEC+ alliance is made up of the 13-member Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and the 10 independent oil producers, which include Russia.

Wednesday's price collapse was, however, predicated by demand concerns that overrode worries about short supply .

The primary concern was over the health of the global economy, particularly Europe's most vulnerable versus the relatively resilient US economy.

The United States has its own problems too, with the energy-price driven inflation of the past three months prodding the Federal Reserve to stay hawkish on interest rates for the foreseeable future. That has pushed the dollar to 11-month highs, further weakening the finances of other nations and international demand for crude and other commodities denominated in the US currency.

The other driver for Wednesday's plunge was the seasonal slide in US fuel demand.

US stockpiles of gasoline jumped almost 6.5 million barrels last week, the biggest build in nearly two years, a government report showed on Wednesday, as refiners optimized processing of oil to capitalize on still-good profit margins despite waning seasonal demand for fuels.

Inventories of crude oil, meanwhile, fell by just a third during the week ended September 29 - amid the first rise in two months in volumes at the Cushing, Oklahoma hub that serves as a central delivery and storage point for US crude, according to the Weekly Petroleum Status Report of the US Energy Information Administration, or EIA.

Crude inventories overall fell by 2.224 million barrels last week, registering a third straight week of draws that kept up with the prior week's drop of 2.17 million.

Despite that headline draw reported by the EIA, crude volumes at Cushing rose last week for the first time in eight weeks, showing a modest gain of 0.132 million versus the previous week's slide of 0.943 million.

The build at Cushing is significant for several reasons. For weeks now, traders had been fearful

that Cushing inventories would fall to critically low levels that would complicate operations at the storage hub. The hub had seen enormous outflows of crude this year versus inflows, partly because of the pickup in export demand for a heavier type of US crude called West Texas Intermediate Midland, which people in the trade say is somewhat comparable to the viscosity of Saudi and Russian oils.

Shipments of US crude reached record highs of more than 5 million barrels per day in recent weeks, boosted by demand for the so-called WTI Midland which made inroads into markets underserved by production cuts in Saudi and Russian crude. Last week, for instance, US crude exports were at 4.96 million barrels, up from the prior week's 4.012 million.

The build in Cushing despite such high demand for US crude proved there were finally more inflows at the hub than outflows despite the number of actively-deployed domestic oil drilling rigs falling almost non-stop since the start of this year. Despite the drop in oil rigs, the EIA continued to project a daily production of 12.9 million barrels for US crude last week.

The agency also reported a gasoline stockpile build of 6.481 million barrels for last week, adding to the prior week's growth of 1.027 million. It was the single largest weekly build in gasoline since January 2022. Gasoline is America's foremost fuel product..

While gasoline inventories rose, stockpiles of distillate — a feedstock for diesel and heating fuel — fell by 1.269 million barrels last week, after a build of 0.398 million in the week prior.

The changes in gasoline and distillate inventories came amid healthy refining profit margins, known as "cracks", seen for both now, particularly in distillates.

"To give an idea of what cracks are worth now, the one for New York ULSD which is representative of diesel, is at around \$45 a barrel prompt," said John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital. "Just over a decade ago, we used to have cracks in the single digits and sometimes even in the negative."

Typically at this time of year, demand for fuels is softer in the United States as fewer families do trip roads with children back in school or college. Yet, refiners seem to be cranking out as much gasoline and diesel as they could, incentivized by the cracks. The EIA said last week's total refined oil product supply to the marketplace -- an indicator of demand -- fell to 8.014 million for gasoline versus the prior week's 8.619 million.

The EIA said refiners actually turned out less gasoline and other fuel products last week compared with the week prior. Still, they seem to be processing more oil than necessary at this time of the year, prompted by the cracks.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

\* The United States is looking at legal ways to use the frozen Russian assets to support Ukraine, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday.

\* Russia is not obliged to recognize the 2014 coup in Ukraine and its refusal of neutral status by the Budapest Memorandum, as it was violated by Kiev and the West, Russian Deputy Director of the Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control Konstantin Vorontsov said.

\* At least 11 people were arrested on Capitol Hill while demanding an immediate ceasefire and an end to the conflict in Ukraine, co-founder of peace activist organization Code Pink Medea Benjamin said.

