

10/31/23 Tuesday

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Tesla Wins Civil Case Over Crash Death Blamed on Autopilot

Electric carmaker Tesla has won the first-ever trial in the United States over deaths allegedly caused by its Full Self-Driving (FSD) system, colloquially known as “autopilot.” The jury agreed with the company’s claims that human error caused the deadly 2019 crash.

The lawsuit was brought by the estate of Micah Lee, a 37-year-old man who was killed in a crash in California in 2019, and two of his passengers who were injured in the crash. They argued that the car’s FSD system had malfunctioned, causing the car to veer off the highway east of Los Angeles, strike a tree at 65 miles per hour, and burst into flames. Tesla, they claimed, had known the FSD system was faulty when it sold Lee the Tesla Model 3.

Jonathan Michaels, an attorney for the plaintiffs, argued during the case that the FSD system was “experimental” because it was in “beta,” and thus not yet ready for release.

“A car company should never sell consumers experimental vehicles,” Michaels said.

However, nine of the 12 jurors in the civil case decided in favor of Tesla, which argued that it was unclear if the FSD system was actually engaged at the time of the crash, had no demonstrable malfunctions, and that Lee had been drunk at the time of the crash.

The company claims it properly alerts its drivers that despite being called full self-driving and an autopilot, the systems still require human monitoring and aren’t totally hands-off.

This was the first case to centrally focus on the FSD system, although another suit earlier this year included the system in one aspect of the case. That one, also from California, also saw Tesla emerge without blame for a crash that injured a Tesla driver.

Self-driving technology has been slowly making its way onto American roads, with seven US states no longer requiring human drivers to be behind the wheel of cars being legally operated on their roads. The laborious process of teaching AI to safely operate cars, and especially to respect pedestrians and to react to sudden emergencies such as a child running into the road, have stirred controversy, especially amid several deaths caused by collisions with self-driving cars.

In February, Tesla [issued a massive recall](#) of 350,000 vehicles because they could cause vehicle crashes by allowing vehicles to “act unsafe around intersections.”

A [report published](#) by a major US newspaper earlier this year found a direct correlation between the increase in the number of Tesla-made cars on US roads and an increase in the number of automobile-related deaths linked to self-driving mode.

Tesla Model Y SUVs and Model 3 sedans are the two most common electric vehicles on US roads, of which the [Biden administration](#) estimates there to be some 3 million in total. According to US government data, 11 people were killed in car crashes involving autonomous vehicles in a four-month period last year, 10 of which were Teslas.

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Two-Year 'Global Photosynthesis Shutdown' Killed Dinosaurs 66 Million Years Ago

Scientists studying a rare fossil deposit dating to the time immediately after a massive asteroid struck the Earth, triggering the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event that killed the dinosaurs, have uncovered new details about the sequence of events that destroyed 75% of all life on our planet.

When a six-mile-wide asteroid struck the Earth 66 million years ago, it left a massive impact crater over 100 miles wide, today called the Chicxulub crater in eastern Mexico. Since the late 20th century, the impact event has been triangulated as the decisive event triggering the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction, which killed three-quarters of all life on the planet, bringing about the end of the era of the dinosaurs and the beginning of mammalian domination of our world.

However, the exact mechanisms by which [the asteroid impact](#) caused such mass death remain largely unknown, with some theories holding that rapid acidification of the seas combined with worldwide forest fires and volcanic events choked out most life in the years after the impact. A new study has found that the real killer was likely ultra-fine dust particles thrown into the atmosphere, blotting out the sun and choking the world's plants.

The study, [published on Monday](#) in Nature Geoscience, looked at the Tanis fossil site in North Dakota, which has yielded numerous important fossil finds from the late Cretaceous era and early Paleocene - that is, the eras that came before and after the Chicxulub asteroid impact. In the fossilized sediments of what at the time of the impact was a lake, scientists found something different than they expected. Where they thought [they would find sulfur](#), and thus evidence of poisonous gases, or soot from fires, they instead found a layer of ultra-fine silicate powder. The particles were so tiny, around 0.8 to 8.0 micrometers, that they could have hung in the atmosphere for up to 15 years.

Ozgur Karatekin, a researcher at the Royal Observatory of Belgium and one of the co-authors of the study, said such a volume of dust particles in the atmosphere "totally shut down photosynthesis" in plants for at least a year, causing a "catastrophic collapse" of life.

"Photosynthesis shutting down for almost two years after impact caused severe challenges (for life)," said lead study author and planetary scientist Cem Berk Senel, a postdoctoral researcher at the Royal Observatory of Belgium. "It collapsed the food web, creating a chain reaction of extinctions."

In addition, the dust would have reflected sunlight, triggering a dramatic cooling of the Earth's climate by as much as 15 degrees Celsius - a phenomenon that [once bore the sole blame](#) for the dinosaurs' extinction.

They concluded that the worst effects would have come immediately after the impact, which vaporized the seafloor of the Gulf of Mexico to create the silicate dust. After about two years, much of the dust would have settled and some photosynthesis would have begun again, but the damage by then would have already been done.

The extinction event included essentially all non-avian dinosaurs, as well as marine creatures like plesiosaurs, ammonites, and other staples of prehistoric Earth. In their absence, mammals proliferated dramatically, undergoing rapid evolution to fill new niches around the world, creating creatures such as horses, primates, and whales, and the avian dinosaurs that survived the extinction began to evolve into modern-day birds.

Sean Gulick, a geophysicist at the University of Texas at Austin who wasn't involved in the research, told US media that by studying the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event 66 million years ago, we can better understand what scientists have come to call the threat of the [Anthropocene Extinction](#), which may erase the human civilization.

"Maybe we can better predict our own mass extinction that we're probably in the middle of," Gulick said.

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Analyst: US 'Shooting Ourselves in the Foot' By Provoking, Escalating Crises Around Globe

US has entered a crisis of its own making in the last three years, thanks to the foreign policy aims of the neoconservatives who have asserted control over the Biden administration's State Department, an analyst told Sputnik.

The emergence of the latest crisis in the Middle East, which has started in Israel but threatens to draw in several other regional powers, is just the latest in which the US has forcefully asserted its interest in propping up a useful ally against its enemies there. However, it has come as the US is already deeply embroiled in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, and has also committed significant resources and effort into a confrontation with China that has not yet exploded into open conflict.

Retired senior security policy analyst Michael Maloof told [Radio Sputnik's The Critical Hour](#) on Tuesday that the US was "shooting ourselves in the foot" by getting itself so deeply embroiled in crises of its own making around the globe, including in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific regions.

"In my opinion, these are all self-manufactured crises put upon by the neoconservatives within the Biden administration - not only internationally, but also domestically," Maloof said. "And in three years, how we could deteriorate so far, so fast, is mind-boggling. And it has to be purposeful. And I'm seeing this accentuated in the policies that we have broadcast to the world internationally, in trying to contain and engineer regime change in Russia. That has failed miserably, Ukraine was just a pawn."

Now we have the Israeli situation. I think there's evidence to show that Netanyahu knew what was happening, but I don't think that he knew what the extent of the attack would be, the way it would be on the seventh of October. So I think that now he's really into it and he has no other choice. Meantime, he's hearing increasing demands for him to step down, and the United States, of course, has moved in at least two carrier strike groups and Marines, and you wonder: what are they going to be used for?" Maloof added.

"I think the whole idea is for deterrence so that Hezbollah doesn't get into the fray. But what's going to be happening this Friday, I'm now told, is that Hassan Nasrallah, who is the secretary general of Hezbollah, will be making a significant statement on Friday. So that's going to be something to listen to and see what direction Hezbollah will go in light of all this. I know he has the support of the Lebanese people as well as the Lebanese army, and those are two significant factors to weigh in. And as Israel continues to do what it's doing in Gaza, it's intensifying the conflict, not diminishing," Maloof said.

"And then the ultimate goal, of course, is to go after Iran. That has always been Israel's goal, and now that they've got the United States sucked into it, I think that now Netanyahu feels emboldened, notwithstanding the domestic opposition he has."

