

**10/24/23 Tuesday**

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Scott Ritter: Israel Failing in Global PR Campaign to Demonize Hamas

The Israeli government has reached for comparisons to some of the most notorious international antagonists of recent years in its effort to demonize Hamas so as to avoid a substantive conversation about the ultimate cause of decades of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, an expert told Sputnik.

The latest claim to emerge about Hamas' deadly border raid on October 7, which killed more than 1,300 Israeli civilians in several towns near the Gaza Strip, is that the Hamas militants were carrying plans for chemical weapons during the attack.

In a broadcast on Sunday, Israeli President Isaac Herzog held up a document he claimed had been found in one of the settlements, across the front of which it says Al-Qaeda in bold white lettering. However, social media users quickly dissected Herzog's claim, pointing out that the document he is holding is a biography of Ramzi Youssef, an Al-Qaeda member who carried out the 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six people, which was published by Al-Qaeda. A former Al-Qaeda operative who turned coat and became a spy for MI6 [told British media](#) that one of the documents Herzog held up was a diagram of a simple bomb that was posted online by Al-Qaeda in 2009 and widely downloaded, but wasn't instructions on how to make such a weapon. However, the Youssef biography doesn't contain the image in question.

Herzog's claims follow rhetorical attempts by Israeli officials to link Hamas with terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda\* and Daesh\*\*, calling the October 7 attacks "Israel's 9/11" and saying that if the US was justified in pursuing its War on Terror, then so is Israel justified in launching its [all-out war on Gaza](#), which has killed more than 5,000 Palestinians as of Tuesday.

Former UN weapons inspector and weapons of mass destruction whistleblower Scott Ritter told [Radio Sputnik's The Backstory](#) that in attempting to destroy Hamas, Israel has asked a question it is still unwilling to answer: "what is the ultimate cause of the violence on October 7?"

Losing the PR Campaign

"Israel's trying to undermine any claim to legitimacy that Hamas might have regarding why they carried out these attacks,' Ritter said. "You know, Israel is not winning the PR campaign globally, primarily because of the heavy-handed manner in which they've responded to the attacks. And people, when they dig into the attacks, are trying to make the claim that you can't cite self-defense when you're the occupier. The occupier cannot ever claim a right of self-defense from the occupied. And there's a larger debate going on right now about the history of Gaza, the history of the Israeli occupation, the history of abuse that's transpired, etc."

"So what they're trying to do, the Israelis right now, is create a new aspect to this conversation, which is: Hamas is an extension of Al-Qaeda, because I believe the documents in question were Al-Qaeda documents, they weren't original Hamas documents, but rather from an Al-Qaeda playbook. And so, again, as has happened before, they're trying to make a nexus

between - the United States did this - where we tried to link Al-Qaeda with [former Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein unsuccessfully because that was a lie. And now we have Israel tried to link Al-Qaeda and ISIS\*\* with Hamas so that it will help, from their perspective, muddy the waters or anybody trying to say that Hamas had a legitimate right to attack Israel on October 7," he explained.

"Then, of course, the chemical weapons, let's just be straight up on this here: anybody who knows anything about chemical weapons will tell you that somebody carrying a piece of paper from a handbook written by another agency in their pocket does not a chemical weapon make."

#### Avoiding an Israeli Civil War

"Remember, Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, was teetering on the brink of political collapse prior to the Hamas action of October 7," Ritter recalled. "He is a man who is under the shadow of some very serious corruption charges, charges which, again, you're innocent until proven guilty in a court of law, but if there was a court of law of relevant jurisdiction who heard the case, he probably be found guilty - and he knows it, which is why he is collaborating with his party in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, to change the Israeli Basic Law so that there is no longer a separate-but-equal branch of government called the judiciary, but rather a judiciary that is subordinated to the Israeli parliament. And the Israeli parliament can basically veto any judge that they disagree with. They can impeach at will. So any judge who heard a corruption case against Ben Netanyahu, who allowed it to go forward would be subjected to impeachment, removal. It makes Benjamin Netanyahu literally above the law."

"Israel was in uproar about this. Of course, his political followers have a line of 'the judiciary must be subordinated to the people, the will of the people', which means the parliament. That's their whole fundamentally flawed outlook. There were hundreds of thousands, millions of Israelis who said no, and they were demonstrating in the streets, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. Israel was on the brink of a civil war. The Israeli president was speaking about this, saying 'if you don't think we could go into a civil war, you don't understand what's happening here'. And so Netanyahu was facing political disaster and then this war came. He needs to create a unifying principle, and you can't do that by having honest reflection," he said.

#### 'I Alone Can Secure You'

"You know, he's also in addition to being the most corrupt prime minister in the history of Israel, he's the guy who has defined himself more than any other prime minister as Mr. Security. He's the guy who said, 'trust me, I will protect you from Hamas', even though he empowered Hamas; 'I will protect you from Iran by [manufacturing the case about nuclear weapons](#)'; 'I will protect you from Iraq by lying about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction'. All these have come back to haunt him, but he continues to tell the Israeli people 'I, Benjamin Netanyahu alone, can secure you'. And now October 7 comes and it turns out he can't protect them," Ritter told Sputnik.

"The last thing he needs or wants or desires is [for] people to honestly reflect on it. Because something horrible happened on October 7, I think we are all in agreement about that. Whether you believe that Hamas had a right to rise up and attack Israeli military targets, that's a separate debate. I happen to believe they should be able to do that. But there's no carte blanche ever for anybody to kill innocent civilians, and a lot of innocent Israeli civilians were killed. And I think it's imperative that Israel, like the United States after 9/11, instead of saying 'we must exact our revenge', to sit there and say, 'how did this happen? Why did this happen and how can we

prevent it from happening again?' But in order to answer that question, you have to define the problem. Israel doesn't want to have that discussion, Netanyahu doesn't want to have that discussion, because the answer is: he is the problem. The right-wing policies of Israel is the problem. Zionism might be the problem."

"So to prevent this, you have to go into these extremist rallying cries. 'It's us against them, good versus evil', when you have to demonize the enemy, because you can't allow people to reflect on the potential legitimacy of what they did on October 7, you must turn them into the devil incarnate: al-Qaeda, ISIS, terrorists, etc. And that's what that's what Netanyahu's doing now. At the end of the day though, it's going to fail because again: you can't solve a problem if you haven't properly defined it. Israel is refusing to engage in any process and would properly define the real problems that led to October 7," Ritter said.

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'Her Role is to Shout Loudly': Lithuanian Attack on Orban Due to Vilnius Being 'Little Poland'

According to European media reports, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis has used a recent handshake between Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Russian President Vladimir Putin at a Beijing forum to suggest that Hungary is under Russia's control. "How do we know Budapest's positions are not dictated by Moscow?" Landsbergis asked in Luxembourg amid the meetings of EU Foreign and General Affairs Councils.

"Hungary is a sovereign country," replied Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó at the meeting, and its prime minister "meets whoever he wants."

Orban has been criticized by EU members for refusing to march in lock-step with the bloc's attempts to isolate Russia for launching its special operation in Ukraine. Budapest has refused to support either Moscow or Kiev, instead calling for negotiations to end the conflict. Recently, Orban criticized the EU, accusing it of similar behavior toward Hungary as that which it experienced as a Soviet ally in 1956, when the Soviet Red Army invaded and crushed an anti-communist uprising.

Gabor Stier, a foreign policy senior analyst at Hungarian conservative daily Magyar Nemzet and member of the Valdai Discussion Club, told Sputnik on Tuesday that with his comments, Landsbergis was trying to show Lithuania is "a good student of the Atlantic circle" and "trying to show itself as a bigger player than it really is."

"Lithuanians have a good sense lately of what the big players like and don't like, for example, the USA and the European Union. Two points are important here. On the one hand, this is a 'Baltic moment' - if something positive or pragmatic happens, then the Baltic states historically always scream."

"Among the Baltic states, Lithuania stands out. Lithuania is a 'little Poland,' it plays the same role, plus Baltic phobias, which are historically justified, but still phobias. On the other hand, this is 'little Poland.' Lithuania is trying to show itself as a bigger player than it really is: following the example of Poland, her role is to shout loudly," he said.

“At this moment, one can criticize Hungary, because they know 100% that they will get a gold star for this from Brussels and Washington. I think it's very simple. Historically they don't like it, but in fact now they use it to show what good students they are, good Atlanticists, good students of the Atlantic mainstream, just to show that ‘we are that good, we know what is right and what is wrong.’”

Stier said what was really important was that Lithuania's comments were ultimately “the voice of America, the voice of Poland,” and did not even represent the Baltic state's specific interest. “Behind the voice of Lithuania I feel is America and Poland,” he said. “Lithuania and Poland play in tandem, and Lithuania plays the role of the younger brother in this tandem. Following Poland's example, Lithuania is trying to show itself as more influential than it really is. They felt that Poland liked it, America liked it,” he said of the comments by Landsbergis, “and basically, as I understand it, this is not even a pro-European, but a pro-Atlantic direction.”

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Watch Heckler Blast Hillary Clinton for ‘Hypocrisy’ Over Biden’s ‘Warmongering’ Speech

Last week, Biden asked Congress for \$106 billion after giving a speech doubling down on his support for Israel, which has been bombing the Gaza Strip for more than two weeks following an attack on Israeli border towns by Hamas. Much of the money is intended to pay for military equipment for Israel and Ukraine.

During an event at Columbia University's Institute of Global Politics on Monday, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was challenged by a protester in the audience who asked her to denounce a “warmongering speech” given by US President Joe Biden.

The incident took place as Clinton and a roundtable of four others fielded questions about the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“Can you please - can you make a statement about President Joe Biden's speech?” a man asked from the audience. “This is a clearly warmongering speech.”

“President Joe Biden is [calling for \\$100 billion](#) of funding for Israel, Taiwan, and Ukraine, and we're supposed to just bundle these together and pretend like we're going to rush to World War III, and we're all just going to let Hillary Rodham Clinton sit here,” he continued.

“This is people constructing narratives that are openly hypocritical,” the protester retorted. “Will you denounce Joe Biden's speech?”

“I'm not sorry. You sit down,” Clinton replied. “It's not free speech when you are disrupting everybody else's opportunity to speak,” she added.

“What I want to hear is Hillary Rodham Clinton to denounce President Joe Biden's warmongering speech,” the protester continued. “He's trying to push us to World War Three. Do you understand?”

“I will not do that,” said Clinton.

Both members of the Democratic Party, Clinton and Biden served together in the Obama administration, during which time both were accused of overseeing US foreign wars and [regime](#)

[change operations](#) including in Honduras, Libya, [and Ukraine](#), and supportive of Israel's 51-day war with Hamas that killed 2,310 Palestinians and injured over 10,000.