#### WESTERN MILITARY SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

\* The United States and Ukraine have worked out everything Volodymyr Zelenskyy has asked for, President Joe Biden said on Wednesday, when asked about long-range missiles for Kiev.

\* The United States has transferred 1 million 7.62mm rounds of ammunition to Ukraine that were seized from Iran, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said.

#### GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

\* Global oil prices are decreasing by 4.5-4.6% on Wednesday and Brent crude fell below \$87 per barrel for the first time since September 1, according to the latest trading data.

\* Russia and Saudi Arabia are fulfilling their oil production obligations, and the market is balanced, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.

\* Novak said he held a meeting with officials from Russian oil companies earlier in the day, where they expressed their interest in stabilizing the situation on the domestic fuel market.

\* The next meeting of the OPEC+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) will take place on November 26, OPEC said.

#### US VISAS FOR RUSSIAN DELEGATION TO UN

\* Members of the Russian delegation who planned to take part in the meeting of the "nuclear five" (P5) on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly First Committee have received the required US visas, but the dates and venues for the expert consultations remain unclear, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told Sputnik on Wednesday.

\* Russia demands an immediate launch of arbitration procedures in connection with the non-issuance of visas by the United States to foreign delegations heading to the UN headquarters in New York, Russian Foreign Ministry's Nonproliferation and Arms Control Department Deputy Director Konstantin Vorontsov said.

#### ARMENIA DEVELOPMENTS

\* Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Wednesday that he is ready to resign if that would help normalize the situation in the country but believes his resignation will have the exact opposite effect.

\* Pashinyan said that he would attend the upcoming European Political Community summit in the Spanish city of Granada after Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev turned down the invitation for a five-way meeting involving Armenia, Azerbaijan, the European Union, France and Germany.

#### NAGORNO-KARABAKH

\* There were contacts among Russia, the United States and the European Union on the

situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, but media reports on the matter are inaccurate, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday.

\* There was nothing secret about the meeting between Russia, the United States and the European Union on the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region as it was a routine exchange of views, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said, adding that the meeting had been proposed by Washington and Brussels.

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Blinken Urges China to Crack Down on Production of Precursors Used in Synthetic Opioids

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday called on China to cooperate in countering the production of chemical precursors used in synthetic opioids.

On Tuesday, the US government issued indictments against eight China-based chemical manufacturing companies and employees for producing precursor chemicals needed to make fentanyl.

"We also have to see more cooperation from countries like China, where many of these chemical precursors are made," Blinken said.

According to the Department of Justice, China-based companies, some of which actively promote their products on the internet, manufacture and distribute precursors essential for producing fentanyl and methamphetamine.

Furthermore, these precursors are shipped internationally, to locations such as the United States and Mexico, where they are mixed by drug traffickers and cartels. Subsequently, the produced synthetic opioids, including fentanyl and methamphetamines, disseminate across the United States, impacting individual consumers.

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Eleven Activists Arrested on Capitol Hill While Demanding End to Ukraine Conflict

(Adds details in paras 3-7)

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - At least 11 people were arrested on Capitol Hill on Wednesday while demanding an immediate ceasefire and an end to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, US political activist and co-founder of Code Pink Medea Benjamin said.

"We just had 11 people arrested in [senator] Bernie Sanders' office, because Bernie Sanders was supposed to be a champion for peace. He helped us out in Yemen, and then why is he saying it's okay to spend \$114 billion and this other \$24 billion that now the administration is asking for to keep an unwinnable war that is going to lead us into World War Three, or a nuclear holocaust?" Benjamin told a Sputnik reporter.

Several dozen peace activists gathered on Capitol Hill on Wednesday morning to demand meetings with US lawmakers including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Ilhan Omar to discuss the need to end military assistance to Ukraine and launch peace talks, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

The protesters were peaceful and held banners with the sign of peace as well as those reading "Peace in Ukraine," "US militarism fuels climate crisis" and "Make out not war."

Among the activists are young people with toddlers, the elderly and even some in wheelchairs. They tried to convey the message that the United States is only inflaming the conflict in Ukraine by sending weapons there and that the conflict was prompted by Kiev not implementing the Minsk agreements while NATO has continued to seek to expand.