"And on top of all that, we have crises that are still looming in the Asia-Pacific. And these, again, are all things that were precipitated by the Biden administration and the neoconservatives at the top, at the State Department. It's been the State Department that has led all of these efforts. And of course, they have Victoria Nuland, [US Secretary of State Antony] Blinken - these are all neoconservatives that want to use that. They want to push the American version of democracy, of hegemony, around the world," he said.

"And I think what they're realizing is that it is being highly challenged as a result of Russia, China coming together, the role of the BRICS countries, the de-dollarization - again, all brought about by the Biden administration's actions. If we sought to avoid having Russia and China become an alliance, and a military alliance at that, and draw closer together in a Eurasian approach, we perpetuated that with all of our actions. So it's actually we've actually done this to ourselves. And not only did we shoot ourselves in the foot, but we're shooting ourselves in the head. And now we're on a slippery slope. How do you stop what's now occurred? It's going to be a real challenge, and we have no adult leadership in the world right now."

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IDF Must 'Moderate Expectations' of Gaza Op, Prepare for Long Urban Warfare

While there are some comparisons between recent urban conflicts and the Israeli assault on Gaza, a number of unique circumstances exist in the Palestinian enclave that could make any kind of Israeli victory impossible, a former US military officer told Sputnik.

As Israeli ground forces severed all communications into and out of the Gaza Strip and launched a [massive assault](#) late last week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has declared a "third stage" of the war with Hamas.

Israel declared a state of war to exist on October 7, when militants from inside the Gaza Strip broke through the Israeli border fence and attacked several nearby settlements, killing more than 1,400 Israelis. In response, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) declared a "complete siege" of Gaza, cutting off electricity, fuel, and water to the enclave of more than 2 million Palestinians. During the nonstop IDF bombardment since then, nearly 9,000 people have been killed in Gaza, including more than 3,000 children, and the acute shortages of other basic goods threaten the lives of thousands more. Hamas' offers to release more than 200 Israelis captured during the

October 7 raid in exchange for an end to the siege and the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel have been rebuffed.

Earl Rasmussen, an international consultant and retired US Army lieutenant colonel with over 20 years of military service, told Sputnik on Tuesday that while the IDF could learn a great deal from the experience of recent urban warfare battles (in the Iraqi cities of Fallujah and Mosul and the DPR city of Mariupol) the Gaza Strip presents a number of unique challenges as well, including the high level of support militant groups like Hamas enjoy among the population.

“The attack by Hamas was tragic. Let's be upfront on that. But I think Israel was overreacting. Already we have several more deaths, and the rate of deaths has been horrendous, basically, it's almost like an ethnic cleansing going on, in the Gaza area, of the Palestinians. And that's affecting both the Muslim and Christian and even, probably, Jewish populations that are from that region,” he said.

“I think Netanyahu initially just wanted to go in and exterminate Gaza and maybe just completely wipe the whole thing out. He says he wants to eliminate Hamas, I don't think it's a realistic thing,” Rasmussen said. “But the US is kind of tempering, [the Israelis] are getting a lot of pressure to be careful on the humanitarian side, civilian deaths, and so on. I think in the US government, a lot of people are trying to encourage a more targeted type of precision strikes and a targeted type of ground operation. So I think there's a little bit of adjustment that's occurring in their strategy other than just the blanket overwhelming invasion to more of relying on air superiority for precision and artillery strikes, and focusing more on a targeted invasion,” Rasmussen said.

“Hamas has become more sophisticated over time. I do not think it's going to be a quick military victory for Israel, or maybe they won't even obtain a victory. It's a shifting area, I think is going to be probably adjusting, probably looking at prior experiences of Fallujah, Mosul, Mariupol - [Mariupol has a very parallel](#) look at this, with the tunnels and everything. I think the strategy by Israel is going to continue to evolve based on the situation.”

Rasmussen said the battles in cities in Iraq and Ukraine were valuable to study in the context of the Gaza Strip invasion because “it provides you a framework for basically urban conflict.”

“But the distinct difference here is that you're going into Gaza, which is probably one of the densest populated areas there is in the world, and you've got a huge network of tunnels underneath, and Hamas - I mean, this is their land, their intent to hold it and to fight is can't be underestimated. I think their training is better, they're more equipped, more organized. Also, they've implemented a new drone [strategy], so they have some air type of capability, both from an intelligence gathering as far as a strike capability.”

“Although there's similarities, there's big differences as well, both on how the structure and the ground operation can take place, as well as the capabilities of Hamas are more sophisticated and advanced than ISIS* was. I really think there's probably more of a similarity to the battle in Mariupol than that even to Fallujah [or Mosul](#),” Rasmussen observed.

He noted that another issue is the question of how supportive the local population is of the fighters.

“In Iraq, we had a lot of Iraqis who were providing insight, intelligence information, you had people there probably were fighting not necessarily completely loyal to the IS. In this case, you've got a lot of Palestinians, and Hamas has been protecting and helping the Palestinians for a long time. Unlike Israel, that has not really assisted Palestinians at all. There are similarities,

but it's much more different, it's going to be much more difficult. I think the casualty rate is going to be much higher. My understanding is there are at least 400,000 civilians still in the area, so you could have huge, huge civilian casualties as well. I think the battle is much more complex than we can even imagine right now.”

When it came to the question of “precision strikes” as the US is urging, or an all-out ground assault, as Jerusalem has desired, Rasmussen said “either one is going to be bad,” especially due to the huge tunnel networks underneath of Gaza.

“I think a massive frontal strike is going to level the entire area, but you still have the tunnel systems. I think they could have troops, they could have elements getting caught, and so they could get isolated. The precision strikes with the limited special forces operations would potentially limit the number of civilian casualties, or mitigate it at least, and they could kind of focus [on an] area, first, prep it more with air superiority, and then go into pockets with that.”

“The other side is - is that going to meet the objectives of what will happen with Hamas? I mean Hamas, they've learned from the lessons of previous conflicts as well. So just the flattening of it [Gaza] with a massive assault may not be - maybe it appears to be the best option to eliminate Hamas, but I don't think that's going to be successful.”

“The precision strikes with limited engagement with special operations - I don't know if that's going to be successful either. The benefits of that are going to be less casualties potentially,” he noted. “It may be better and more successful with urban fighting. A massive assault is going to be very difficult and they could get bogged down and have large portions of the units taking on injuries or destruction from Hamas, because Hamas knows the region. They're buried inside the tunnels. They can leverage their drone capabilities.”

Rasmussen said the IDF would need to understand that “fighting urban warfare, you're not just going to be able to go in and take it immediately, that it's going to be a long process. Perhaps looking at a siege type of capability. That it could be bloody and that you're literally going from building to building to building. It's not just a tank operation across the desert.”

He said the IDF would have to “moderate your expectations” and examine how Daesh or the Iraqi insurgent forces reacted at Mosul and Fallujah, respectively, to the assault on their city, and judge if Hamas is likely to react similarly.

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Zero Percent Contained: Thousands Flee Southern California Wildfire

Strong winds helped spread a wildfire south-east of Los Angeles Tuesday as attempts to control the blaze have so far proven unsuccessful.

The Santa Ana winds – warm, dry gusts that sweep through Southern California yearly – helped drive a wildfire on Tuesday amidst evacuation orders affecting some 4,000 people.

The fire started Monday afternoon around the town of Aguanga and has so far burned through 1,200 acres, [according](#) to the Riverside County Fire Department. Dry conditions helped fuel the blaze and trigger evacuation orders for more than 1,100 homes. Another 500 homes are under

an evacuation warning, according to fire department spokesperson Jerry LaRusso, meaning people there should be prepared for a possible order to evacuate if necessary. Recent winds and dry conditions created grass and brush that was “almost like kindling,” [according](#) to LaRusso. This week has seen the most powerful winds of the season so far, with gusts measuring from 20 to 25 miles per hour fanning the flames across the parched landscape. Additionally, an air quality alert was issued by the National Weather Service due to smoke from the blaze. As of Tuesday morning, firefighters said the fire was zero percent contained; the combined effort of 300 firefighters and three air tankers has so far failed to prevent its spread. The forecast called for winds to ease slightly Tuesday evening to around 15 to 25 miles per hour, potentially aiding firefighters’ efforts.

“Wind trumps everything,” said LaRusso. “Hopefully the forecast holds.”