The most recent conflict in Gaza began on October 7, when Hamas [militants attacked several](#) Israeli border towns, killing more than 1,300 Israelis. The [Israeli bombardment of Gaza](#) in the time since then has killed more than 5,700 Palestinians, including 700 in the last day, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Israel has amassed more than 300,000 troops outside the enclave in preparation for a ground assault aimed at destroying Hamas.

According to some reports, Jerusalem has delayed the assault over fears that it could draw the Lebanese militant group [Hezbollah into the war](#), creating a two-front conflict on Israel's north and south.

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House GOP Picks Mike Johnson as Speaker-Designate in Latest Bid to End Stalemate

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) - US Rep. Mike Johnson (R-LA) was picked late Tuesday as the latest nominee to take up the House speakership since it was left vacant following a historic ouster vote.

Fellow US Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) congratulated Johnson for being elected speaker-designate of the lower congressional chamber, writing on social media:

"Congratulations to speaker-designate Republican Mike Johnson."

Johnson, whose win reportedly prompted a chorus of applause during a closed-door voting session, managed to clinch the nomination with 128 votes.

"Democracy is messy sometimes but it is our system," Johnson told reporters outside the conference room. "This conference that you see — this House Republican majority — is united." Johnson further noted that he would be "working" overnight with Republicans who were absent during the vote.

Reports have indicated 43 Republicans threw their backing for US Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), who was booted from the post in early October and was not formally running again for the speakership. One vote was given to US Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH), who previously failed to gain enough support despite holding three floor votes.

Although the little-known Louisiana lawmaker was able to come out on top, it remains unclear whether he will meet the same fate as his predecessors and fail to gain the 217 Republican votes needed to secure the gavel. To date, none of the nominated candidates have been able to win over enough detractors.

Of the [GOP candidates](#), Johnson has the least amount of congressional experience, having only served three full terms in the chamber. The lawmaker was elected to Congress in 2016 and served as the chair of the Republican Study Committee between 2019 and 2021. He presently serves as the vice chairman to the House Republican Conference.

During his brief time on Capitol Hill, Johnson infamously filed a brief on a Texas lawsuit that sought to invalidate the results of the 2020 presidential election on the basis that pandemic-era changes made to state laws were unconstitutional.

Johnson's rise to nominee status came hours after he initially placed second to House Majority Whip Tom Emmer (R-MN), who ultimately [dropped out of the contest](#) in a matter of hours once he failed to gain sufficient backing from his fellow Republicans.

A floor vote is expected to take place on Wednesday.

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Nearly Half of Canadians Say Financial Support for Ukraine Should Be Maintained - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - Nearly half of Canadians believe that Canada should maintain its current levels of financial support for Ukraine, a Leger poll revealed on Wednesday.

The poll was conducted on a randomized sample of 1,521 Canadians aged 18 or older from October 20-22.

"45% of Canadians believe that the Government of Canada should maintain the current levels of financial aid to Ukraine," the pollster said.

Thirty percent of those surveyed said Ottawa should strengthen its humanitarian and diplomatic efforts with regard to Ukraine. Twenty-three percent support increasing Canada's efforts for military training of Ukrainian troops, and one in five favors sending more ammunition and other military supplies to Kiev.

Leger also surveyed Canadians on the country's relationship with the United States. Forty-two percent said Canada should distance itself from US foreign policy.

However, 49% of those surveyed believe being a close ally of Washington helps Canada on the international scene, whereas close to a third (30%) of Canadians say it hurts the country.

Fifty-seven percent think Canada should play a greater role in the UN, and half of respondents think it should assert itself more on a diplomatic front, the poll showed. Forty-eight percent support increasing foreign assistance and 43% believe the country should play a more visible role when it comes to military intervention or support.

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Blinken Asked Qatar to Tone Down Al-Jazeera Commentary on Israel – Reports

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a group of Jewish community leaders that he asked Qatar's prime minister during a visit to Doha on October 13 to tone down Al-Jazeera's commentary about Israel's war on Gaza, Axios reported on Wednesday, citing three attendees.

One source said that Blinken asked that Qatar's government, which funds the media network,

to "turn down the volume on Al Jazeera's coverage because it is full of anti-Israel incitement" as part of modifying its public stance toward Hamas.

Al-Jazeera has maintained that it operates independently of the Qatari government.

The US State Department declined to comment on Blinken's alleged remarks.

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UNSC to Vote on US, Russian Draft Resolutions on Mideast Wednesday - UNSC President

UNITED NATIONS, October 25 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council will vote on rival US and Russian draft resolutions on the Israel-Gaza conflict on Wednesday at 19:00 GMT, the Brazilian mission said.

Brazil holds the UNSC presidency during the month of October.

"Following the request by the US, we will schedule the voting on the draft resolution on the situation in the Middle East for 3pm [EST]," the mission said in a statement.

It will be followed by a vote on the Russian-drafted resolution, the mission confirmed.

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Biden to Assure Australia's PM US Will Follow Through on AUKUS Submarine Deal - Official

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden will assure his Australian counterpart later on Wednesday that the United States will follow through on its AUKUS submarine despite delays caused by the House speaker dilemma in Congress, a senior US administration official told reporters.

Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will have a bilateral meeting in Washington to discuss a range of matters concerning China, the Indo-Pacific region, Ukraine, and other topics of mutual interest.

"I'm confident that the President will assure Prime Minister... that the United States will follow through on its strong commitment to deliver nuclear submarine capability to Australia," the official said. "We're in close consultations on Capitol Hill."

Under AUKUS, the United States plans to sell between three to five Virginia-class submarines to Australia as an interim capability in the early 2030s.

However, lawmakers want more clarification on the cost estimates for the US submarine industrial base before advancing legislation authoring the AUKUS deal.

Australia, the United States and the UK announced a new trilateral defense partnership called AUKUS in September 2021. The first initiative announced under the AUKUS defense pact was the development of nuclear-powered submarine technology for the Royal Australian Navy, so the Australian government decided to abandon its agreement, estimated at \$66 billion at that

time, with France's Naval Group company for the construction of diesel-electric submarines.

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Australia's Albanese May Talk With Biden Desire to Improve China Relations - US Official

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese during a meeting with President Joe Biden later on Wednesday is likely to discuss his country's desire to improve relations with China, a senior US administration official told reporters.

Earlier this week, Albanese said he will visit China in early November to meet President Xi Jinping.

"I think it is likely Prime Minister Albanese will talk about his government's desire to improve relations [with China]," the official said.

Biden will be interested to share notes and compare details about what the United States is seeing with respect to Xi and China, the official added.

According to the official, the two leaders will have "deep discussions" on issues related to the stability in the South China Sea, their engagement with the Pacific Islands, and leadership within the Quad partnership group.

Biden and Albanese will have a bilateral meeting to discuss a range of matters concerning China, the Indo-Pacific region, Ukraine, and other topics of mutual interest.

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US, Australia to Clarify Cyber Defense Alliance During Biden-Albanese Visit - Official

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The United States and Australia are expected to elaborate on their cyber defense commitments later on Wednesday following the bilateral meeting between US President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, a senior US administration official told reporters.

Biden and Albanese will have a bilateral meeting in Washington on Wednesday to discuss a range of matters concerning China, the Indo-Pacific region, Ukraine, and other topics of mutual interest.

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"We'll also be announcing important research partnerships and really explaining and clarifying how our alliance works together in the cyber domain, making clear that a cyber attack on either one of our countries applies to our mutual defense commitment," the official said.

The United States and Australia held consultations in July that included joint work on cyber-related issues.

The two sides made a joint commitment to security standards to safeguard sensitive technology and information.

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US, Australia to Make Major Announcement on Undersea Cable Project - Senior Official

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The United States and Australia are expected to make a major announcement regarding the joint undersea cable project that seeks to improve internet connection to Pacific Island states, a senior US administration official told reporters.

President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will have a bilateral meeting in Washington on Wednesday to discuss a range of matters concerning China, the Indo-Pacific region, Ukraine, and other topics of mutual interest.

"We expect to make a big splash with the submarine cable project announcement," the official said.

The US official further said both sides will also make two important maritime infrastructure announcements relevant to the Pacific Islands.

The United States, Australia, and Japan are working together on a \$95 million undersea cable project that will connect the state of Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia, Tarawa in Kiribati and Nauru to the existing cable landing point located in Pohnpei in Micronesia.

The partners are expected to finish laying the 1,400-mile undersea fiber optic cable in 2025. The project is meant to counter China's growing influence in the region.

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US Will Have 'Blood On its Hands' if Plan for Israel Has No De-Escalation - Ex-Egyptian FM

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The United States risks having blood on its hands if its security assistance for Israel does not include efforts to deescalate the conflict, former Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy told Sputnik.

On Friday, President Joe Biden submitted a \$106 billion supplemental funding request to Congress that includes \$61.4 billion for Ukraine, half of which is to provide Kiev with weapons and replenish US weapon stockpiles. The supplemental package also proposes \$14.3 billion for Israel, which includes \$10.6 billion for security assistance such as air and missile defense support and industrial base investments.

"So it's really surprising. What is the actual intention? What is going to be done that requires this much support? If you're going to provide this blanket support without a clear, de-escalation phase, then frankly, you're going to also have blood on your hands," Fahmy said.

Fahmy added that the White House's call for a supplemental aid package of this magnitude is indicative of what the United States is trying to do, unless it's simply an electoral motive.

"In all honesty, the money and the kinds of equipment being envisaged here for Israel... the amount of material and resources here even exceed what's provided to many NATO countries," Fahmy said.

Moreover, Fahmy said Biden's comparison of the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza are completely different issues. He added that the United States should take the opposition position in terms of Gaza because Israel is the one that is occupying the West Bank and carrying out a gas blockade.

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Israel-Hamas War Could Affect Global Cost of Oil, Gas - Ex-Egyptian Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The ongoing Israel-Hamas war could have an impact on the price of oil and gas around the world if the conflict is prolonged, former Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy told Sputnik.

"Any extended geopolitical disturbance affects strategic goods, be it oil, be it gas," Fahmy said. "The cost of energy - be that oil or gas - could be affected, but it's secondary in my mind. My primary objective here is the cost in terms of human life."

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food and fuel. The blockade was later eased to allow trucks with humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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Ex-Egyptian Foreign Minister Says Doesn't Rule Out Gaza War Turning Into Regional Conflict

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - Former Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy told Sputnik he would not rule out that the Israel-Hams war in the Gaza Strip may expand into a regional conflict given the ongoing level of violence.

"So, as an analyst, I would not expect this to be the intention, but as a practitioner, I would not rule it out given the level of violence that continues to go on," Fahmy said regarding risk of a wider regional conflict in the Middle East.