The protesters also came to the office of Rep. Omar. A representative of Omar came out and talked with the activists.

The event, in which activists literally walk from office to office trying to have their voices heard, was organized by Code Pink.

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'Multiple Victims' Shot in Downtown Holyoke, Massachusetts - Police

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) – A shooting in Holyoke, Massachusetts resulted in multiple victims, local police said on Wednesday.

"We can confirm that there are multiple victims," the police said in a statement.

The incident occurred in the city's downtown area in the early afternoon when 911 operators began receiving "multiple calls for help," it added.

The law enforcement is conducting an "active and ongoing investigation" and urges people to avoid the area, according to the statement.

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US Approves Potential \$2.8Bln Sale of Four Patriot Configuration-3+ Systems to Spain– DSCA

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - The US State Department has approved a potential \$2.8 billion sale of four PATRIOT Configuration-3+ Modernized Fire Units to Spain, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Wednesday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Spain of PATRIOT Configuration-3+ Modernized Fire Units and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$2.8 billion," DSCA said in a press release.

The potential sale will include 51 PATRIOT Advanced Capability (PAC) 3 Missile Segment Enhanced (MSE) missiles, 24 PATRIOT M903 launch stations, four AN/MPQ-65 radar sets, four AN/MSQ-132 Engagement Control Stations, and other related equipment, according to the

release.

The contract will be fulfilled by Raytheon Corporation and Lockheed Martin, the release added.

10/4/2023 3:25:55 PM -04:00

'Multiple Victims' Shot in Downtown Holyoke, Massachusetts - Police

Sputnik

10/4/2023 3:19:23 PM -04:00

US Defense Contractor Says to Launch Two Kuiper Communications Satellites for Amazon

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - The United Launch Alliance (ULA) is about to launch the first two of what will eventually be a constellation of hundreds of Kuiper low earth orbit (LEO) satellites for Amazon.com, the company announced on Wednesday.

"A ULA Atlas V rocket is in final preparations to launch the Protoflight mission for Amazon's Project Kuiper [from] Space Launch Complex-41 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida," the release said. The two hour launch window opens at 2 pm EDT (Eastern Daylight Time) on Friday, it said.

The Atlas V booster will place two satellites - Kuipersat-1 and Kuipersat-2 - in 311-mile orbits with an inclination of 30 degrees, ULA said.

The "ULA Atlas V 501 rocket will deliver two satellites into low Earth orbit for Amazon's Project Kuiper, a LEO satellite network that will provide fast, affordable broadband to unserved and underserved communities around the world," the release explained.

The Protoflight launch is the first mission in a broader partnership between ULA and Amazon to launch hundreds of Kuiper satellites, ULA said.

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IFRC Warns Politicizing Migrant Crisis Puts Vulnerable Refugees Even More at Risk

UNITED NATIONS, October 4 (Sputnik), Lenka White - The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is concerned that politicizing the global migration crisis may put vulnerable refugees fleeing difficult situations even more at risk, IFRC spokesperson Tommaso Della Longa told Sputnik.

Italy's Lampedusa last month declared a state of emergency after some 8,000 undocumented migrants arrived, more than the island's permanent population. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni blamed the crisis on NGO ships rescuing refugees fleeing North Africa, and has called for a naval blockade of the continent.

"The problem here is when we are trying to criminalize a group of people... the problem is that

these people are fleeing for a reason. We need to respect, we need to protect, and we need to serve them," Della Longa said.

Such perceptions put human beings fleeing conflicts at risk and creates issues in how communities accept newcomers, Della Longa, a former spokesperson of the Italian Red Cross National President, added.

With respect to the Lampedusa crisis, the IFRC spokesperson said it is important to remember the underlying causes, such as the fact 180 million people in Africa are facing food insecurity, exacerbated by climate change.

Tuesday marked the ten-year anniversary of shipwrecks off Lampedusa's coast that left more than 360 migrants fleeing Africa dead. Survivors and activists marched in remembrance of the incident, calling on European governments to "stop the invisible deaths."

In March, Meloni told lawmakers Italy had been "left alone" to deal with rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean, as she rejected accusations that children are being left to die at sea.