Still, the local power company was considering cutting power to 144,000 people in the area to prevent the ignition of fires from downed power lines. Experts warned the current blaze could be a sign of things to come for the region later this fall.

“If we get the wrong weather at the wrong time and that aligns with the really dry fuels – which we know we have way too many of – it could still end up being a really serious fire season,” said Lenya Quinn-Davidson from the University of California’s division of agriculture and natural resources.

A recent [study](#) claimed that climate change caused by human burning of fossil fuels could cause portions of California susceptible to damage from wildfires to increase in acreage by 52% by midcentury.

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Trump Crushes Competitors in Poll of Likely Republican Voters in South Carolina

Trump dominates among Republicans and likely voters without a college degree, while Nikki Haley, trailing in a distant second, is strongest among college graduates and independents. Donald Trump’s crushing dominance among likely Republican voters shows no signs of abating, with a new poll from the early primary state of South Carolina revealing a massive lead for the former president.

Fifty-three percent of likely Republican primary voters in the new [poll](#) conducted by SSRS said Trump was their first choice for the party’s presidential nomination, putting him at least 30 points ahead of any other candidate. Nikki Haley, South Carolina’s former governor, and Tim Scott, a senator from the state, seemed to benefit little from their home-field advantage, with the former registering 22% support and the latter garnering 6%.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis polled in between Haley and Scott with 11% support. No other candidate garnered more than 2% support in the poll.

In another positive sign for Trump, the poll showed his supporters appear very firm in their backing for the ex-President. Eighty-two percent of Trump backers in the poll said they would “definitely” support him and won’t change their minds. Only 42% of Haley supporters and 38% of DeSantis supporters said the same about their preferred candidate.

Trump dominated among nearly all demographics in the poll, winning more support from some groups than others. Trump leads Haley by 50% among both likely voters without a college degree and voters under 45, while leading her by 54% among those making less than \$50,000 per year. The two candidates are tied among college graduates, and Trump leads by 22% among voters older than 45. His lead is 17% among voters earning more than \$50,000 per year. South Carolina's Republican primary is open to voters not registered as Republicans, and differences in level of support are seen based on party preference. Trump leads registered Republicans by 40%, while his lead among independents and those registered with other parties is only 4%. He leads by double digits among both self-described conservatives and moderates/liberals.

Fifty-three percent of respondents to the poll said the economy is their top issue in next year's election, while 21% said immigration was most important to them. 8% picked voting rights as most important and 5% picked abortion.

Only 5% of respondents said foreign policy is their primary concern in next year's election, but Nikki Haley has tried to sell her neoconservative foreign policy vision as a key differentiator between herself and the former president.

"As president, I will not compliment Hezbollah," [said](#) Haley recently at the annual summit of the Republican Jewish Coalition, referring to [comments](#) Trump made calling the armed militant group "very smart." "Nor will I criticize Israel's prime minister in the middle of a tragedy in war," she added. "We have no time for personal vendettas."

As President Biden continues to advocate for millions of dollars of additional aid towards Israel amidst their military campaign in the Gaza Strip, the issue has shown signs of emerging as a concern among the broader electorate. Most respondents said they support a [ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hamas in a recent poll of US voters. Meanwhile, support for Biden has [fallen](#) to an all-time low of just 17 percent among Arab American voters.

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Secret Chamber Filled with Michelangelo's Drawings Revealed to the Public

The master painter and sculptor took refuge in the hidden room when Pope Clement VII issued a death sentence against him over his republican political sympathies.

Famed Renaissance artist Michelangelo is well known for his exquisite paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. But now in Italy, a lesser known body of work on the walls of a hidden room underneath Florence is gaining attention.

The chamber is concealed underneath a trap door in the Medici Chapels at the Basilica of San Lorenzo. In 1975, the director of the chapels discovered the entrance to the approximately 30 by 10 foot space underneath a wardrobe during renovations. Stripping of the walls in the room revealed numerous charcoal and chalk drawings by the master artist.

"He drew things from the past as if he was taking a trip down memory lane," said current director of Bargello Museums Paola D'Agostino. "It was like having an album of his works."

The small room serves as a gallery of drawings similar to some of the artist's other works, including portions of the Sistine Chapel and his famed statue of David. Historians believe Michelangelo hid in the room after a warrant for his arrest was issued by Pope Clement VII. Michelangelo supported Florence's brief republican government, backing a revolt and supervising the city's fortifications. This provoked the ire of the powerful Medici family, who sought his death after returning to the city in 1527. The Medicis eventually made peace with the legendary artist, allowing him to finish work on the Sistine Chapel and other projects. November 15 will mark the first time the room will be accessible by the public. Four people at a time will be allowed to enter the chamber to ensure the priceless artworks are preserved. The Medici Chapels are currently [open](#) to the public from 8:15 am local time until 2:00 pm, until December 26 when they will be open until 4:50 pm.

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Americans Plan Moderate Holiday Spending – Poll

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) – Americans plan to spend moderately this holiday season, according to a Gallup poll released Wednesday.

Respondents said they planned to spend an average of \$923 on Christmas or other holiday gifts – similar to their \$932 estimate last year and \$942 in pre-pandemic 2019.

Still, around 90% of Americans say they will engage in some holiday gift spending, with 21% planning to spend at least \$500 and 35% predicting they will spend \$1,000 or more.

The October 2-23 poll was conducted amid moderate inflation, rising interest rates, and reduced personal savings, despite low unemployment and improving wages.

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Arab World in Deep Political Crisis, Fears War Plunging Region Into Abyss - Ex-Advisor

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The Arab world is in the middle of a political crisis of unprecedented levels and there is fear the Israel-Gaza conflict may lead the region into further problems, former Palestinian peace advisor Hiba Hussein told Sputnik.

"The Arab world is in political crisis of unprecedented levels not seen since the Nakba days back in 1948," Hussein said. "The Arab regimes cannot yet formulate a position on the end game. However, there is a cohesive tone and message that this war may lead us into a deep black hole. The relations are very strained."

Hussein said immediate steps must be taken to resolve the Gaza conflict pending a longer term political settlement, including a ceasefire in exchange for the release of hostages, improved humanitarian conditions for Palestinians, and ending destruction to buildings, homes,

places of worship, and especially hospitals and medical care facilities in Gaza.

Husseini also said Israel should stop the incursions by the Israeli special forces into the West Bank, settler violence in the West Bank, and psychological warfare against Palestinians.

On October 7, Hamas carried out a surprise large-scale attack on Israel. Soon after, Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip. Last week, Israel began its ground invasion of Gaza in what the government called the "second phase" of the offensive against Hamas.

The death toll from Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip has topped 8,500 and over 21,000 people have been injured, the Palestinian Health Ministry said on Tuesday. The Israeli death toll has exceeded 1,500.

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Possible Saudi-Israel Normalization Talks Should Include Palestinian Deal - Ex-Advisor

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Saudi Arabia, under pressure from the Arab public, may call for some kind of resolution for Palestinians in its normalization negotiations with Israel, former Palestinian peace advisor Hiba Hussein told Sputnik.

"Saudi Arabia is being sent stern messages by the Arab public that bypassing the Palestinians in a normalization deal must not go through and there is growing talk now that SA [Saudi Arabia] cannot engage in normalization talks without the end game for resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in tandem," Hussein said.

US efforts to broker a normalization deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel came as surprise and did not receive public legitimacy, Hussein said.

Saudi Arabia and Israel were on the verge of normalizing relations, according to President Joe Biden. Under the Trump administration, Israel normalized relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan as part of the Abraham Accords.

Biden believes Hamas carried out its attacks on Israel on October 7 in order to prevent Saudi Arabia and Israel from normalizing relations. In September, the Saudi Crown Prince said in an interview that a deal with Israel to normalize relations was getting closer "every day."

"The Abraham Accords countries are seen [as] 'agents' of the West to perpetuate the occupation of the Palestinian Territories," Hussein said. "While their interests are important as a matter of their national policies, the Palestinians have long relied on Arab political support in the international arena; the Palestinians have been left behind and forgotten."

Arab public sentiment does not align with their governments' policies on Israel, Hussein said.

Israel's normalization of ties to the Arab world has been seen as a license for Israel to continue expanding settlements and oppressing Palestinians, Hussein said.