Fahmy explained that he does not think it is the intention of any third parties to get involved in the Israel-Hamas war at this point because of the complications associated with that, however, he underscored that the "fog of war" is difficult to control.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food and fuel. The

blockade was later eased to allow trucks with humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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West Spoiling Its Reputation in Arab World With Blatant Backing of Israel - Ex-Egyptian FM

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - Western countries are spoiling their reputation in the Arab world with their flagrant support for Israel amid its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, former Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy told Sputnik.

"Well, I think the West is doing its best to spoil its reputation in the Arab world by having a double standard that is flagrant and blatant... the West is doing a huge disservice for itself," Fahmy said.

The West should support a ceasefire that will stop hostilities on both sides, provide humanitarian access to Palestinians, and support a conflict resolution that would deal with the issues of hostages and most importantly Israel's occupation, Fahmy added.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food and fuel. The blockade was later eased to allow trucks with humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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Ramaswamy Questions US Interventionist Foreign Policy in Middle East

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nomination contender Vivek Ramaswamy said the United States has an outdated interventionist strategy in the Middle East.

"They're attacking us in places that we shouldn't have been. Why are we in Syria? Why are we in Iraq? We shouldn't have been in either of those places," Ramaswamy said at the Hudson Institute on Tuesday.

Ramaswamy said some bad intentions have been involved in pursuing such a strategy at present, but it is mostly an outdated vision of an "interventionist foreign policy."

"That put us in a place to be attacked," Ramaswamy said.

As Israel appears to be moving toward a ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, the concern grows that it will become exposed to a potential attack from the north by Hezbollah, Ramaswamy added.

On October 7, the Palestinian group Hamas launched surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched massive strikes as well as imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity,

and fuel to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and more than 5,000 Palestinians with multiple thousands injured.

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Al-Aqsa Martyrs Joined Hamas' Qassam Brigades in Attack on Israel on October 7 - Hersh

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The al-Aqsa Martyrs brigade joined the Qassam brigades - the military wing of Hamas - in the attack on Israeli kibbutzim and villages on October 7, US investigative journalist Seymour Hersh said in a new article.

On the day of the attack on Israel, the Qassam brigades were not alone and were actually joined by al-Aqsa Martyrs brigades, a coalition of Palestinian armed groups that has been designated as a terrorist organization by the United States, Israel, the European Union and others, the article said on Tuesday, citing a US official.

"We know," Hersh cited the official as saying, "that the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade participated." The participation of outside groups on Hamas' side in the attack on Israel was likely one of the reasons why secret talks about a larger release of Israeli hostages were never successful, according to Hersh.

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Paul Whelan's Family Says Unaware of US Offer to Russia to Release Him

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The family of former US Marine Paul Whelan, who is serving a 16-year prison sentence in Russia for espionage, said it is not aware of a new US offer to Moscow on his release, but is confident that the work continues.

A State Department spokesperson confirmed to Sputnik earlier on Tuesday that the United States offered Russia a "serious proposal" to facilitate the release of Paul Whelan.

"I don't have any updates. The people who are tasked with working on it continue to work on finding a way for him to be free," Paul Whelan's brother, David, told Sputnik.

Paul Whelan was arrested in Moscow in December 2018 and subsequently sentenced to 16 years in prison on charges of espionage. Whelan, who is also a citizen of Canada, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, has maintained his innocence, insisting that he came to Russia to attend a

friend's wedding.

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Pentagon Declines to Confirm if US Plans to Deploy 12 Air Defense Systems in Middle East

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department has declined to confirm media reports that the United States is planning to deploy 12 air defense systems across the Middle East.

"We have no additional announcements or information to provide at this time," the Defense Department press office said in a statement on Tuesday.

Media reports claim that the United States is planning to send missile launchers to Iraq, Syria and the Persian Gulf ahead of Israel's ground invasion of the Gaza Strip.

On Sunday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said that the United States will deploy a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile defense system, as well as additional Patriot air defense battalions in the Middle East to enhance the security of US forces.

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Israel Considering Flooding Hamas's Tunnel System Before Ground Operation - Hersh

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Israel is looking into flooding Hamas' tunnel system before starting its ground operation in the Gaza Strip, US investigative journalist Seymour Hersh said, citing sources.

"A well-informed American official told me that the Israeli leadership is known to be considering flooding Hamas's vast tunnel system before sending in its troops, many of whom have had only a few weeks of training in the maneuvers and coordination required for the invasion," Hersh said in his column published on Substack.

Hersh said Israel is in the process of turning Gaza City into rubble, via constant bombing, and is also planning to begin the ground invasion soon.

Flooding the tunnels could mean that Israel was ready to "write off the hostages still in jeopardy," Hersh said.

"Where the estimated 200-plus hostages are is an open question. Israel is only talking about the end of the Hamas regime and Hamas has so far released four hostages," Hersh said. "The American official told me that the Israel leadership expects more to come soon."

Earlier on Tuesday, Israel's Deputy Director General for Public Diplomacy Emmanuel Nahshon said that Israel is delaying the start of the ground invasion in Gaza due to possible "deadly traps."

The Israeli military is taking its time as it needs to prepare its soldiers for this unique situation, Nahshon added.

On October 7, the Palestinian group Hamas launched surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched strikes as well as imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and some 5,000 Palestinians with multiple thousands of injured.

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US Welcomes Kyrgyzstan Repatriating 83 People From Syria's Al-Hol - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The United States welcomes Kyrgyzstan repatriating 83 women and children from the Al-Hol camp in Syria and stands ready to cooperate with other nations on their repatriation efforts, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"The Kyrgyz Republic's repatriation of 83 women and children from the al-Hol displaced persons camp in northeast Syria is another important step to resolve the humanitarian and security challenges that have followed the territorial defeat of ISIS [Islamic State, outlawed in Russia]," Miller said in a statement on Tuesday.

The spokesperson said the United States supported Kyrgyzstan's repatriation of its nationals and stands ready to continue its cooperation with other nations in their repatriation efforts.

Miller noted that Kyrgyzstan's repatriation was the third this year after it repatriated 95 women and children in August.

Miller also said that about 35,000 persons from more than 60 countries outside of Syria remain in the al-Hol and Roj camps.

"Repatriation is the only durable solution," Miller said.

More than 3,000 people have been repatriated to their countries of origin from the two camps this year, helping to ease the burden of providing humanitarian services and reducing the risk of Islamic State exploiting this vulnerable population, Miller said

Numerous European countries, including the United Kingdom, Denmark and Belgium, have said they are reluctant to take back their nationals captured alongside terrorists in Syria and Iraq as well as their wives and children.

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Israel Not Prepared to Confront Iran But US Stands Ready - US Congressman

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - Israel is not prepared for a confrontation with Iran, but the United States stands ready to take on Tehran, US Congressman Darrell Issa said after receiving a briefing on Iran.

"Israel is not in a position to deal with Iran. They're in a position to deal, maybe, with Hamas

and Hezbollah," Issa said on Tuesday in an interview with Fox News. "We're in a position to deal with their [Iran's] aggression in Yemen, their aggression throughout the region, but most importantly, the sanctions."

Earlier on Tuesday, lawmakers received a briefing about Iran's activities in the Middle East amid a number of attacks on US forces in the region. The increase in attacks coincides with the escalation of fighting between Israelis and Palestinians.

Issa said briefers informed the lawmakers that Hamas' and Hezbollah's funding and capabilities came from Iran. However, there is no "smoking gun" tying Iran to Hamas' October 7 surprise attack on Israel, Issa added.

The United States has sent thousands of troops and other military assets to the region in an effort to aid Israel in the war with Hamas.

The Biden administration has said they do not intend to deploy US troops on the ground to join combat.

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US Plant Refuses to Fulfill Order on Balloons With Call to End Siege of Gaza - CODEPINK

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - The US peace advocacy group CODEPINK said that a plant in the United States had refused to fulfill the peace group's order to produce balloons with a call to stop the siege of the Gaza Strip.

"We ordered balloons that read 'End the siege on Gaza' and the production plant refused to print them," CODEPINK said via X (formerly known as Twitter).

CODEPINK characterized the plant's conduct as "ridiculous."

Last week, CODEPINK member Leslie Angeline went on a hunger strike to protest the military actions against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere in Israel.

Angeline vowed to visit US lawmaker offices to encourage them to sign the Ceasefire Now Resolution, which was introduced by a group of Democrats in the US House of Representatives.

On October 7, the Palestinian group Hamas launched surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched strikes as well as imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and some 5,000 Palestinians with multiple thousands of injured.

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Hern, Johnson May Be Back in US House Speaker Race, 'Nothing Certain' - Source

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - Congressmen Kevin Hern and Mike Johnson may be back in the race to become the next speaker of the US House of Representatives, but nothing is certain, a congressional source told Sputnik.

Earlier on Tuesday, House Majority Whip Tom Emmer dropped out of the speakership race after failing to secure enough support among House Republicans.

"Nothing is certain yet, but those names are being discussed," the congressional source said on Tuesday.

All lawmakers interested to become candidates for House speaker have until 5:30 p.m. ET to declare and file their candidacy, media reported.

US lawmakers hope to immediately approve legislation to provide further security assistance to Israel amid concerns that the lack of a House speaker may delay that process. The House of Representatives cannot engage in normal business until a new House speaker is elected.

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GOP Greene Says Did Not Support Emmer as Speaker of US House

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) - Conservative congressman Marjorie Taylor Greene said that she didn't support Tom Emmer as the next Speaker of the House of Representatives.

"I like Emmer as a person but I can't support him as a Speaker of the House," Green told reporters on Tuesday.

Earlier today, Greene posted on her X profile that "Emmer voted for a Democrat gay marriage bill, voted with Democrats to overturn President Trump's transgender military ban, voted for every penny of Ukraine funding, at one time supported the Soros national popular vote scheme, and voted to certify Biden's 2020 election" as reasons why she can not support him.

Earlier in October, House lawmakers ousted Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker in a historic first, leaving the lower chamber leaderless ahead of a government funding deadline and calls for new foreign aid packages.

The House of Representatives is limited in its ability to pass bills or conduct other normal legislative business until they elect a new speaker. Some lawmakers have also proposed empowering temporary speaker pro tempore Patrick McHenry, although other members of Congress have questioned the constitutionality of such a move.

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US Charges Haiti Gang Boss Innocent in Hostage-Murder Case - Justice Dept

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) -The US government has filed a federal indictment charging a Haitian gang leader with taking two US citizens hostage and murdering one of them, the Department of Justice announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"An indictment, filed in the District of Columbia and unsealed [on Tuesday] charges Vitel'homme Innocent, a Haitian national and leader of the Kraze Barye gang, for his alleged role in the October 2022 armed hostage taking, in Haiti, of two U.S. citizens, one of whom was killed during the event," the release said.