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McConnell Says Next US House Speaker Should Abolish Motion to Vacate Leader

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Wednesday that the next speaker of the House of Representatives ought to abolish the ability to vacate its leader, after lawmakers ousted Congressman Kevin McCarthy in a historic first.

"I have no advice to give to House Republicans except one: I hope whoever the next speaker is gets rid of the motion to vacate. I think it makes the speaker's job impossible," McConnell said during a press conference.

On Tuesday, eight House Republicans joined Democrats to pass a motion to vacate McCarthy as speaker, leaving the lower chamber of Congress leaderless. The House of Representatives is unable to conduct normal business, such as passing appropriations bills, before it elects a speaker.

McConnell said that he hopes the House of Representatives elects a speaker by next week. Congress must pass government funding legislation before November 17 or risk a shutdown.

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McConnell Says Ukraine Aid Still 'Major Priority' for US Congress

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Wednesday that Ukraine aid is still a major priority for Congress.

"It's still a major priority," McConnell said during a press conference, when asked about Congress' strategy to move forward with funding for Ukraine. "I think the majority of the members of both bodies still support it."

However, Congress needs direction from the Biden administration about how it intends to move forward regarding support for Ukraine, McConnell added.

Earlier on Wednesday, US President Joe Biden said that he will soon make a "major speech" about continued US support for Ukraine.

10/4/2023 2:58:25 PM -04:00

US Constantly, Consistently Supports Dialogue Between 5 Nuclear States - Official

UNITED NATIONS, October 4 (Sputnik) - The United States "constantly and consistently" supports dialogue between the five nuclear states, also referred to as P5, and considers it to be a vital tool for international stability, a US representative at the United Nations said on Wednesday.

"The dialogue among the five nuclear states is vital. We have constantly and consistently supported it," the representative said during a UN General Assembly First Committee meeting.

The next meeting of the P5 should proceed as soon as possible, the representative added.

Also on Wednesday, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told Sputnik that the United States granted visas for members of the Russian delegation for the P5 meeting on the sidelines of the First Committee meeting.

However, the Russian Foreign Ministry's Nonproliferation and Arms Control Department Deputy Director Konstantin Vorontsov said the United States had not issued visas for two members of the Russian delegation.

"We see this as an attempt to undermine Russia's participation in this format," Vorontsov said.

The United States is abusing its position as the host state of the United Nations headquarters, Vorontsov added.

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Rep. Jordan Says Would Oppose Ukraine Aid Package as Speaker

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) – US Congressman Jim Jordan told reporters on Wednesday he would be against sending more assistance to Ukraine as House speaker amid so many acute problems in the United States like street crime and the migration crisis.

"I'm against that [assistance package for Ukraine]. What I understand is at some point we're going to have to deal with this appropriation process in the right way. And we're going to try to do that in the next 41 days. The most pressing issue on Americans' mind is not Ukraine. It is the border situation and it is crime on the streets," Jordan said.

In a letter earlier on Wednesday, Jordan announced that he is running for the House of Representatives speaker position left vacant by Congressman Kevin McCarthy, whom the House of Representatives ousted in a vote the day before.

House Republicans must address issues including rising crime, increasing government

spending, border security, and national security, Jordan said in the letter. The House of Representatives must also continue oversight of the federal bureaucracy, the letter said. At the same time, the letter said nothing about Ukraine aid being among Jordan's priorities.

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US Looking at Legal Ways to Use Frozen Russian Assets to Support Ukraine - Blinken

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) – The United States is looking at legal ways to use frozen Russian assets to support Ukraine, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday. "We are looking at what legal authorities we may have, Europeans may have to actually use those assets for Ukraine," Blinken said during a conversation at the University of Texas at Austin.

He added that most of the frozen \$300 billion is located in Europe.

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US House Majority Leader Steve Scalise to Run for Position Speaker of Lower Chamber

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - US House of Representatives Majority Leader Steve Scalise said on Wednesday that he will run to be the next speaker of the lower chamber of Congress.

"I humbly ask you for your support on this mission to be your speaker of the House," Scalise said in a letter to his colleagues.

However, Congressman Jim Jordan also said he would run for the speaker position.

On Tuesday, former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said he would not run again for the position after he was ousted. Eight Republicans voted with all Democrats to remove McCarthy in the first such case in US history.