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Continued Heavy Killings in Gaza May Make Population Dysfunctional for Years - Ex-Advisor

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - There is a fear that continued heavy killings in Gaza may render its population dysfunctional for several years, former Palestinian peace advisor Hiba Hussein told Sputnik.

"There is fear that the continuance and heavy killings will render the Gaza population dysfunctional for years to come in an attempt to create a demographic slowing down of the population growth in Gaza," Hussein said.

Many Gazans, Hussein added, have already declared they will die in their homes before agreeing to leave.

"Palestinians will not repeat the Nakba of 1948. Palestinians will never surrender to occupation or population transfer and refugee status," she said.

Gazans fear fleeing and being stuck in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Hussein said. Moreover, there is fear that Israel will empty the Gaza Strip into Sinai and take over the territory of Gaza for a buffer zone, Hussein added.

Hussein pointed out that Gaza, which has a population of 2.2 million people, has already existed on limited humanitarian assistance and most of its population were living under the poverty line of less than \$2 per day.

The conditions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are harsh with severe limitations on movement and continuous crackdown on the refugee camps, Hussein said. The day-to-day living conditions for the East Jerusalem Palestinians are tough - filled with apprehension, fear and high anxiety, she added.

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Gaza War to Impact Relations in Arab World, West Must Reassess Mideast Policy - Ex-Advisor

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The Gaza conflict will have an impact on many relations in the Arab world and the West must reassess its Mideast policy in light of the current unrest in the region, especially regarding Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, former Palestinian peace advisor Hiba Hussein told Sputnik.

"There is a high risk that many relations in the Arab world will be impacted," Hussein, who has advised the Palestine Liberation Organization in negotiations with Israel, said. "This is a time to reassess US and the West's policies in the Middle East especially towards the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and provide an equitable and true end to occupation."

Hussein and former Israeli negotiator Yossi Beilin developed a proposal for a European-style confederation as a facilitator for the establishment of a two-state solution. They presented the model to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during talks in New York last year.

Hussein said the United States and the rest of the West should recognize a Palestinian state, among other actions.

"We need stabilization that includes an enhanced quality of life unconstrained from armed groups, illegitimate leadership, or internal and external repression of Palestinians," Hussein

said. "We need to change the narrative of violence and victimization because both Israelis and Palestinians have inherited traumas."

Arabs and Israelis want to realize the economic and security benefits made possible by the diplomatic normalization between Israel and Arab nations, Hussein said.

Hussein also called for the 1993 Oslo Accords to be retired considering they failed to facilitate a two-state solution.

"Oslo must be retired," Hussein said. "It was intended to last five years and its life was extended to 30 and now it cannot survive any longer."

Hussein also warned that the West's support of Israel will complicate relations with the Arab world, especially in light of a perceived lack of sympathy for the violence being committed against an innocent civilian population, and the horrendous destruction to residential homes, hospitals, churches, mosques and UN premises.

"The West rushed to Israel's rescue and stood in absolute solidarity with them, giving the Israeli government the green light to uproot Hamas from the Gaza Strip and they, in particular the USA, UK and Germany, supplied aircraft, bombs and other warfare and military assistance including personnel," Hussein said.

There have been many pro-Palestinian mass demonstrations held around the world, including in Western nations like the United States, United Kingdom, and France, she said.

The Arab governments, Hussein said, cannot ignore their public's outrage, otherwise they risk the demonstrations turning into violent encounters.

On October 7, 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.

On October 27, Israel announced it is expanding ground operations in Gaza to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages.

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Musk Says X Has United Nations Exclusion Rule, With All Leaders Represented on Platform

UNITED NATIONS, November 1 (Sputnik) - The US Entrepreneur Elon Musk said on Tuesday that his social platform X is governed by the so-called 'United Nations Exclusion Rule,' in which all leaders should be represented.

"We do have what we call the kind of United Nations exclusion rule, which is that you can have, say, the Ayatollah, who would prefer that Israel didn't exist, for example. But he's allowed to go to the UN building in New York. And, in fact, generally, officials from Iran do in fact go to the UN building in New York, even though they are a heavily sanctioned country," Musk said to Joe Rogan during his podcast.

There shouldn't be a world government we 'bow down to' which would be risky for civilization but leaders should be represented, he added.

Twitter is like the 'collective consciousness of humanity,' Musk followed, but of course, if

somebody actively advocates a murder or does something illegal then they get suspended.

During the show, Elon Musk also explained why people on the left complain about Twitter being shifted to the right since his takeover: old Twitter was more of a 'state media' and was controlled by the far left in San Francisco. San Francisco is also one of the most far-left places in the US - so for them, the inclusion of the people from the right meant a huge shift. The entrepreneur bought Twitter to help humanity bridge differences and reduce misinformation.

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Colombian President Gustavo Petro Says Recalled Ambassador from Israel

WASHINGTON, November 1, (Sputnik) – Colombian President Gustavo Petro said on Tuesday that Bogota would recall its ambassador to Israel over the "massacre of the Palestinian people".

"I have decided to recall our ambassador in Israel for consultations. If Israel does not stop the massacre of the Palestinian people, we cannot be there," Petro said via X (formerly Twitter).

Colombia becomes the third Latin American country to break diplomatic relations or recall ambassadors from Israel, following up on Bolivia and Chile.

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Blinken in Call With Herzog Calls for Precautions to Minimize Harm to Civilians-State Dept

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Israeli President Isaac Herzog, emphasizing the need to minimize harm to civilians while supporting Israel's right to self-defense against terrorism, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke via phone today with Israeli President Isaac Herzog. The Secretary reiterated US support for Israel's right to defend itself against terrorism consistent with international humanitarian law and emphasized the need to take feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians," Miller said on Tuesday in a readout.

Furthermore, Miller said that Secretary Blinken and President Herzog discussed ensuring the safety of US citizens in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, efforts to secure the release of hostages, increasing humanitarian aid to Gaza, and preventing further conflict escalation.

On October 7, 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 on both sides.

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Blinken Discusses Recent Battlefield Developments With Ukrainian FM- State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba, addressing recent battlefield developments and the ongoing Valletta meeting.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba today via phone from Washington, DC. They discussed the latest battlefield developments and the third meeting of nations in Valletta, Malta, to build global consensus on a principled and durable peace in Ukraine," Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday in a readout.

Furthermore, Miller said that Blinken reiterated the US' dedication to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, along with the ongoing commitment to providing Ukraine with the necessary assistance to safeguard its independence and ensure the safety of its citizens.

Last week, Malta hosted the third international meeting on Ukraine, featuring delegates from over 50 countries, including the G7, who gathered in Valletta, some remotely, to deliberate on the peace plan put forth by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

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Blinken to Visit Israel on Friday, Followed By Other Stops in Region - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Israel on Friday to meet with Israeli government officials amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, Reuters reported.

The report said on Tuesday that Blinken will also make additional stops in other countries in the Middle East.

Media reported earlier that the United States and Israel are looking into various options for dealing with a possible post-Hamas Gaza, which may include placing the enclave under temporary United Nations oversight or deploying a multinational force to maintain security

Earlier on Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the Palestinian Authority taking over Gaza's governance and security would "make the most sense" after the current conflict with Israel ends. He added that having Hamas or Israel run Gaza were not options.

On October 7, 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 on both sides.

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Watchdog Group Says Uncovered US Taxpayer-Funded Study to Infect Bats with Coronavirus

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Watchdog group White Coat Waste Project (WCW) uncovered a 2018 US-taxpayer funded study that involved infecting bats with a coronavirus imported from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, WCW said in a statement.

In 2018, the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) infected a dozen bats with a "SARS-like" coronavirus as part of a study conducted at Rocky Mountain Laboratories in the state of Montana. The lab is operated by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, which at the time was led by Anthony Fauci.

The bats used in the experiment were shipped from a wildlife preserve in Maryland, near the Camp David presidential retreat.

"We've uncovered new details about how a shady roadside zoo whose curator was an NIH animal experimenter shipped off bats to a deadly government virus superlab to be infected with a coronavirus obtained from the notorious Wuhan lab that experts believe caused COVID," WCW's statement said.