According to the indictment, Vitel'homme Innocent and the Kraze Barye gang operate in the Ouest department of Haiti to include Delmas, Torcelle, and Tabarre. The gang actively participates in kidnappings for ransom, extortion, and car thefts.

Vitel'homme Innocent remains at large and is believed to reside in Tabarre, Haiti. He faces additional charges in Washington, DC related to his role in the kidnapping of 16 US citizens in the fall of 2021, for which he was indicted. In the Fall of 2022. The US Department of State has offered a reward of up to \$1 million for information leading to his arrest or conviction.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 25 (Sputnik) -

#### ISRAEL-PALESTINE WAR

- \* The total number of Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip has surpassed the death toll in the 50-day war in 2014, UN Assistant Secretary-General Lynn Hastings said on Tuesday.
- \* More than 2,300 children in the Gaza Strip and more than 30 Israeli children have been killed since the escalation of the conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said.
- \* US President Biden and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman have joined forces to embark on a comprehensive diplomatic initiative to curb the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the White House said on Tuesday.
- \* Israel will have to make an assessment regarding the country's relations with the United Nations after UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' statement about the October 7 Hamas attack, Ambassador Gilad Erdan said.
- \* Israel has identified launches from Syria and has been responding with artillery fire, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said.
- \* The Israeli military targeted a group of Hamas fighters on Tuesday when they tried to infiltrate the Israeli territory, the IDF said.

#### RUSSIA'S UNSC DRAFT RESOLUTION ON ISRAEL, GAZA

- \* Russia's alternative UN Security Council draft resolution calls for an immediate and durable ceasefire in the Middle East, the text of the resolution obtained by Sputnik said on Tuesday.
- \* Russia's alternative draft resolution is also calls for an immediate rescission of Israel's evacuation order for civilians in the Gaza Strip.
- \* The alternative draft resolution urges establishing humanitarian corridors and pauses, according to the text of the document.

#### ATTACKS ON US FORCES IN SYRIA, IRAQ

\* The US Defense Department is aware of alerts about a new potential attack on US forces in Syria later on Tuesday and is looking into it, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said.

\* The US and coalition forces have been attacked at least ten times in Iraq and three times in Syria by a mix of drones and rockets over the past week alone, Ryder said.

#### PUTIN-ERDOGAN TALKS

\* Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed over the telephone the current crisis in the Middle East, the Kremlin said on Tuesday.

#### US-AUSTRALIA TALKS

\* US President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will discuss the challenges and opportunities related to China during their upcoming meeting at the White House, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday.

\* Kirby highlighted the enhancement of defense cooperation between the United States and Australia and the potential for its trilateral expansion to include Japan.

#### BALTICCONNECTOR INVESTIGATION

\* The Russian Sevmorput cargo ship is no longer a subject of an investigation into damage caused to the Balticconnector gas pipeline between Finland and Estonia, Risto Lohi, a representative of the Finnish police who is leading the investigation, said on Tuesday.

\* The investigation into the incident at the Balticconnector gas pipeline has established that vessel Newnew Polar Bear under the flag of Hong Kong was likely to have caused the damage, the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation said.

#### CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

\* Ukraine has lost more than 235 soldiers in the Donetsk direction over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Tuesday.

\* Moscow has studied the recent article by The Washington Post, which described the long-term cooperation of the Ukrainian intelligence services with the CIA, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

\* The potential of ammunition production the collective West is limited and it takes a lot of time to mobilize resources in this regard, so there are "points of tension," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

#### PAUL WHELAN CASE IN RUSSIA

\* A State Department spokesperson confirmed to Sputnik on Tuesday that the United States offered Russia a serious proposal to facilitate the release of US citizen Paul Whelan from prison, where he serves a 16-year sentence for espionage.

\* Whelan's lawyer Olga Karlova told Sputnik that she cannot disclose the details of the proposal allegedly made by the Biden administration to Moscow.

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Turkey Urges UN Security Council to End Indifference Amid Lack of Resolution - Official

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Turkey has called on the UN Security Council to stop being indifferent amid its failure to adopt a resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian war, Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister for Middle East and North Africa Affairs Ahmet Yildiz said on Tuesday.

"We urge the Council to put an end to its indifference to this ongoing carnage, which can have no place in the 21st century," Yildiz said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia announced that Russia has prepared an alternative draft resolution after the United States vetoed a Brazil-drafted resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian war.

The new draft resolution is calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire in the Middle East and urges establishing humanitarian pauses and humanitarian corridors.

Over the weekend, a source in the UN Security Council told Sputnik that the United States has distributed a draft resolution condemning Hamas and recognizing Israel's right to self-defense, but not calling for a ceasefire.

The US draft resolution, obtained by Sputnik, said that it "unequivocally rejects and condemns the heinous terrorist attack by Hamas and other terrorist groups that took place in Israel starting October 7."

The US draft resolution also reaffirms "Israel's inherent right of individual and collective self-defense" and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages taken by Hamas," as well as respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians.

The United States has already vetoed the draft resolutions put forth by Russia and Brazil.

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since October 7 has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and some 5,000 Palestinians with multiple thousands of injured.

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US Approves \$74M In RAM Missiles Air Defense sale to Japan - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has approved the sale of up to 63 small ground-to-air Rolling Airframe Missiles (RAM) to Japan for more than \$74 million, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Japan of Rolling Airframe Missiles (RAM) Block 2B Tactical Missiles and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$74.6 million," the release said.

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

"The Government of Japan has requested to buy up to 63 Rolling Airframe Missiles (RAM)

Block 2B Tactical Missiles, RIM-116E. Also included are RAM Guided Missile Round Pack Tri-Pack shipping and storage containers; training equipment; operator manuals and technical documentation," the DSCA said.

The proposed sale will improve Japan's capability to meet current and future threats by providing significantly enhanced self-defense for surface units defending critical air and sea lines of communication, the release explained.

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Tom Emmer Drops Out of US House Speaker Race - Congressman

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US House Majority Whip Tom Emmer is dropping out of the speakership race after failing to secure enough support among House Republicans, Congressman Lance Gooden said on Tuesday.

Emmer dropped out of the race for speaker hours after the House Republican Conference nominated him as speaker-designate due to opposition to his bid by more than 20 members, Gooden told reporters, according to a Sputnik correspondent.

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South Africa 'Appalled' at UNSC Failure to Agree on Resolution on Israel-Palestine Crisis

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - South Africa is "appalled" by the failure of the UN Security Council to agree on a resolution to end the killing and suffering in the Israel-Palestinian war, Foreign Affairs Minister Naledi Pandor said on Tuesday.

"South Africa is appalled at the Security Council's failure to agree on a unified resolution that signals a full commitment to ending killing and suffering. There can be no search for compromise resolutions when this Council is faced with a crisis of such proportions," Pandor said during the UN Security Council meeting.

The minister emphasized that the conflict in the Middle East highlighted the shortcomings of the United Nations and more so the Security Council, which is responsible for upholding international peace and security.

On October 7, the Palestinian organization Hamas launched surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched strikes as well as imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and some 5,000 Palestinians killed with multiple thousands of injured.

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Oil Closes Down Another 2% Amid Diplomatic Efforts in Gaza, Europe's Economic Troubles

NEW YORK, October 24 (Sputnik) - Crude prices fell another 2% Tuesday, adding to Monday's 3% slump, amid less intensity in the Israel-Hamas war that took a greater war risk premium out of oil.

Europe's economic woes indicating more troubles for Germany and Britain — two of the bloc's most influential members — also pressured oil markets.

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, crude for December delivery, settled at \$83.74, down \$1.75, or 2% on the day. On Monday, WTI fell 2.9%.

The US crude benchmark rose 2% last week and around 6% the prior week. Tuesday's session low was \$82.97, putting it not too far from the two-month low of \$81.50 struck on October 6, a day before the outbreak of fighting in Gaza.

UK-origin Brent crude for December delivery settled at \$88.07, down \$1.76, or nearly 2%. Brent fell 2.5% in the prior session.

Last week, the global crude benchmark rose 1.4%, adding to the prior week's gain of 7.5%. Tuesday's session low for Brent was \$87.36.

Oil's rally over the past two weeks was driven by global shock over the death toll emanating from Israel's response to the Oct 7 attacks carried out by Hamas, and concerns of a contagion should the crisis spill over and impact neighboring countries, which include some of the biggest oil producers such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Kuwait.

Conversely, the market's retreat comes amid diplomacy efforts by the United States and other world powers in convincing Israel to delay a ground assault on Gaza while they try to negotiate the release of an estimated 200 Israeli hostages being held by the Palestine militant group.

Adding to Wednesday's bearish mood in oil was dire economic data out of Europe. German readings suggested a recession was underway. Britain's businesses reported another monthly decline in activity, highlighting recession risks ahead of the Bank of England's interest rate decision next week.

"I think it's beginning to dawn on some people that you can't put black gold and gold in the same bucket when looking for a hedge to this war," John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge Again Capital, said, referring to oil by a popular market parlance.

He said oil derived its net worth from consumption, while gold acts more as an insurance against economic and political troubles. "The truth is there's been no direct impact thus far on the oil trade from the crisis in Gaza and, therefore, it's only right that crude prices give back the gains they've been running up the past two weeks."

Gold hit three-month highs last week as investors sought a hedge to the war, with New York traded futures breaching \$2,000 an ounce. It has eased since from those highs but remains largely in a bull market, technical charts show.

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Hungary Says Sees Risks of Losing Abraham Accords Outcomes Due to Anti-Israel Attacks

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Hungary warns that all the achievements of the Abraham Accords may be lost as a result of the series of terrorist attacks against Israel, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said on Tuesday.

"Unfortunately, we see a huge risk posed by the series of terrorist attacks against Israel, that all the achievements we have reached since 2020, since signing the Abraham accords will be lost," Szijjarto said during the UN Security Council. "We do count a lot on the Gulf Countries and on the Arab countries in the region who have shown a very responsible way of behavior not to let all these achievements reached by the Abraham accords be lost."

The US launched a process to normalize relations between Israel and the Arab states in 2020. As a result of these efforts, in September 2020, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed a set of documents known as the Abraham Accords, and were joined by Morocco in December of that year. In January 2021, Sudan also signed the declaratory section of the Accords, but did not sign the corresponding document with Israel, unlike the other states, due to disagreements between the Sudanese military and civilian leadership over the issue. Up to 2020, Israel had diplomatic relations with only two Arab countries in the region, Jordan and Egypt.

The ongoing war between Israel and Hamas will make the normalization process with the Arab nations longer, but will not stop it, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said on Tuesday.