The House of Representatives will be in recess until Tuesday and will not perform any work during that period.

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Sub-Saharan Africa Economic Growth Forecast to Decrease 1.1% in 2023 - World Bank

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are expected to experience a 1.1% decrease in economic growth this year, the World Bank said on Wednesday. "Economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is forecast to decelerate to 2.5% in 2023, from 3.6%

in 2022," the World Bank said in a statement.

The regional outlook remains bleak amid an allusive growth recovery, the statement said.

The weak growth thus far and the raising instability in the largest economies in the region as well as the lingering uncertainty in the global economy are dragging down growth prospects, the statement said.

The World Bank emphasized that other African countries, particularly South Africa, Nigeria, Angola and Sudan, will also face significant economic problems due to global instability and violence.

"The region's poorest and most vulnerable people continue to bear the economic brunt of this slowdown, as weak growth translates into slow poverty reduction and poor job growth," World Bank Chief Economist for Africa Andrew Dabalen said.

However, the World Bank said it expects African economies to see some improvement despite the general lukewarm outlook.

"Inflation is expected to decline from 9.3% in 2022 to 7.3% in 2023 and fiscal balances are improving in African countries that are pursuing prudent and coordinated macroeconomic policies," the statement said.

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Biden Says Will Soon Make Major Speech on Ukraine

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that he will soon make a major speech about Ukraine.

"I'm going to be announcing very shortly a major speech I'm going to make on this issue and why it's critically important for the United States and our allies that we keep our commitment [to Ukraine]," Biden said during a press briefing.

Biden added that the recent infighting in the House of Representatives among members of the Republican party should not get in the way of Ukrainian aid.

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US Backed Yeltsin Firing on Russian Parliament in 1993 - National Security Archive

\*WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - The United States backed efforts by then-Russian President Boris Yeltsin to order tanks to fire on the Russian parliament building in the midst of political turmoil, according to declassified documents released by the National Security Archive on Wednesday.

The archive released several documents, including the transcript of a phone call between Yeltsin and then-US President Bill Clinton from the day after tanks fired on the parliament building.

"I know it has been very hard for you , but you did everything exactly as you had to and I congratulate you for the way you handled it," Clinton said in the call with Yeltsin.

In late September 1993, the Russian parliament impeached Yeltsin, leading to more than a week of violent conflict on the streets of Moscow between various factions. On October 4, 1993, Yeltsin ordered the military to shell and storm the parliament, where opposition figures had barricaded themselves.

Approximately 147 people were killed and 437 others injured during the fighting. Clinton did not inquire about casualties during the call with Yeltsin.

The National Security Archive also released a document detailing an October 22, 1993 meeting between Yeltsin and then-US Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Christopher told Yeltsin that Clinton was interested in his "superb handling" of the situation, the document said.

Clinton admired the "restraint" shown by Yeltsin and believed that it resulted in the least possible loss of life, the document said. The US was "greatly relieved" when Yeltsin re-established control, the document added.

The National Security Archives released the documents in coincidence with the 30th anniversary of Yeltsin's order to shell the Russian parliament.

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Biden on ATACMS for Kiev: US Has Worked Out Everything Zelenskyy Has Asked for

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - The United States and Ukraine have worked out everything Volodymyr Zelenskyy has asked for, President Joe Biden said on Wednesday, when asked about long-range missiles for Kiev.

"I have spoken with Zelenskyy, and everything he's asked for, we've worked out," Biden said during a press briefing.

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Biden Says US Congress Must Avoid '11th Hour' Government Funding Deal

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - The US Congress ought not again reach an agreement to fund the federal government at the last moment, President Joe Biden said on Wednesday.

"We cannot and should not again be faced with an 11th-hour decision," Biden said ahead of remarks on student debt relief.

Congress reached a deal over the weekend to temporarily fund the US government through November 17, after which point the government would again face a shutdown.

However, appropriations efforts in the House of Representatives have halted, following the lower chamber of Congress' decision to oust Kevin McCarthy as speaker. House lawmakers are

unable to conduct normal legislative business until they elect a new leader.