The NIH funded the experiment using more than \$20 million in US taxpayer-funded grants, the statement said.

WCW submitted Freedom of Information Act requests in an effort to uncover more details about the experiment, the statement said. However, NIH has so far refused to turn over the documents, the statement said.

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US, Israel Mull Having Multinational Force Oversee Gaza When War Ends - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The United States and Israel are looking into various options for dealing with a possible post-Hamas Gaza, which may include placing the enclave under temporary United Nations oversight or deploying a multinational force to maintain security, Bloomberg News reported citing sources.

The report said on Tuesday that a multinational presence in Gaza could include armed forces from the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

However, according to the report, President Joe Biden believes deploying a small group of US troops to Gaza could be politically risky.

The United States is far from making a decision on whether it would back sending US troops to Gaza to help maintain security in a post-Hamas environment, the report said.

The discussions of plans for Gaza, should Israel succeed in removing Hamas, are in early

stages and open to many changes, the report said. US officials, the report added, believe these options are premature or unlikely to happen

Earlier on Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the Palestinian Authority taking over Gaza's governance and security would "make the most sense" after the current conflict with Israel ends. He added that having Hamas or Israel run Gaza were not options.

Moreover, the top US diplomat said that if the Palestinian Authority was not a possibility, he suggested that there could be temporary governance and security arrangements led by other countries in the region or international agencies, but ultimately, there would need to be a two-state solution.

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US House Speaker Johnson Eyes Former Trump Aide to Lead Communications - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - New US House Speaker Mike Johnson intends to hire former Trump administration White House Deputy Press Secretary Raj Shah to help lead the lawmaker's communications efforts, Politico reported, citing a source familiar with the matter.

Johnson tapped Shah to serve as his deputy chief of staff for communications, the report said on Tuesday.

Shah served as deputy press secretary and deputy assistant for former US President Donald Trump. After leaving the White House, Shah worked as an executive at the Fox Corporation.

Shah is expected to help develop Johnson's communication operations, as well as lead messaging for House Republicans, the report said.

The move comes as Johnson builds a team to help manage his new responsibilities as speaker, a position to which he was elected earlier this month.

Johnson's hiring choices, which include several well-known Republican staffers, indicates his embrace of House Republicans' existing political infrastructure, Politico also reported. Johnson hired Billy Constandy, who previously served as chief of staff for Republican campaign head Richard Hudson, to lead his political operations, the report said.

Johnson hired former staffer Dan Ziegler to lead his policy department as well, the report said. Johnson also plans to maintain the existing structure of the Congressional Leadership Fund, a political action committee dedicated to electing Republicans to seats in the House of Representatives, the report said.

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Elon Musk Says George Soros Doing Things That 'Erode Fabric of Civilization'

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Elon Musk slammed George Soros while talking in a podcast with Joe Rogan, saying that Soros' actions destroy civilization.

"He is doing things that erode the fabric of civilization. Getting DAs elected who refused to prosecute crime, that's part of the problem in San Francisco and LA and other cities, so why would you do that?," Musk told Rogan on Tuesday.

"... Once you get to sort of city and state district attorneys, the value money's extremely good. Soros realized that you don't need to change the laws. You just need to change how they are enforced," Musk continued.

Musk and Soros share a long-time animosity. In May, the former accused the latter of hating humanity.

In August, Elon Musk has announced his intention to sue billionaire investor George Soros's Open Society Foundations grantmaking network over its attempts to suppress freedom of speech.

The tweet was published as a commentary on an article by US journalist Ben Scallan in which he reported that Soros-funded NGOs promote censorship across Ireland and Scotland. These policies include, among other things, police raids on homes and seizure of citizens' personal devices. Such measures are the result of the NGOs' claims about an increase in "hate crimes" in the regions, Scallan wrote, adding that the endgame of the claims is to promote legislation which will "restrict freedom" and "make it easier to secure prosecutions and convictions."

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US Keeping Close Eye on Iran Activities in US in View of Past Assassination Attempts - FBI

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US intelligence agencies are closely watching to see whether the conflict in Israel and Gaza might prompt Iran or Iranian-backed groups to conduct malign activities in the United States, FBI Director Christopher Wray told members of Congress.

Wray said during testimony to the House Homeland Security Committee on Tuesday that Iran has in the past mounted assassination attempts against dissidents and high-ranking US government officials within US borders.

"Given that disturbing history, we are keeping a close eye on what impact recent events may have on those groups and tensions here in the United States and how those intentions might evolve. For example, the cyber targeting of American interests and critical infrastructure that we already see conducted by Iran and non state actors alike. We can expect to get worse if the conflict expands, as well the threat of kinetic attacks," Wray said.

The US has previously accused Iran of plotting assassinations on US soil and has filed criminal charges against several individuals over their alleged involvement in plots to assassinate former National Security Adviser John Bolton, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Iranian-American dissident Masih Alinejad. Iran has denied involvement in any assassination attempts on US soil.

Wray said that Hezbollah, who he called a primary strategic partner of Iran, possesses a track record of deploying operatives and infrastructure, securing funds and weaponry, and engaging in espionage activities within the territories of the United States.

The hearing comes after Hamas on October 7 launched a surprise large-scale attack from the

Gaza Strip into Israel, breaching the border and killing and abducting people from nearby Israeli communities.

In response, Israel initiated retaliatory strikes and imposed a complete blockade on the Gaza Strip, home to over 2 million residents, leading to shortages of essential supplies like water, food, and fuel. Israel has since then allowed only limited humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. The conflict's escalation has resulted in a significant loss of life and injuries on both sides.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) –

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

* At least 1.4 million Palestinians have moved from the north of the Gaza Strip to the south of the territory, Palestine's Permanent Representative to the Arab League Mohammad Aklouk said on Tuesday.

* Three workers of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have been killed in the Gaza Strip in past 24 hours, the UNRWA said.

* All Israeli requests to evacuate hospitals in the Gaza Strip are just impossible, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Alyona Synenko, told Sputnik.

* At least 400 people in Gaza Strip's Jabalia refugee camp were killed and injured after Israeli air attacks on Tuesday, the enclave's Interior Ministry said.

* The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck the Jabalia camp in the Gaza Strip, spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Hecht said, adding that the death of civilians is a consequence of a "tragedy of war."

* The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Tuesday that a commander of Hamas, Ibrahim Biari, was killed in the Gaza Strip.

* Bolivia has decided to cut diplomatic ties with Israel over "crimes against humanity," Reuters reported on Tuesday, citing the Bolivian Foreign Ministry.

RUSSIAN ECONOMY

* Russia remains open to foreign investment and is ready to create comfortable conditions for foreign business, but amid the West's quasi-war, the country has a special regime concerning outgoing Western companies, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday.

* Russia's GDP has increased by 2.8% over the past nine months, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said on Tuesday, adding that the GDP growth in September was 5% in annual terms.

RUSSIA SANCTIONS

* The European Union is considering imposing new sanctions on Russia that may hit exports and imports worth \$5.3 billion, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday.

* The Justice Department on Tuesday charged a Brooklyn Resident and two Russian-Canadian nationals with massive sanctions evasion and export control scheme, according to a DOJ release.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that the United States is working with Ukraine to facilitate its grain exports via new routes, but there is no substitute for the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

* US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Tuesday that Russia will succeed if the US does not provide supplemental aid to Ukraine.

* Ukraine has lost up to 250 soldiers in the Krasnyi Lyman direction over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

WESTERN SANCTIONS ON MYANMAR

* The US Treasury will prohibit certain financial transactions with Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise from December 15 onward, it announced in a release on Tuesday.

* Canada has imposed sanctions on 39 individuals and 22 entities over their support for the Myanmar military government, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said.

RUSSIAN BUSINESSMAN DETENTION IN FRANCE

* The co-owner of Russia's Alfa Group Consortium, Alexey Kuzmichev, who was detained in France on suspicion of money laundering on October 30, will stay in custody no longer than 48 hours, a source in the French prosecutor's office (PNF) told RIA Novosti on Tuesday.

* The French authorities did not inform Russian diplomats about the detention of Kuzmichev, and Russian Consulate in Paris is ready to assist the detained businessman, the Russian Embassy in Paris told Sputnik.