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Some Countries Not Excited About AUKUS, Try to Divide US, Partners - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) – Some countries are not excited about the trilateral defense union between the United States, the UK and Australia (AUKUS) and try to divide them, but these efforts are not successful, US Deputy under Secretary of Defense Mara Karlin said on Tuesday.

"We have seen some actors who are not terribly excited about AUKUS and have tried to sow some kind of disinformation," Karlin said during a conversation at the Brookings Institution.

She pointed out that these countries were trying to divide the US and its partners, but these efforts are unsuccessful. She also expressed confidence that AUKUS got a "wide-spread support," which is clearly understood by adversaries.

Karlin also stressed that AUKUS aimed to getting all here countries to have sophisticated capabilities and being able to work together in an advanced technology environment, That would ensure the Indo-Pacific security and stability, she added.

Australia, the US and the UK announced a new trilateral defense partnership called AUKUS in September 2021. The first initiative announced under the AUKUS defense pact was the

development of nuclear-powered submarine technology for the Royal Australian Navy, so the Australian government decided to abandon its agreement, estimated at \$66 billion at that time, with France's Naval Group company for the construction of diesel-electric submarines.

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US Approves Potential \$220Mln Sale of HIMARS Rocket Systems to Latvia - Pentagon

(adds details in paras 3-6)

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The US State Department has approved a potential \$220 million sale of six High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) and corresponding equipment to Latvia, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Tuesday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Latvia of M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$220 million," DSCA said in a statement.

Under the deal, Latvia would be allowed to purchase six M142 HIMARS and a variety of rockets including twelve M30A2 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMLRS) Alternative Warhead Pods with Insensitive Munitions Propulsion System (IMPS), and another twelve M31A2 GMLRS-Unitary High Explosive Pods with IMPS.

The potential sale also includes ten M57 Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATCAMS) Pods, as well as computing and communication equipment, among others.

DSCA considers the sale proposal as being fully aligned with US goals for enhancing the security of NATO ally that is "an important force" in maintaining the regions political and economical stability, the statement added.

The statement further noted that going forth with the deal would not alter the regional power balance and will also pose no adverse impacts to US defense readiness.

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Egypt Regrets UNSC Inability to Adopt Mideast Crisis Resolution, Call for Ceasefire - FM

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Egypt regrets the UN Security Council failure to adopt a resolution on the Middle East war and also for its inability to urge the ceasefire, Foreign Affairs Minister Sameh Hassan Shoukry said on Tuesday.

"We followed with regret the inability of this ghost Council twice to adopt a resolution or even to call for a ceasefire to end this war ," Shoukry said during a UN Security Council.

Moreover, Shoukry stressed, Egypt is surprised by new attempts to adopt a resolution that does not include a call for a ceasefire.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia announced that Russia has prepared an alternative draft resolution after the US vetoed a Brazil-drafted

resolution on the Israel-Gaza conflict. Russia's new draft UN Security Council resolution on the Israel-Gaza conflict is calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire in the Middle East and urges the establishment of humanitarian pauses and humanitarian corridors

Over the weekend, a source in the Security Council told Sputnik that the United States has distributed to the UN Security Council a draft resolution on the conflict in the Gaza Strip, condemning Hamas and recognizing Israel's right to self-defense, but not calling for a ceasefire,

The draft, obtained by Sputnik, read that it "unequivocally rejects and condemns the heinous terrorist attack by Hamas and other terrorist groups that took place in Israel starting October 7."

The draft resolution also reaffirms "Israel's inherent right of individual and collective self-defense" and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages "taken by Hamas," as well as respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians.

Washington has already vetoed draft resolutions from Russia and Brazil.

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Meta Sued by Over 40 States for Alleged Harm to Youth Mental Health - NY Attorney General

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - New York is leading a coalition of dozens of states in a lawsuit against Meta (banned in Russia as an extremist organization) alleging the company's platforms contribute to the youth mental health crisis, Attorney General Letitia James' office said in a statement on Tuesday.

"New York Attorney General Letitia James and a bipartisan coalition of 32 attorneys general today filed a federal lawsuit against Meta for harming young people's mental health and contributing to the youth mental health crisis," the statement said.

Furthermore, alongside James and the group of 32 attorneys general, an additional nine attorneys general have launched lawsuits in their own states, totaling 42 attorneys general pressing charges against Meta, the statement added.

According to the statement, the legal complaint suggests that Meta intentionally developed detrimental features on platforms like Instagram and Facebook, targeting the addictive tendencies of young users.

Moreover, the lawsuit, presented in the US District Court for the Northern District of California, also accuses Meta of consistently gathering data from users below the age of 13 without notifying their parents or securing their approval, breaching federal regulations, the statement said.

The lawsuit follows the recent announcement of state-level legislation proposed by James and colleagues to protect children online, the statement said.

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US, EU to Convene Experts to Find Ways of Using Russia's Assets to Fund Ukraine - Official

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Washington and Brussels at the US-EU summit agreed to convene experts to find ways of how to use Russian assets to compensate Ukraine for the damage resulting from the ongoing conflict between the two countries, Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economics Mike Pyle said on Tuesday.

"The United States and Europe will, together with our allies, convene experts around exploring options to compensate Ukraine in a timely manner for the loss, injury, and damage resulting from Russia's aggression, that will sit alongside efforts in the shorter term to explore how to use any extraordinary revenues held by private entities stemming directly from immobilized Russian sovereign assets," Pyle said during a press briefing.

The United States and the European Union will also target those countries that are allegedly helping Russia acquire equipment for its defense industrial base, including companies supplying critical raw materials and other high-priority items to Russia, to undermine Moscow's ability to support its industrial complex, Pyle said.

The US-EU summit concluded on Friday. Among many other things, Washington and Brussels agreed to plan to explore redirecting certain revenues derived from immobilized Russian assets to aid Ukraine's recovery, provided such actions align with existing laws, according to a summit statement.

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"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Latvia of M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$220 million," DSCA said in a statement.

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Trump Urges Republicans Not to Vote for 'Globalist' Emmer as House Speaker

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said it would be a tragic mistake for House Republicans to back Congressman Tom Emmer for the Speakership given his globalist positions that make him a member of the party in name only.

"Voting for a Globalist RINO [Republican In Name Only] like Tom Emmer would be a tragic mistake!" Trump posted on his Social Truth profile.

Emmer is now a top pick for Speaker of the US House of Representatives but as of now, he is short of 21 votes.

On October 3, House lawmakers ousted Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker in a historic first, leaving the lower chamber leaderless ahead of a government funding deadline and calls for new foreign aid packages.

The House of Representatives is limited in its ability to pass bills or conduct other normal legislative business until they elect a new speaker. Some lawmakers have also proposed empowering temporary speaker pro tempore Patrick McHenry, although other members of Congress have questioned the constitutionality of such a move.

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US Gen. Glynn in Israel to Help With Planning, Mitigating Civilian Casualties - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) – Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Glynn is in Israel among US advisers tasked with helping the Israelis plan their military operations and mitigate civilian casualties, Pentagon press secretary Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

“As it relates to General Glynn, we have asked a few officials with relevant experience simply to help Israeli officials think through the kinds of questions that they need to consider as they conduct their planning, including advice on mitigating civilian casualties. These officials, to include General Glynn, have deep experience when it comes to urban combat,” Ryder said during a press briefing.

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US, Coalition Forces Have Been Attacked 13 Times in Iraq, Syria Over Past week - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The US and coalition forces have been attacked at least ten times in Iraq and three times in Syria by a mix of drones and rockets over the past week alone, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"Between October 17 and the 24, US and coalition forces have been attacked at least 10 separate times in Iraq and three separate times in Syria via a mix of one-way attack drone, rockets," Ryder said during a press briefing.

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### Biden, Saudi Crown Prince Agree to Work on Containing Israel-Hamas Conflict - White House

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - President Biden and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman have joined forces to embark on a comprehensive diplomatic initiative aimed at curbing the escalation of the Israel-Gaza conflict, the White House said on Tuesday in a statement.

"The two leaders agreed on pursuing broader diplomatic efforts to maintain stability across the region and prevent the conflict from expanding. They welcomed the delivery of humanitarian assistance from Egypt into Gaza and recognized that much more is needed for civilians to have sustained access to food, water, and medical assistance," the White House said.

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### Pentagon Says Aware of Another Potential Attack on US Forces in Syria on Tuesday

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) – The US Department of Defense is aware of alerts about a new potential attack on US forces in Syria later in the day and is looking into it, Pentagon press secretary Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"I am aware that there are Dataminr alerts out there talking about another potential attack today in Syria]. So, we are looking into that. I just don't have any information to provide," Ryder said during a press briefing.

Dataminr is a US company that provides artificial intelligence services to monitor real-time threats and events.

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### State Dept. Confirms US Offered Russia 'Serious Proposal' for Release of Paul Whelan

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - A State Department spokesperson confirmed to Sputnik on Tuesday that the United States offered Russia a serious proposal to facilitate the release of US citizen Paul Whelan.

"We offered Russia a serious proposal for Paul's release and will not stop working on his case until he is reunited with his family," the spokesperson said without adding any details.

Earlier in the day, Whelan's lawyer Olga Karlova told Sputnik that she cannot disclose the details of the "serious proposal" allegedly made by the Biden administration to Moscow.

Whelan, a former US Marine, was arrested in Moscow in December 2018 and subsequently sentenced to 16 years in prison on espionage charges. Whelan, who is also a citizen of Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom, has maintained his innocence, insisting that he came to Russia to attend a friend's wedding.

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McConnell Says US Senate Republicans Will Seek Changes to \$106Bln Funding Request

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Tuesday that Senate Republicans will likely seek changes to the Biden administration's \$106 billion supplemental funding request in order to bolster its border security provisions.

"I think Senate Republicans are going to take a good, hard look at the supplemental request. We're probably going to have a number of changes we want to make in it, and of course, we want a credible — a very credible — border security part of this bill," McConnell said during a press conference.

The Biden administration sent a \$106 billion supplemental funding request to Congress, which includes aid for Israel and Ukraine, as well as money for US border security.

The supplemental funding request is a "joke," Senator Steve Daines said. Border security cannot be achieved by throwing money at the issue, but rather, by changing immigration policies to remove the incentives to cross the border, Daines said.

The request is just a "starting place" for negotiations, McConnell added.

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Blinken, Sullivan to Discuss 'Challenging Issues' With China's Wang - White House

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik)- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan will meet with Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi and discuss issues and explore potential cooperation with the People's Republic of China (PRC), White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"So, we're gonna raise the challenging issues, obviously, we're going to address misconceptions and also miscommunications, and explore working with the PRC [People's Republic of China]," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

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Israel War With Hamas to Prolong Normalization With Arab States - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - The ongoing war between Israel and Hamas will make the normalization process with the Arab nations longer, but will not stop it, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said on Tuesday.