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US Senate Confirms James O'Brien to be Assistant Secretary of State

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Wednesday confirmed the nomination of James C. O'Brien to be Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.

US senators confirmed O'Brien's nomination by a 67-31 vote.

O'Brien has served as the head of the Office of Sanctions Coordination within the State Department since April 2022.

Between August 2015 and January 2017, he served as the US special envoy for hostage affairs.

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Russia Urges To Improve UN Chief's Mechanism For Investigating Use of Chemical Weapons

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) – Russia insists on strengthening the United Nations Secretary General's mechanism for investigations over the use of chemical and biological weapons, deputy director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control Konstantin Vorontsov said on Wednesday.

"There is an urgent need to strengthen UN Secretary General's mechanism (SGM) for investigation for alleged use of chemical and biological weapons," Vorontsov said at a UN first committee meeting.

He reminded that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov sent a note to the UN chief Antonio Guterres in June calling for the organization of a review of the current SGM principles and procedures.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the UN Secretary General's mechanism for investigating the alleged use of chemical and biological weapons

"An entire group of countries supported this idea, and many states submitted similar appeals to Antonio Guterres," he added.

Vorontsov expressed hope that Guterres will immediately start the corresponding review. He also urged him to request the help of experts and use relevant proposals of member states.

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## Record 75,000 Kaiser Permanente Employees Strike Over Wages, Staffing - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - More than 75,000 employees of health care provider Kaiser Permanente have started the largest healthcare-related strike in US history, sparked by disputes over staffing and wages, the Washington Post reported on Wednesday.

The Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions said that some 85,000 Kaiser Permanente employees are currently negotiating their initial contract since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the report said.

The employees claim that working conditions and staffing requirements have significantly worsened since then, the report said.

In a three-day strike that began this week, workers from California, Oregon, Colorado, and Washington state are projected to impact the access to health care and services of thousands of patients, the report also said.

Meanwhile, approximately 400 pharmacists and optometrists in the US state of Virginia and Washington, DC have planned a one-day work stoppage, the report also added.

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## Pelosi Says Temporary US House Speaker McHenry Kicked Her Out of Capitol Office

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi said in a statement that House Speaker Pro Tempore Patrick McHenry kicked her out of her extra office in the US Capitol building, after the congressman took temporary control over the lower chamber of Congress.

McHenry is serving as temporary leader of the House of Representatives, following lawmakers' decision to oust Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker on Tuesday.

"With all of the important decisions that the new Republican Leadership must address, which we are all eagerly awaiting, one of the first actions taken by the new Speaker Pro Tempore was to order me to immediately vacate my office in the Capitol," the statement said.

Pelosi maintains another office in a House office building near the Capitol. However, as a former House speaker, Pelosi was granted one of the extra office spaces inside the Capitol, which are assigned by the sitting speaker.

The eviction from the extra office is a "sharp departure from tradition," the statement said.

Pelosi was unable to retrieve her belongings at the time of the eviction due to visiting California to pay respects to the late US Senator Dianne Feinstein, the statement added.

McHenry also kicked Democratic Congressman Steny Hoyer out of his Capitol office, Punchbowl news reported on Wednesday. Democrats should expect more such actions in the wake of their decision to back a motion to vacate McCarthy as speaker, Republican Party sources reportedly said.

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Peace Activists on Capitol Hill Demand US Stop Pumping Weapons, Money Into Ukraine

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - Dozens of protesters gathered on Capitol Hill on Wednesday to demand that US lawmakers stop their support for providing weapons and money to Ukraine in order to avoid the outbreak of World War III, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene.

The activists are from a number of pro-peace organizations - Code Pink, Religions for Peace USA, American Friends Service Committee, Sojourners and Franciscan Action Network - and came to Capitol Hill to protest the actions of US lawmakers in sending more weapons and funds to Ukraine. The targeted lawmakers include alleged progressive Democratic senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

"They promised that NATO would never expand and look, it is all around Russia. [I am here today] to stop the war [in Ukraine], and weapons, money going to Ukraine to kill people. People are dying every day - men, women, and children," the activist said. "All of the senators and all representatives, what they are doing ... is money, money, money," Code Pink activist Joan Nicholson said while being escorted out of the building by police.