* It is necessary to get information through the Russian diplomatic mission in France about the detention of Kuzmichev, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SYRIA

* The Russian aerospace forces have conducted airstrikes targeting militant facilities in Syria's Idlib province and hit two underground hideouts, Vadim Kulit, the deputy head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in Syria, said on Tuesday, adding that air attacks killed at least 10 militants.

* The US base at the Omar oil field in the province of Deir ez-Zur in eastern Syria has come under missile fire, a local source told Sputnik.

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Oil Poised To End October With Double-Digit Losses

NEW YORK, October 31 (Sputnik) - Crude prices are on track to finish October with double-digit losses as oil bulls who rushed to hedge against the Israel-Hamas war discovered to their disappointment that the rest of the market was not prepared to assign a war risk premium to a trade barely impacted by the conflict.

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, crude for December delivery, settled Tuesday's session at \$81.02 per barrel, down \$1.29, or 1.6% on the day, to add to Monday's 3.8% slump.

Aside from its more than 5% drop on the week, the US crude benchmark looked likely to finish the current month down as much as 11%. That would be its worst performance since May, just before the announcement of Saudi-Russian production cuts that led to four straight months of rally in oil.

UK-origin Brent crude's most-active January contract was at \$85.16, down \$1.19, or 1.4%, by 15:00 Eastern US Time (19:00 Greenwich Mean Time). Brent was also down almost 11% on the month in what appeared to be its worst month since August 2022.

After last week's stumble, oil began this week deeper in the red as traders looked beyond the war in the Middle East to concerns over the Federal Reserve's expected interest rate decision on Wednesday.

"It is interesting crude prices have given up the bulk of their gains since Hamas attacked Israel which suggests either the geopolitical risk-premium has sharply reduced or global economic concerns have increased, perhaps a combination of the two," said Craig Erlam, analyst at online trading platform OANDA.

The Fed is expected to hold interest rates unchanged after 11 hikes between March 2022 and July this year that boosted the base US lending rate from just 0.25% to 5.5%.

But the central bank still has another meeting in December where it could do another hike. Data showed on Tuesday that US labor costs increased solidly in the third quarter amid strong wage growth while house price inflation accelerated in August, the latest signs that the Fed could keep interest rates high for some time.

On top of the wage inflation report, the Fed will get an even more influential reading on US jobs and wages when October's non-farm payrolls report is released on Friday.

Weaker-than-anticipated factory activity in top crude importer China added to Tuesday's market gloom. Chinese manufacturing activity unexpectedly shrank in October, while non-manufacturing growth slowed substantially, data showed.

The reading indicated that despite a slew of stimulus measures from Beijing, business activity was struggling to recover and raised more questions over just how much more Chinese oil consumption will increase this year, given the steadily worsening economic conditions.

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US Government UAP Office Launches New Reporting Mechanism, Will Soon Release New Info

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The US government's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) launched a secure reporting mechanism on their website for current and former

government employees to provide information on unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP) and related clandestine programs, AARO Director Sean Kirkpatrick said on Tuesday.

"AARO launched the second phase of our secure reporting mechanism on the aaro.mil website. This phase of the reporting mechanism is for current or former US government employees, service-members or contractors with direct knowledge of alleged US government programs or activities related to UAP dating back to 1945 to contact AARO to voluntarily submit a report," Kirkpatrick said.

AARO will use the reports to inform its congressionally directed Historical Record Report and investigations into alleged government UAP programs due to Congress in June 2024, Kirkpatrick said.

The reporting mechanism is intended as an initial point of contact with AARO and not to convey sensitive or classified information, Kirkpatrick added.

AARO's website is a "living thing" that the office will update over time, Kirkpatrick said. AARO has a package of new material, including declassified historical documents, that it will release in the coming days and weeks, Kirkpatrick said.

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Fuel Shortage in Gaza Raises Concerns for Healthcare, Infrastructure - White House

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The White House is concerned over the critical shortage of fuel in Gaza and the potential threat that this poses to hospitals and water pumps in the territory, Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"No fuel has gotten in and the existing stocks are dang near down to zero. And that's that's perilous here for the hospitals for the water pumps. And so we're working hard with Israel to make sure we can find some accommodations to get fuel," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby said that he has heard the argument that supplying fuel to the territory would aid Hamas. But he emphasized the need for clarity on this matter and stressed that there had been no indication that Hamas has obtained any of the humanitarian assistance provided to Gaza.

"It goes from these UN trucks, to humanitarian organizations and the UN for delivery to the people of Gaza," Kirby said.

On October 7, 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 on both sides.

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

US Government UAP Chief Says Working With Allies to Share Information

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The United States is in the preliminary stages of working with allies and partners to share information about unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP), All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) Director Sean Kirkpatrick said on Tuesday.

"We have coordinated with some allies and partners. We're looking at sharing information as we find it. We're looking at establishing ways to get any reporting that they might want to contribute to the collection of data," Kirkpatrick said, in response to a question from Sputnik.

"That's all in preliminary discussions right now and is ongoing."

The US has not reached out to any adversaries on UAP "for a variety of reasons," Kirkpatrick added.

The US government launched AARO in an effort to investigate UAP and potential clandestine government programs related to them. On Tuesday, AARO launched a secure reporting mechanism on their website for current and former US government employees, servicemembers or contractors with potential knowledge of such matters.

AARO intends to open up public reporting mechanisms as well in the future, Kirkpatrick said.

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Biden to Discuss Gaza Humanitarian Situation With Jordanian King - White House

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is scheduled to hold talks with King Abdullah II of Jordan to address the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"President Biden will speak with His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan this afternoon to discuss further cooperation with our partners to address this worsening humanitarian situation," Kirby said during a press briefing.

On October 7, Hamas carried out 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 later began ground operations in Gaza. It also ordered a complete blockade of the exclave, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

Trucks with humanitarian aid have since been allowed into the Gaza Strip, but the level of assistance that has been allowed into the exclave is completely inadequate and not commensurate with the needs of its population of 2 million, according to the United Nations.

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Muslim Democrats Demand Biden Forces Ceasefire in Gaza Fighting - Letter

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden must act immediately to force a ceasefire in Gaza where at least 8,000 Palestinians have been killed in retaliatory Israeli Army actions or he will face losing Arab American support in critical swing states in next year's presidential election, the National Muslim Democratic Council (NMDC) said in a letter to the US leader on Tuesday.

"The situation in Gaza has reached a critical juncture, nearing a complete humanitarian catastrophe, and we implore you to take immediate action to secure a ceasefire by Tuesday, October 31st at 5 pm EST [Eastern Standard Time]," the letter said.

The massacre of over 8,000 Palestinians and the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza were both unacceptable, the letter said

"We call on the White House to urgently advocate for an immediate ceasefire. Your administration's unconditional support, encompassing funding and armaments, has played a significant role in perpetuating the violence that is causing civilian casualties and has eroded trust in voters who previously put their faith in you," the council wrote.

The US state of Michigan in the 2020 presidential election was decided by a mere 2.6% margin and holds 16 electoral votes. Ohio, Iowa, Florida, Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee are also critical states where significant blocks of Arab American voters resided, the letter noted.

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FBI Director Calls for Comprehensive Reform of Asylum System

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - FBI Director Christopher Wray on Tuesday emphasized the need for a top-to-bottom overhaul of the United States' asylum system.

"The asylum system needs to be reformed from top to bottom," Wray said during a Senate hearing.

During fiscal year 2023, the Biden administration recorded the third successive year of record-high illegal border crossings along the US southern border.

Statistics from CBP revealed that there were more than 2.4 million apprehensions on the southern border between October 2022 and September 2023.

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Secretary of Homeland Security Says Over 600,000 Getaways in Fiscal Year 2023

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Alejandro N. Mayorkas on Tuesday acknowledged that the figure of getaways exceeded

600,000, emphasizing that the issue of getaways has posed a long-standing challenge for the DHS.

"I believe, Senator, that number is over 600,000. As I'm sure you are well aware, the phenomenon of getaways is something that has been a challenge for the Department of Homeland Security, for decades," Mayorkas said during the Threats to the Homeland Full Committee Hearing when asked how many getaways did the Customs and Borders Protection (CBP) report in the fiscal year of 2023.