"Definitely one of the three objectives of the terror attack was to harm peace and normalization

process in our region," Cohen told reporters. "Definitely it will take time since right now we are in the war - but I think they will not be able to achieve this goal."

Last week, US President Joe Biden said that the process of normalizing ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia is not dead but will take some time.

According to Biden, the Saudis, the Emiratis, and other Arab nations understand that their security and stability is enhanced if there's normalization of relations with Israel.

Saudi Arabia reportedly ended the normalization talks after the Hamas-Israel conflict broke out on October 7, although Biden has insisted that a deal is still possible.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman during his Sunday meeting with Blinken emphasized the need to rein in Israel's retaliatory response to Hamas' attacks and stop its military operations and siege on Gaza's civilian population.

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Kirby Says Loss of Life Amid Ongoing Israel-Gaza War 'Unfortunate, Nature of Conflict'

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The loss of civilian life in the Israel-Hamas war is unfortunate but it also reflects the nature of conflicts, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"This is war. It is combat. It is bloody. It is ugly and it's going to be messy, and innocent civilians are going to be hurt going forward. I wish I could tell you something different. I wish that that wasn't going to happen. But it is going to happen," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby made the remark in response to a question on the latest death toll of Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, which according to the Health Ministry increased by 700 today.

While acknowledging the reality of war does not make it right for civilians to be targeted, it unfortunately is "the nature of conflict," Kirby added.

Kirby also said the United States will continue to express concern about the death of civilians and provide Israel all the required assistance to minimize such incidents.

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and at least 4,100 Palestinians with multiple thousands of injured.

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White House Says Concerned by Potential for House Speaker Situation to Stall Aid Request

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is concerned by the possibility that the House of Representatives could fail to elect a new speaker and stall a \$106 billion supplemental funding request, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"It's a concern," Kirby said during a press briefing, when asked about the potential for the

House of Representatives to remain leaderless amid the urgent funding request.

The \$106 billion supplemental funding request includes aid for Israel and Ukraine, as well as funding for US border security initiatives. The House of Representatives is restricted in its ability to pass legislation until they elect a new speaker.

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China Will Be on Agenda of Biden's Meeting With Australian Prime Minister - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will discuss the challenges and opportunities related to China during a White House meeting, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby on Tuesday.

"There's no question in my mind that the challenges and the opportunities in relations with the PRC will be on the agenda," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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Israel to Assess Relations With UN After Guterres Statement on Hamas Terror Attack - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Israel will have to make an assessment regarding the country's relations with the UN after Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' statement about the October 7 Hamas attack, Ambassador Gilad Erdan said on Tuesday.

Israel called for Guterres to resign after the UN chief in remarks to the Security Council earlier in the day said the Hamas terrorist attack "did not happen in a vacuum."

"I think I speak on behalf of the minister - it's too early to call but definitely we will have to make an assessment regarding our relations with the UN," Erdan told reporters.

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US, Australia to Boost Bilateral Defense Ties, Potentially Include Japan - White House

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik)- National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby on Tuesday highlighted the enhancement of defense cooperation between the United States and Australia and the potential for its trilateral expansion to include Japan.

"Advancing connectivity across the Pacific through investments in undersea cable infrastructure and maritime infrastructure, enhancing our defense cooperation between us to include the trilateral cooperation with Japan," Kirby said during a press briefing.

The statement comes ahead of the upcoming meeting between US President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday.

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US Monitoring China Sea Clash With Philippines, Pacific Exercise - Coast Guard Chief

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The US Coast Guard is monitoring the activities of Chinese fishing fleets in the northern Pacific Ocean and is also watching the recent incidents between Chinese maritime militia forces and the Philippines Coast Guard in the South China Sea, Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Lynda Fagan said on Tuesday.

"We have seen aggressive behavior on the part of the Chinese Coast Guard and the Chinese [maritime] militia. It bears watching," Fagan said. "There was definitely a shouldering incident a couple of days ago at the Second Thomas Shoals between a Chinese and a Philippines vessel."

In July, more than 10 Russian and Chinese warships and more than 30 aircraft participated in a four day "Northern/Interaction 2023" exercise in the Northern Pacific Ocean, Fagan recalled.

"China is operating fishing fleets in defiance of international rules and norms. This is a problem that will require international, multilateral and mini-lateral responses," she said.

At no point did the Chinese or Russian warships enter the US sphere of influence during the exercises, Fagan acknowledged.

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Israel Urges UN Chief to Apologize for Saying Hamas Attack Didn't Happen in Vacuum - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Israel is urging UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to apologize for saying that the October 7 attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum, Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan told reporters on Tuesday.

"I think that the Secretary-General must resign because from now on every day that he is here in this building, unless he apologizes, immediately. Today we called on him to apologize," Erdan stated. "You, Mr. Secretary-General have lost all morality and impartiality because when you say those terrible words that those heinous attacks did not happen in the vacuum, you are tolerating terrorism and by tolerating terrorism you are justifying terrorism."

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US Not at Point of Executing Mass Evacuation of Citizens From Middle East - White House

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The United States is not at the point of executing mass evacuations of US citizens from the Middle East amid rising tensions in the region due to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"It would be imprudent and irresponsible if we didn't have folks thinking through a broad range of contingencies and possibilities, and certainly evacuations are one of those things," Kirby said during a press briefing. "But we're not at a point of execution right now."

On Monday evening, US media reported that the Biden administration is preparing for the possibility of having to evacuate hundreds of thousands of US citizens from the Middle East if the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians escalates and expands.

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White House Says Aware of French Proposal for Anti-Hamas Coalition, Discussing With Allies

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is aware of French President Emmanuel Macron's calls to form an anti-Hamas coalition to aid Israel and is discussing the issue with its allies, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"We're just aware of these reports coming out," Kirby said during a press briefing. "We're certainly in discussions with our allies and partners. President Macron was on two calls that the president has had with European leaders in just the last several days."

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US Companies Greenlit to Launch Into Space From Australia in New Deal - White House

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US companies will be able to launch into space from Australia per a new agreement soon to be unveiled, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday during a press briefing.

"This tech innovation piece we'll also be highlighting a new space agreement that will allow US companies to launch into space from Australia," Kirby said.

The announcement precedes an upcoming meeting between US President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

The two leaders are expected to discuss a variety of topics, including advancements in artificial intelligence and developments in space exploration, according to the White House.

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## US Congressman Nehls Says Emmer Cannot Secure Speakership, Over 20 Republicans Oppose Him

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US House Majority Whip and Republican speaker-designate Tom Emmer cannot secure enough support among House Republicans to win the speakership in a floor vote, Congressman Troy Nehls said on Tuesday.

"In the end, I think there were maybe 28 or so that stated they're going to choose someone else other than Tom Emmer," Nehls said. "I don't see how he gets to 217 [votes]."

Nehls said that he would nominate former President Donald Trump as speaker on the floor. However, Nehls noted that he would not block Emmer's bid if he were to secure 216 votes.

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## Russia Urges Consideration to Prevent Recurrence of Middle East Conflicts - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik)- Russia emphasized the need for the council's foresight to prevent future conflicts, Permanent Representative to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday at a UN Security Council meeting.

"The council absolutely has to take this into consideration in the future otherwise similar incidents will not be able to be avoided," Nebenzia said during the UN Security Council.

Moreover, Nebenzia said the importance of establishing a sustainable negotiation process, reviewing and approving platforms. He further conveyed the necessity for the formation of a sovereign Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem serving as its capital, living in peace and security alongside Israel.

"However, we are all facing a more urgent challenge to stop the violence and ensure the supply of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza that are encountering arbitrary strikes from Israel and egregious violations of by IHL [International humanitarian law]," Nebenzia added.

This comes after a large-scale attack by Hamas on Israel earlier this month, leading to significant casualties on both sides. In response, Israel declared a state of war with Hamas, imposing a complete blockade on the Gaza Strip, affecting water, electricity, and food supplies.

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## Russia's Draft UNSC Resolution on Israel-Gaza War Calls for Humanitarian Pauses, Corridors

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Russia's new draft UN Security Council resolution on the Israel-Gaza conflict urges the establishment of humanitarian pauses and humanitarian corridors, according to the text of the document obtained by Sputnik.

"Notes in this regard that humanitarian ceasefire agreement could play a vital role to facilitate

the delivery of humanitarian assistance in order to help save civilian lives, and further calls for all measures, such as humanitarian pauses and establishment of humanitarian corridors," the draft resolution said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia announced that Russia has prepared an alternative draft resolution after the US vetoed a Brazil-drafted resolution on the Israel-Gaza conflict.

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Biden, Australia Prime Minister to Discuss AI, Space During Bilateral Meeting -US Official

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will discuss a number of issues during their upcoming meeting, including artificial intelligence and space, National Security Council Senior Director for East Asia and Oceania Mira Rapp-Hooper said on Tuesday.

"Tomorrow, the two leaders will discuss and announce significant deliverables," Rapp-Hooper said during a press briefing. "First, we'll have several announcements related to new technology cooperation, particularly on artificial intelligence, and highlighting new cooperation on space issues. Second, we will have announcements related to clean energy and the building of resilient, sustainable, and secure critical mineral supply chains."

Rapp-Hooper said the two officials will also discuss ways to advance connectivity across the Pacific Ocean by making major investments in undersea cable and maritime infrastructure.

Additionally, Biden and Albanese will discuss bilateral defense cooperation, but also trilateral cooperation with Japan, and the implementation of the AUKUS partnership, Rapp-Hooper added.

Albanese arrived in the United States on Sunday and is scheduled to take part in a dinner at the White House on Wednesday. The meeting is the ninth between the two officials since Albanese took office about a year-and-a-half ago.

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Russia UNSC Draft Resolution Urges Rescission of Evacuation Order for Gaza Civilians

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Russia's alternative UN Security Council draft resolution is calling for an immediate rescission of Israel's evacuation order for civilians in the Gaza Strip, the text of the draft resolution obtained by Sputnik said on Tuesday.

"Urges the immediate rescission of the order for civilians and UN staff to evacuate all areas in Gaza north of the Wadi Gaza and relocate in southern Gaza," the draft resolution said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia announced during a UN Security Council meeting that Russia has prepared an alternative draft of the

resolution.

The draft resolution also condemns the October 7 attack by Hamas on Israel and also condemns Israel's indiscriminate attacks on the Gaza Strip.

"Unequivocally rejects and condemns the heinous attacks by Hamas that took place in Israel starting 7 October, 2023 and the taking of civilian hostages, and expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to all Israeli civilians and all other civilians who have lost their lives," the draft resolution said.

In addition, the draft resolution said it "unequivocally condemns indiscriminate attacks against civilians as well as against civilian objects in the Gaza Strip resulting in civilian casualties, in particular heinous strike against Al Ahli hospital 17 October and the orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius 19 October."