The activists represented a range of age groups including both young people and the elderly, carrying signs and banners in support of peace such as "Peace in Ukraine," "US militarism fuels climate crisis" and chanting slogans like "ceasefire now."

The protesters near Senator Warren's office tried to convey the message that the United States is only inflaming the conflict in Ukraine by sending thousands of tons of weapons there and emphasized that the war was prompted by the Kiev regime not implementing the Minsk agreements while NATO has continued to seek to expand.

At least 11 peace activists were arrested while protesting at Sanders' office.

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US Transfers 1.1Mln 7.62mm Rounds of Seized Iranian Munitions to Ukraine - CENTCOM

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - The United States has transferred 1 million 7.62mm rounds of ammunition to Ukraine that were seized from Iran, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Wednesday.

"On October 2, 2023, the US government transferred approximately 1.1 million 7.62mm rounds to the Ukrainian armed forces," CENTCOM said in a press release. "The government obtained ownership of these munitions on July 20, 2023, through the Department of Justice's civil forfeiture claims against Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)."

The munitions were originally seized by the United States as the IRGC tried to transfer them to the Houthi rebels in Yemen in violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2216, the release said.

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US, Allies Impose Their Own Rules on Others in Violation of UN Charter- Russian Official

UNITED NATIONS, October 4 (Sputnik) - The United States along with their Western partners attempt to impose their own rules on other states despite the direct violation of the United Nations Charter, Russian Deputy Director of the Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control Konstantin Vorontsov said on Wednesday.

“The US and its allies show blatant intolerance for dissent and are trying in violation of the UN Charter to impose rules of behavior on other states,” Vorontsov told the First Committee members.

By imposing their own rules, they want to achieve their own hegemony, he added.

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US Congressman Jordan Says Running for Vacant House Speaker Position

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Jim Jordan said on Wednesday that he is running for the House of Representatives speaker position left vacant by Congressman Kevin McCarthy, whom the House of Representatives ousted in a vote the day before.

“I respectfully ask for your support for Speaker of the House of Representatives,” Jordan said in a letter to colleagues.

On Tuesday, the House of Representatives agreed to oust McCarthy as speaker, leaving the lower chamber of Congress unable to conduct normal legislative business until they elect a new speaker.

Jordan currently serves as US House Judiciary Committee Chairman as well as on the House Oversight Committee. Jordan helped found the conservative House Freedom Caucus and served as its first chair.

House Republicans must address issues including rising crime, increasing government spending, border security and national security, Jordan’s letter said. The House of Representatives must also continue oversight of the federal bureaucracy, the letter said.

“Now is the time for our Republican conference to come together to keep our promises to Americans,” the letter said. “But no matter what we do, we must do it together as a conference.”

A nominee for speaker must receive a simple majority of votes to win the leadership role; Republicans hold a slim 221-212 majority in the House of Representatives, with two vacant seats. Eight Republicans voted on Tuesday alongside Democrats to oust McCarthy.

The House of Representatives is expected to meet next week to begin consideration of a new speaker, after which point it could resume legislative business, including passing government

funding legislation before November 17.

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Russia Demands Launch of Arbitration Over US Non-Issuance of Visas to UN Delegations

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - Russia demands an immediate launch of arbitration procedures in connection with the non-issuance of visas by the United States to foreign delegations heading to the UN headquarters in New York, deputy director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's department for nonproliferation and arms control said on Wednesday.

"We demand an immediate launch of an arbitration procedure with regards to the host country of the UN headquarters. The situation is egregious since visas have not been issued within the requested time frame to those members of our delegations who are also to participate in a P5 expert meeting," Konstantin Vorontsov said at a UN first committee meeting.

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Eleven Activists Arrested on Capitol Hill While Demanding End to Ukraine Conflict

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - At least 11 people were arrested on Capitol Hill on Wednesday while demanding an immediate ceasefire and an end to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, US political activist and co-founder of Code Pink Medea Benjamin said.

"We just had 11 people arrested in [senator] Bernie Sanders' office, because Bernie Sanders was supposed to be a champion for peace. He helped us out in Yemen, and then why is he saying it's okay to spend \$114 billion and this other \$24 billion that now the administration is asking for to keep an unwinnable war that is going to lead us into World War Three, or a nuclear holocaust?" Benjamin told a Sputnik reporter.