Mayorkas further said that the situation is a powerful example of a broken immigration system. During fiscal year 2023, the Biden administration recorded the third successive year of record-high illegal border crossings along the U.S. southern border.

Statistics from CBP revealed that approximately 2.4 million unauthorized migrants were intercepted on the southern border during this fiscal year, covering the period from October 2022 to September 2023.

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US Senate Confirms Jack Lew as Ambassador to Israel

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Tuesday confirmed the nomination of Jack Lew to serve as the United States' Ambassador to Israel, amid an effort by the Biden administration to back Israel in its conflict with Hamas.

Senators approved of Lew's nomination in a 53-43 vote.

US President Joe Biden nominated Lew, who previously served as Treasury Secretary, in September. The ambassadorship has been vacant since Tom Nides stepped down from the role in July.

The Senate confirmed Lew in the wake of Hamas' surprise attack on Israel earlier this month, which sparked a state of war in the country. The Biden administration and most lawmakers have expressed support for Israel, including proposing billions of dollars in emergency military aid.

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Blinken Briefed New House Speaker on Foreign Aid Needs, US Efforts in Mideast - State Dept

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met recently with newly-elected Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson to discuss the White House's request to Congress for additional aid for Ukraine and Israel, among other ongoing diplomatic efforts in the Middle East, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"The Secretary had a chance to meet with the speaker, he talked to him about a number of things, most importantly, the President's requests for supplemental assistance to support

Ukraine and to support Israel and to get humanitarian assistance into Gaza and into other areas," Miller said during a press briefing.

Blinken also briefed Johnson on recent diplomatic engagements in the Middle East to secure the release of hostages held by Hamas, evacuating American citizens out of the region amid the conflict, and preventing the conflict from spreading into a regional war.

President Joe Biden has submitted a request to Congress asking for \$106 billion to address US national security matters.

Biden's request includes \$61 billion in military aid for Ukraine and \$14 billion for Israel.

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Canadian Finance Ministers to Discuss Alberta Wish to Exit Pension Plan – Freeland

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – Canadian Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland said on Tuesday that she would convene a Special Meeting with her provincial counterparts to discuss Alberta's wish to exit the Canada Pension Plan (CPP).

"I can confirm that this Friday I will be convening a special meeting of provincial and territorial finance ministers to discuss the government of Alberta's proposed withdrawal from the Canada Pension Plan," Freeland said during a press conference.

In a letter, the Minister said the CPP is a world leading investment body worth C\$570 billion of which C\$380 billion was generated from investment income, delivering its highest return yield between 2013-2022.

"The CPP also ensures Canadians can live, work, and retire anywhere in Canada," the letter said, adding that it also protects pensions from provincial or territorial financial hardships.

Canadians work hard for their pensions, and they understand by exiting the plan, Alberta could endanger the pensions of Albertans and citizens nationwide., the letter added. The provincial government has the right to exit the CPP but must be aware of the risks it poses.

Alberta' ruling United Conservative Party has been mulling exiting the CPP since 2020.

Incumbent Prime Minister Danielle Smith has moved to launch consultations that will allow citizens to submit their opinions on the matter until early 2024.

The province alleged that it would be entitled to C\$334 billion by the time it leaves the plan in 2027.

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Americans Still Unable to Make it out of Gaza, US Making Progress on Issue - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - American citizens and foreign nationals trapped in Gaza have not yet been able to leave the region safely, though the United States is making headway on the issue, State Department Spokesman Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"They have not been able to get out [of Gaza] as of yet. I will say that we are making very good progress on this issue. You may have seen some reports that have moved from the region just in the last few hours about the possibility of Rafah gate opening tomorrow," said Miller during a press briefing.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said earlier on Tuesday that there are roughly 400 American Citizens and their families trying to get out of Gaza as soon as possible and that this issue is a top priority for the United States.

The Rafah crossing is the main entrance and exit point to the Gaza Strip from Egypt. It is controlled by Egypt and has become the focal point of efforts to deliver aid to Palestinians since the beginning of the conflict on October 7. Though aid trucks have recently been permitted to move across the border into Gaza, no foreign nationals have yet been allowed to leave.

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White House Says Biden Looking Forward to Meeting Xi in November

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden is looking forward to meeting with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in San Francisco next month, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"The President said he is looking forward to meeting with President Xi. [I am] not going to get into details about this meeting, that is going to happen next month," Jean-Pierre told reporters, adding that the meeting will take place in San Francisco.

Jean-Pierre expressed confidence that the discussion would be constructive.

"It is important to have this type of diplomatic conversations. That is the best way to manage this type of competition that we see through intense diplomacy," she said.

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Pentagon Says Tracking Total of 27 Attacks in Iraq, Syria Over Past Two Weeks

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US military bases in the Middle East have been attacked at least 27 times over the past two weeks, including 16 times in Iraq and 11 in Syria, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"Right now, we are tracking a total of 27 attacks: 16 in Iraq and 11 in Syria," Ryder said during a press briefing.

Since October 26, when the United States conducted a series of "self-defense" strikes in Syria, its bases in the region were attacked six more times, three times in Iraq and three in Syria.

On October 26, the Pentagon said that US military forces conducted self-defense strikes on two facilities in eastern Syria used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and affiliated groups in response to their alleged attack against US personnel in Iraq and Syria by

Iranian-backed militia groups that began on October 17.

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US Concerned About Potential for Terrorists to Cross Southern Border - White House

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The US remains deeply concerned about the potential for terrorists to arrive from overseas on US soil, Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"We're always concerned about the potential presence on US soil of terrorists coming from overseas, that's something we're always worried about," Kirby said during a White House press briefing when asked whether the Biden administration was concerned that such individuals could cross into the country via the southern border with Mexico.

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Pentagon Says US Has Slightly Over \$5.4Bln Left in Funding for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – The United States has a bit more than \$5.4 billion left in presidential drawdown authority (PDA) to support Ukraine, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"Right now, we have a little more than \$5.4 billion in restored PDA authority that remains available for Ukraine," Ryder said during a press briefing.

In June, the US Department of Defense said that a series of valuation errors by the United States has made available more than \$6 billion in additional military aid to provide Ukraine through PDA packages.

Earlier in October, the White House sent to Congress a request for an additional \$106 billion. 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.

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US, Partners Looking at Possibility of Israel-Hamas Humanitarian Pause - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The United States and partners who have lines of communications with Hamas are exploring whether a humanitarian pause in the Israel-Gaza war is possible, Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"We do believe that humanitarian pauses could be a value but there has to be credible support on both sides here for where to do it, when to do it, for how long to do it and for what purpose," Kirby told a briefing, when asked if it is the time for a humanitarian pause, given the latest airstrikes on a densely populated refugee camp in Gaza. "And we're continuing with partners in the region, including those who have a direct line of communication with Hamas, to see if that's possible."

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Pentagon Says Expects Ukrainian Pilots to Finish Training on US Fighter Jets in 5-9 Months

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Tuesday that the United States expects Ukrainian pilots to finish training on F-16 fighter jets within five to nine months, depending on individual aptitude.

"We expect completion will be dependent on the individual proficiency of pilots themselves, but we can estimate about five to nine months for them to complete that training," Ryder said during a press briefing.

Earlier this month, Ukrainian pilots arrived in the state of Arizona to train on the fighter jets with Arizona National Guard members specialized in training foreign pilots.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has said that Ukraine will begin to acquire F-16 capabilities no sooner than next spring.

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Pentagon Says US Aware of Thwarted Houthi Missile Strike on Israel

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The United States is aware of an attempted missile strike on Israel by Houthi forces in Yemen, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"We are aware that the Houthis did fire a medium-range ballistic missile — or cruise missile — targeting Israel. The IDF did take it down," Ryder said during a press briefing.

The US will continue to monitor such attempted strikes, Ryder added.

The Houthis have missiles with a range of approximately 2,000 kilometers (X miles), Ryder said, although he declined to clarify whether the recent missile was of a ballistic or cruise variety.

The attempted strike on Israel comes amid a conflict between Israelis and Palestinian Hamas fighters, which has sparked broader tensions in the region.