Finally, the draft resolution condemns and rejects Israel's actions to impose a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off 2.3 million Palestinians from water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel.

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UPDATE - House Republicans Hope to Hold Speaker Vote Tuesday Afternoon - Congressman

(Adds details in paras 5-6)

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US House Republicans hope to hold a floor vote to elect a speaker as soon as Tuesday afternoon, Congressman Doug LaMalfa said on Tuesday. "We'd like to go to the floor this afternoon," LaMalfa said in response to a question from Sputnik, when asked about House Republicans' plans.

Earlier on Tuesday, House Republicans elected Majority Whip Tom Emmer as their speaker-designate. Emmer has to secure a majority of votes in a floor vote to win the speakership.

Emmer is approximately 10 votes shy of securing the speakership, Congressman Dan Meuser told reporters. House Republicans plan to hold a roll call vote before heading to the floor to ensure they have the necessary support.

Asked whether the House could again hit an impasse over the nomination, as they did with Jim Jordan, former Speaker Kevin McCarthy said: "I think people are tired of all this."

Rep. Troy Nehls said he will nominate Trump when the vote goes to floor.

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Russia UNSC Resolution Calls for Immediate Ceasefire in Israel, Gaza -Text Seen by Sputnik

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Russia's alternative UN Security Council draft resolution is calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire in the Middle East, the text of the

resolution obtained by Sputnik said on Tuesday.

"Calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected humanitarian ceasefire," the draft resolution said. "Firmly condemns all violence and hostilities against civilians."

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia announced that Russia has prepared an alternative draft of the resolution.

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UAW Workers Halt Production at GM's Arlington Plant Amid Broader Strike - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Some 5,000 workers at General Motors Arlington Assembly stopped work, joining the larger Stand Up Strike amid reports of GM's \$3.5 billion third quarter earnings, the UAW said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The workers who make some of GM's most profitable vehicles, the Chevy Tahoe, Chevy Suburban, GMC Yukon and Cadillac Escalade, are joining the unprecedented Stand Up Strike against all three of the Big Three automakers. The move comes just hours after GM reported third-quarter earnings of \$3.5 billion, one day after the union struck Stellantis' largest plant, Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP), and just a few days after the union detailed the shortcomings of GM's latest contract offer," the statement said.

According to the statement, even after GM achieved \$10 billion in profits over the last nine months and surpassed both revenue records and Wall Street predictions, GM's recent proposal doesn't adequately compensate UAW members for their contribution to these profits.

Moreover, the proposal from GM trails that of Ford, introducing a two-level wage structure and offering the least attractive 401(k) contribution, an inadequate Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA), among other areas of concern, the statement said.

Approximately 45,000 American automotive employees at different facilities of Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis have engaged in strikes following unfruitful discussions, as the UAW pursues a 46% salary increase and a 32-hour working week, along with additional conditions.

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Biden Says Humanitarian Aid to Gaza Not Going There 'Fast Enough'

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that humanitarian aid is not getting to Gaza "fast enough."

"Not fast enough," Biden told reporters following an award ceremony at the White House when asked whether he is satisfied with the speed of the humanitarian aid delivery to Gaza.

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Russia Opposes US UNSC Resolution on Israel-Gaza Due to No Call For Ceasefire - Nebenzia

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) -Russia is urging an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in the Middle East and thus far, can not support the US draft resolution as it does not include this provision, Russian Permanent Representative to the UN Vassily Nebenzia stated on Tuesday.

"We are firmly convinced, colleagues, that the main sign that the whole world is expecting from the Security Council is a call for a swift and unconditional ceasefire on the opposing parties ," Nebenzia said during the UN Security Council. "This is precisely what is not in the American draft. Therefore, we do not see any point in it and we cannot support it."

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House Republicans Hope to Hold Speaker Vote Tuesday Afternoon - Congressman

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Emmer is approximately 10 votes shy of securing the speakership, Congressman Dan Meuser told reporters. House Republicans plan to hold a roll call vote before heading to the floor to ensure they have the necessary support.

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Egypt Urges UNSC to Work on Immediate Ceasefire in Middle East - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Egypt is calling on the UN Security Council members to work on an immediate and sustained ceasefire in the Middle East and provide for the protection of civilians, Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister Sameh Hassan Shoukry said on Tuesday.

"We call on the UN Security Council to undertake its responsibility as defined in the Charter to work for cessation of hostilities and an immediate and sustained ceasefire and to provide

protection for all civilians," Shoukry said during a press briefing.

On October 7, Hamas launched surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched strikes as well as imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and at least 4,100 Palestinians with multiple thousands of injured.

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UN Chief Has Not Received Notice That Meeting With Israeli FM Canceled - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - The UN has not yet received any official notice that the planned meeting between Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen has been canceled, Spokesman Stephane Dujarric told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"We have not as of now received an official notification of the meeting being canceled," Dujarric said.

Dujarric added that he had no comment in regards to statements made on Tuesday by Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Gilad Erdan, issuing a resounding call for the immediate resignation of Guterres.

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Two Adults, 3 Children Dead in Shootings in Canada's Ontario Province - Police

(Updates with more details in paras 3-7; modifies headline)

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Five individuals, including three children, have died during shootings at two residences in the city of Sault Ste. Marie in Canada's Ontario province, police said on Tuesday.

"Detectives with Investigation Services continue to investigate five deaths at two residences: one in the 200 block of Tancred Street, the other in the 200 block of Second Line East," the police said in a statement.

Local law enforcement received a call on Monday at 10:20 p.m. reporting a home intrusion. Upon arriving on the scene, the police found a 41-year-old individual killed by a gunshot.

Shortly after at 10:30 p.m. a second call reported an armed individual entering a residence. Dispatched law enforcement units found an injured 45-year-old individual, and three deceased children aged 6, 7 and 12.

The shooter, 44, died by a self-inflicted gunshot wound, the police said in the statement.

"As these incidents are the result of intimate partner violence ... These investigations are connected. These are not random acts of violence and there is no ongoing risk to public safety,"

the statement said.

Police officers will remain on scene at both residences for as long as the investigation continues, the statement added.

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US House Republicans Select Congressman Tom Emmer as Speaker Nominee - Stefanik

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US House Republicans selected Majority Whip Tom Emmer as the party's nominee for the vacant speakership, House Republican Conference Chair Elise Stefanik said on Tuesday.

"Congratulations Speaker-designate @GOP MajorityWhip [Emmer]," Stefanik said in a statement via social media platform X.

The House Republican speaker race started with nine candidates, narrowing down to a vote between Emmer and Congressman Mike Johnson.

Emmer must now secure a majority of votes in the full House of Representatives during a floor vote, which House Republicans hope to hold as soon as Tuesday, a congressional source told Sputnik.

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Blinken Says Will Collaborate With China Counterpart on Message Against Threats to Israel

UNITED NATIONS, October 23 (Sputnik)- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday that he will collaborate with his Chinese counterpart later this week in developing a strong, unified message in response to potential non-state actor actions against Israel.

"I look forward to continuing to work with my counterpart from the People's Republic of China to do precisely that, when he visits Washington later this week," Blinken said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The secretary of state also said that the UN Security Council, especially its permanent members, has a unique responsibility to prevent the spread of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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RPT - US, Egypt, Israel, UN Working on Mechanisms for Humanitarian Deliveries to Gaza - Blinken

(Repeats to fix date in dateline and day of week in lede)

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik)- The United States is closely coordinating with Egypt, Israel, other regional partners and the United Nations to establish effective mechanisms for the continuous delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza's civilian population, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"We continue to coordinate closely with Egypt, Israel and partners across the region, as well as with the United Nations, to build mechanisms that will enable sustained humanitarian assistance to flow to civilians in Gaza, without benefiting Hamas, or any other terrorist group," Blinken said during a UN Security Council meeting.

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Path to Two-State Solution 'Hard to Achieve', Only Way to Lasting Peace – Blinken

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) – The path toward achieving a two-state solution and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine will be “hard to achieve” but is the only way forward, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

“The only road to lasting peace and security in the region, the only way to break out of this ripping cycle of violence is through two states for two people ... Palestinians have a right to self determination and a status of their own. We have no illusions about how hard it will be to achieve a two state solution,” Blinken told the UN Security Council meeting on the Palestinian question.

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International Community Should Demand Qatar Enable Release of All Israeli Hostages - Cohen

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Israel demands that all the hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip be unconditionally released and the international community should demand that Qatar enable their immediate release, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said in an address before the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

"Qatar which finances and harbors of the Hamas leaders could influence and enable the immediate and unconditional release of all, of all hostages held by the terrorists," Cohen said.

"You, members of the international community, should demand Qatar to do just that."

On October 7, Hamas launched surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched strikes and imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and

at least 4,100 Palestinians with multiple thousands of injured.

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Israel Must Take All Possible Precautions to Avoid Harm to Civilians - Blinken at UNSC

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday called on Israel to take all necessary measures to protect civilians as well as to consider humanitarian pauses.

"It means Israel must take all possible precautions to avoid harm to civilians," Blinken stated during the UN Security Council. "That means food, water, medicine and other essential humanitarian assistance must be able to flow into Gaza and to the people who need them. That means civilians be able to get out of harm's way. That means humanitarian pauses must be considered for these purposes."

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RPT - Five Dead, Including Children, After Shootings in Canada's Ontario - Police

(Repeats to fix headline)

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Five individuals, including three children, are dead after shootings at two residences in the city of Sault Ste. Marie in Canada's Ontario, police said on Tuesday.

"Detectives with Investigation Services continue to investigate five deaths at two residences: one in the 200 block of Tancred Street, the other in the 200 block of Second Line East," the

police said in a statement.

Three children aged 6, 7 and 12, and a 41-year-old individual were found deceased on the scene. The shooter, 44, died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

"As these incidents are the result of intimate partner violence ... These investigations are connected. These are not random acts of violence and there is no ongoing risk to public safety," the police added.

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War Imposed on Israel But Country Will Undoubtedly Win - Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The current war was imposed on Israel but the country will undoubtedly emerge victorious, Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said on Tuesday.

"This war was imposed on us. We have not chosen this war but have no doubt we are going to win it," Cohen said.

The foreign minister emphasized that a proportionate response to the attacks by Hamas on October 7 is the "total destruction" of that organization.

On October 7, Hamas launched surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched strikes and imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and at least 4,100 Palestinians and multiple thousands of injured.

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Five Dead, Including Children, Dead After Shootings in Canada's Ontario - Police

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US Maritime Admin. Says Ships Should Act Cautiously in Red Sea Amid Missile, Drone Attacks

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The US Maritime Administration on Tuesday issued an alert advising US vessels to operate cautiously in the Red Sea due to the threat of missile and drone strikes on ships.