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US to Transfer Seized Iranian Weapons to Ukraine - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - The United States will transfer to Ukraine thousands of weapons and rounds of ammunition that it has seized from Iran, CNN reported, citing Biden administration officials.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) will make the announcement about the transfer of the seized weapons as soon as this week, the report said.

The weapons are stored in CENTCOM facilities in the Middle East, the report also said.

It is unclear at present how the United States will handle the legal aspect of the weapons transfer, the report added.

The report comes as the Ukrainian military continues to face weapons and ammunition shortages amid warnings by NATO that its members are facing the "bottom of the barrel" of their ammunition stockpiles.

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Senior White House Officials Visited Saudi Arabia for Israel Normalization Talks - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - Senior Biden administration officials secretly visited Saudi Arabia for several hours last week for talks concerning a possible agreement to normalize relations with Israel, Axios reported, citing two unnamed sources.

The officials include National Security Council Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk and Special Presidential Coordinator for Global Infrastructure and Energy Security Amos Hochstein, the report said.

McGurk and Hochstein met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and other senior officials to discuss the agreement as well as other regional and bilateral issues.

The Biden administration is hoping to secure the agreement before the 2024 US presidential campaign ramps up.

Saudi Arabia is reported to have various demands in exchange for normalizing relations with Israel, including US support for a civilian nuclear weapons program, access to sophisticated weapons sales and Israeli concessions on the Palestine question.

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US Senate Foreign Relations Chair Calls for Halt to Security Aid to Azerbaijan-Statement

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) – US Senator and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee Ben Cardin said on Wednesday that the United States should halt security assistance to Azerbaijan and prioritize support for the Armenians expelled from the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

“As the world continues to grapple with Azerbaijan's coordinated, intentional campaign of ethnic cleansing, we must both prioritize support for the Armenians who have been expelled as well as holding Azerbaijan accountable,” Cardin’s office cited him as saying said in a statement. “The United States should halt security assistance to Azerbaijan until it has stopped this brutal campaign.”

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US Death Row Inmate Protests Nitrogen Hypoxia Use After Failed Lethal Injection - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - A death row inmate from Alabama objects to being a "guinea pig" in a trial of a new method of execution using nitrogen hypoxia after a failed lethal injection, Fox News reported on Wednesday.

In 1988, Kenneth Smith, now 58, along with his accomplice John Parker, received an order to kill Elizabeth Sennett, 45, the wife of preacher Charles Sennett, who paid them \$,1000 for it, the report said. The preacher killed himself a week later after his wife was stabbed to death by the two murderers.

While Parker was executed in 2010 by lethal injection, Smith was sentenced to death only in 2022. His execution in November 2022 was called off because executioners could not perform a lethal injection after several failed attempts, according to the report.

Following at least four failed executions by lethal injection since 2018, the Alabama Department of Corrections decided to go with an experimental method of nitrogen hypoxia, when the bloodstream oxygen is replaced with inhaled pure nitrogen, the report said.

In September, Smith and his attorneys filed an appeal against his second execution attempt arguing that the use of the nitrogen hypoxia method would make him a "test subject," the report added.

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Trump Says Would Help US House Republicans Elect Speaker But Focused on Presidential Race

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that he is willing to help US House Republicans select a new speaker, but his primary focus remains on winning the 2024 presidential election.

"We're leading by like 50 points for president. My focus is totally on that," Trump said during remarks before a court appearance in New York. "If I can help [House Republicans] during the process, I would do it."

Trump said many people have reached out to the former president about the vacant speaker position. There have been several calls for Trump to serve as House speaker, given that membership in Congress is not a requirement to serve in the leadership position.

However, House Republican Conference rules mandate that party leadership step aside if indicted for a felony that carries a possible sentence of more than two years in prison. Trump has been named in several indictments and charged with dozens of felonies, although he denies the allegations and has not yet been convicted.

Trump said there are "great people" in the Republican Party who could serve as speaker.

On Tuesday, the House of Representatives ousted Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker in a historic first for the lower chamber of Congress amid efforts to pass full government funding

measures before November 17. The House lawmakers are unable to conduct legislative business until they select a new speaker.