"There are reports that multiple drones and missiles were launched from Yemen into the Red Sea region on October 19, 2023. Exercise caution when transiting this area," the alert said.

The Maritime Administration said the alert is effective from October 23-30.

Last week, the Defense Department confirmed that the US Navy destroyer Carney shot down three cruise missiles and several drones launched by Houthi forces in Yemen. The attack occurred amid rising tensions in the Middle East, linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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UNSC Must Uphold Mandate Without Double Standards - Palestinian Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) – Palestinian Authority Minister of Foreign Affairs Riyad al-Maliki said on Tuesday that the UN Security Council (UNSC) must uphold its responsibility fulfill its mandate and council resolutions without double standards toward Palestine.

"Is it not the Security Council's duty to maintain international peace and security and preserving the principles and purposes of the UN Charter that have guaranteed to our peoples to save the generations from the scourge of war and taking these joint and effective measures to prevent the causes that threaten peace as per the principles of international law and justice? Or is it difficult for your security council to uphold its responsibility and its mandate and resolutions without selectivity or double standards when it relates to Palestine," al-Maliki told the UNSC meeting on the Palestinian question.

The Minister addressed members of the international community asking whether their "human conscience" were not offended by the crimes committed by the Israeli government over the time of its colonial occupation, or by what he characterized as terrorist practices of killing, destruction, and starvation of the Palestinian people.

Al-Maliki further noted that the current war waged on Gaza by the Israeli side is only a continuity of the occupation and colonization of Palestine.

"Peace and Security cannot and will not be achieved by crushing the skulls of infants," he added.

On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against

Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food and fuel. The blockade was later eased to allow trucks with humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured.

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Blinken Urges Iraq Prime Minister to Pursue Those Behind Attacks on US Troops - State Dept

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani to pursue those responsible for the recent attacks on American troops in the country, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"The Secretary urged the Prime Minister to pursue those behind the attacks and fulfill Iraq's commitment to maintain the security at these installations," Miller said in a readout.

The two also discussed the Israel-Gaza war and reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate on regional stability, the readout added.

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F-16 Jets Arrive in Middle East to Boost US Posture to Deter Further Aggression - CENTCOM

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) – The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Tuesday that additional F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft have arrived in its area of responsibility as part of United States' efforts to bolster its posture in the Middle East amid the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The 119th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft have arrived in the US. Central Command area of responsibility to bolster US posture to deter further aggression," CENTCOM said via X (formerly Twitter).

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Former Trump Attorney Jenna Ellis Pleads Guilty in Georgia Election Case - Court Document

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Jenna Ellis, former attorney for Donald Trump, pleaded guilty to charges related to election interference in the state of Georgia, according to a court filing released on Tuesday.

"This case is not involving a capital felony. I waive indictment by a grand jury and instead allow the district attorney to charge me by accusation pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 17-7-70 [Official Code of Georgia Annotated]," Ellis said in the court document. "I understand that I may enter a plea and be tried on this accusation according to the same rules of substantive and procedural laws relating to defendants who have been indicted by a grand jury."

The prosecutors in the case recommended sentencing Ellis to five years of probation and insisted that she pay \$5,000 in restitution.

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Israeli Fatalities in Current Conflict 3 Times as High as Number Killed Since 2005 - UN

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) -The number of Israeli casualties in the current conflict between Israel and Palestine is already more than three times cumulative of the Israelis killed since OCHA (The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) started doing these records, Lynn Hastings, Assistant Secretary-General, Humanitarian Coordinator In The Occupied Palestinian Territory, said on Tuesday.

"On the Israeli side, the fatality toll is more than three times the cumulative number of Israelis killed since OCHA began recording casualties in 2005," Hastings, who delivered remarks on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General For Humanitarian Affairs And Emergency Relief Coordinator, said.

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Gaza Death Toll After First Week Outnumbered Fatalities of 50-Day 2014 War - UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - The total number of the Gazans killed in the current Israel-Hamas conflict has surpassed the dead toll from the 50-day war in 2014, Lynn Hastings, UN assistant secretary-general and humanitarian coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory, said on Tuesday.

"In Gaza, even after the first week, the fatality toll exceeded the number of Gazans killed in the 2014 war of 50 days. Women and children comprise some 62 per cent of these victims," Hastings said. "According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, more than 1,500 people have also been reported missing and are presumed to be under rubble."

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#### Aid Deliveries to Gaza 'Drop in Bucket,' Amount to 4% of Previous Daily Average - UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - The deliveries of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip are minuscule compared to actual needs and amount to no more than 4% of previously provided daily average, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Occupied Palestinian Territory said on Tuesday.

"But these deliveries are a drop in the bucket compared to the vast scale of needs," Hastings said. "They amount to no more than four percent of the daily average volume of commodities entering Gaza prior to these hostilities. Needs are now, of course, significantly greater."

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#### UN Demands Hostages in Gaza Be Treated Humanely, Allowed ICRC Visits - Official

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - The United Nations welcomes all diplomatic efforts to free the hostages held in the Gaza Strip and demands that they be treated humanely and allowed visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UN Assistant Secretary-General and Resident Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory Lynn Hastings said on Tuesday.

"The more than 200 hostages still being held must be released without condition or any further delay," Hastings said. "We welcome all diplomatic efforts to secure their release and demand that, in the interim, they be treated humanely and be allowed to receive visits from the ICRC."

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#### RFK Jr. Says Biden Administration More Focused on Securing Ukraine's Border Than Its Own

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Tuesday that the Biden administration cares more about Ukraine's borders than those of the United States.

"We have an administration more focused on securing Ukraine's border than our own, and a House that couldn't pass a border package right now anyway!" Kennedy wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

He further said that illegal border crossings in the US set a new record in September, making it the third record-setting year in a row.

Border patrol agents also arrested 18 people on the FBI terror watchlist in September, the politician added.

Kennedy has promised, if elected president, to secure the US border and eliminate the cartels' drug trafficking economy.

Last week, the Biden administration requested \$106 billion in extra funding. The supplemental

package includes \$61.4 billion for Ukraine, half of which is to provide Kiev with weapons and replenish US military stocks. It also seeks \$14.3 billion in assistance for Israel. There is also a request of \$6.4 billion to fund operations on the US southern border.

The US House of Representatives is limited in its ability to pass legislation after ousting Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker and remaining leaderless. The US Congress must also pass government funding measures before November 17 or face a shutdown.

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Moody's Places Deposit Ratings of 5 Israeli Banks on Review for Downgrade - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Moody's Investors Service issued a statement on Tuesday that it has decided to review for downgrade the deposit ratings of five Israeli banks.

"Moody's Investors Service ("Moody's") today placed the deposit ratings of the five Israeli banks it rates on review for downgrade," the statement said.

The move pertains to Bank Leumi Le-Israel B.M.; Bank Hapoalim B.M.; Mizrahi Tefahot Bank Ltd.; Israel Discount Bank Ltd. (IDB); and First International Bank of Israel Ltd, the statement said.

"Previously, the outlook on the long-term deposit ratings was stable," the statement said.

In addition, Moody's placed on review for downgrade the five banks' long-term counterparty risk ratings and counterparty risk assessments, as well as IDB's long-term foreign currency senior unsecured debt rating, the statement said.

Moody's assumes a very high probability of government support for Israel's five large banking groups that it rates given their systemic importance and the Israeli government's long-standing practice of injecting capital into such systemically important banks, in case of need, the statement said.

During the review, Moody's will assess the impact of a potential weakening of the sovereign's capacity to provide support, the statement said.

Moody's will also consider whether the current military conflict in Israel risks weakening the operating environment for banks sustainably, the statement also said.

"The longer and more severe the military conflict, the greater its impact is likely to be on the economy," the statement added.

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Guterres Says Two-State Solution Only Foundation For Peace And Stability In Middle East

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has stated on Tuesday that the world should not lose sight of the only realistic base to the peace in the

Middle East which is a two-state solution.

"Even in this moment of grave and immediate danger, we cannot lose sight of the only realistic foundation for a true peace and stability: a two-state solution," Guterres stated.

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Guterres Says UN Fuel Supplies on Gaza Will Run Out in Matter Of Days

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) -UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Tuesday that the fuel supplies in the Gaza Strip will be exhausted in a matter of days, causing another disaster in the Palestinian territory.

"In addition, our UN fuel supplies in Gaza will run out in a matter of days. That would be another disaster," Guterres said. "Without fuel, aid cannot be delivered, hospitals will not have power, and drinking water cannot be purified or even pumped."

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Guterres Says Israel's Relentless Bombardment of Gaza 'Deeply Alarming'

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday he is deeply alarmed by the continuous bombardment of the Gaza Strip by Israel and the subsequent large-scale destruction of neighborhoods.

"The relentless bombardment of Gaza by Israeli forces, the level of civilian casualties, and the wholesale destruction of neighborhoods continue to mount and are deeply alarming," Guterres said in his remarks during a UN Security Council meeting.

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Guterres Says Deeply Concerned by Violations of International Humanitarian Law in Gaza

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday he is extremely worried about violations of international humanitarian law in the Gaza Strip amid the Israel-Hamas war.

"I am deeply concerned about the clear violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing in Gaza," Guterres said in his remarks during a UN Security Council meeting.

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Guterres Condemns Hamas Attack on Israel, But Says It Did Not Take Place 'in Vacuum'

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) – UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday that he condemns the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, but admits that it did not take place "in a vacuum" as the Palestinians have been occupied for 56 years.

"I have condemned unequivocally the horrifying and unprecedented 7 October acts of terror by Hamas in Israel," Guterres said in his remarks during a UN Security Council meeting. "It is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum."

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US Congressman Palmer Drops Out of House Republican Speaker Race - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Gary Palmer said on Tuesday that he is dropping out of the race to become House Republicans' nominee for speaker in an effort to hasten the process.

"Congress and the American people needed a Republican Speaker three weeks ago. If withdrawing my name can help expedite that process even a little, then I will gladly step aside," Palmer said in a statement via social media platform X. "With this in mind, I am withdrawing my name from consideration for Speaker."

Palmer's departure from the race leaves seven candidates vying for the vacant leadership role. US Congressman Dan Meuser also dropped out of the race on Monday.

All of the candidates agreed to back whomever wins a majority of support within the House Republican conference, Congressman Mark Alford said on Tuesday, following a candidate forum the previous evening.

House Republicans also agreed to hold an internal roll call vote before going to the floor to ensure that they have enough support to pass a floor vote on their nominee, Alford said in an interview with CNN.

Remaining candidates include congressmen Jack Bergman, Byron Donalds, Tom Emmer, Kevin Hern, Mike Johnson, Austin Scott and Pete Sessions.