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Kirby Says Not Aware Of Yemen's Declaration of War Against Israel, US to Defend Interests

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday that he is not aware of Yemen's declaration of war against Israel and warned that the US will defend its security interests in the region.

"Our message to anybody who seeks to escalate and deepen this conflict is, be mindful how seriously we take our national security interests," Kirby told reporters.

The US does not want to see the escalation of the conflict by any actor and any state, he added.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, said earlier in the day that his country declared war against Israel, according to the media reports.

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FBI Director Says Bureau Not Paying X for Content Moderation

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - FBI Director Christopher Wray on Tuesday said that the bureau no longer pays money to moderate content on X (formerly known as Twitter).

"I'm not aware of us paying money to moderate content there [X, formerly known as Twitter] or anywhere else," Wray said during a House Homeland Security Committee hearing, when asked about the FBI's financial involvement in social media content moderation.

Information released as part of the so-called Twitter Files, shared by reporters in coordination with Twitter CEO Elon Musk, revealed the FBI's considerable influence over the company and alleged an organized effort by the US intelligence community to exert control over certain information, including the Hunter Biden laptop story.

The Twitter Files revealed frequent contact between the FBI and Twitter officials, including a high number of requests to take action on purported misinformation.

Wray on Tuesday said the FBI does still communicate with social media companies, but he noted that all these interactions have undergone significant changes.

At the same hearing, Homeland Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said his department's meetings with social media companies do not involve instructing them to remove specific content.

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Freeland Says Unaware of Reports Israel Planning to Resettle Palestinians in Canada

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said on Tuesday she is unaware of reports that Israel has proposed resettling Palestinians in Egypt and Canada.

"I'm unaware of those reports," Freeland said, when asked whether Canada would be open to accepting Palestinian refugees.

Earlier in the day, media reported that an Israeli ministry had drafted a proposal to resettle Gazans in Egypt, Turkey, Qatar and other countries. Canada reportedly made it to the list due to its "lenient" immigration policies.

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US to Conduct Operational Test Launch of Unarmed Minuteman III Ballistic Missile -Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – The United States will conduct a prescheduled operational test launch of an unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile on Wednesday from a base in the US state of California, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

“Tomorrow, a prescheduled operational test launch of a US Air Force Global Strike Command unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile is scheduled from North Vandenberg Space Force Base, California,” Ryder said during a press briefing.

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US to Deploy Additional 300 Troops to Middle East, Not Israel – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – The United States will deploy an additional 300 troops to the Middle East to support the US military forces already in the region, but they will not go to Israel, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

“I can announce the decision to deploy an additional 300 troops to the US Central Command region from home stations in the continental United States,” Ryder said during a press briefing.

“I can confirm they're not going to Israel and that they are intended to support regional deterrence efforts and further bolster US force protection capabilities.”

These additional troops will provide capabilities and explosive ordnance disposal, communications, and other support enablers for forces already in the region, Ryder added.

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State Dept. Says US Ready to Enter Into Strategic Stability Discussions With Russia

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – The United States stands ready to enter into strategic stability discussions with Russia to develop a post-2026 arms control framework, a State Department spokesperson told Sputnik in a statement on Tuesday.

“As National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said publicly, the United States is ready to engage Russia now to manage nuclear risks and develop a post-2026 arms control framework. We are prepared to enter into those discussions,” the statement said.

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White House Says US Supporting Israel to Go After Hamas, Not Funding Any Genocide

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The United States is providing support to Israel to go after the Palestinian Hamas movement and is not funding any sort of genocide against Palestinians, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday. "We're helping them go after those Hamas terrorist, we're not funding any kind of genocide," Kirby said in an interview with CNN.

The United States is sending Israel security assistance amid its war in Gaza and is asking Congress to approve some \$14 billion to provide the Israelis with additional support.

Kirby added that civilian casualties are not a war aim of Israel, they are going after Hamas leadership.

This week, Gaza's Health Ministry said the death toll among Palestinians passed 8,000, mostly women and minors, as a result of Israel's bombardment.

Palestine's Permanent Representative to the Arab League Mohammad Aklouk said earlier in the day that at least 1.4 million Palestinians have moved from the north of the Gaza Strip to the south of the enclave.

On October 7, 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 on both sides.

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US National Archives Identifies 82,000 Pages of Emails Sent by Biden Pseudonyms - Filing

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) identified approximately 82,000 pages of messages associated with three of then-Vice

President Joe Biden's pseudonymous email accounts, according to a filing in a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit.

The plaintiff in the lawsuit, the Southeastern Legal Foundation, sought to compel NARA to produce records related to three pseudonymous email accounts purportedly used by Biden during his time as vice president.

"NARA has completed a search for potentially responsive documents ... NARA has identified approximately 82,000 pages of potentially responsive documents, and it is currently processing those documents and preparing any nonexempt responsive documents for production on a rolling basis," the joint filing said on Monday.

The parties intend to discuss options to narrow the FOIA request to resolve the matter more expeditiously, the filing added.

The US House Oversight Committee has also taken interest in the pseudonymous email accounts allegedly used by Biden to secretly communicate with people including his son, Hunter Biden. The domain for one of the accounts was hosted by the US Defense Information Systems Agency, US media reported earlier this year.

The panel requested unredacted copies of the emails from NARA as well, pointing toward the potential for redactions to cover up people copied on certain messages sent by the account, particularly those pertaining to Ukraine policy, Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said in August.

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FBI Chief Says China, Russia, Iran Becoming 'More aggressive, Capable Than Ever'

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - FBI Director Christopher Wray said on Tuesday that China, Russia, and Iran are becoming "more aggressive and more capable," and it is a priority for the agency to counter this "threat."

"Nations such as the PRC, Russia, and Iran are becoming more aggressive and more capable than ever before," Wray said during a Senate hearing.

Wray argued that these countries aim to subvert essential democratic, economic, and scientific institutions, utilizing an expanding array of strategies.

Defending American institutions and values against these "threats" is a national security imperative and a priority for the FBI, Wray added.

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FBI Director Voices Concern Over Terror Threats Following Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - FBI Director Christopher Wray on Tuesday expressed concerns about the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan and the intentions of Foreign Terrorist

Organizations (FTOs) to inspire attacks in the US.

"The FBI remains concerned about the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and that the intent of FTOs, such as ISIS and al-Qa'ida and their affiliates, is to carry out or inspire large-scale attacks in the United States," Wray said during a House Homeland Security Committee hearing.

Wray also said the use of social media and messaging applications by ISIS to attract recruits remains a cause for concern.

"Like other foreign terrorist groups, ISIS advocates for lone offender attacks in the United States and Western countries via videos and other English language propaganda that have specifically advocated for attacks against civilians, the military, law enforcement and intelligence community personnel," Wray said during the hearing.

Wray added that Al-Qaida continues to harbor the ambition to both execute and incite large-scale attacks. Though this desire persists, ongoing pressure has led to the deterioration of key leadership within the group, he said.

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US Senator Says Border Agents Caught Migrants With Bombs on US Southern Border

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - US Senator John Barrasso said on Tuesday that Border Patrol agents recently caught migrants coming through the US-Mexico border with explosive devices the size of cannon balls.

"We have just returned from our southern border and it is painfully clear that with Joe Biden's open border policy, our country is really at an increased threat for a terrorist attack," Barrasso said during a press conference. "A couple days before we got there alert border agents were able to seize immigrants carrying with them IEDs, explosive devices really tailor made for terrorism. They were the size of cannon balls."

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) did not immediately respond to Sputnik's inquiry on this matter.

According to lawmakers, in fiscal year 2023 alone, 169 migrants on the FBI's terrorism watchlist were apprehended along the US southern border.

Senator Ted Cruz during the press conference stressed that President Joe Biden's supplemental request to Congress on border security would only further facilitate the flow of migrants coming into the US from the southern border.

Biden's \$106 billion supplemental request includes \$6.4 billion for border security.

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Pentagon, US State Dept. Tracking Settler Violence in West Bank Very Carefully - Officials

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told senators on Tuesday that they are very carefully tracking Israeli settler violence in the West Bank and have raised this issue in talks with their Israeli counterparts.

“The [US] President [Joe Biden] himself has been very clear, very direct, and very explicit about our concerns about extreme settler violence and the impact that’s having on the West Bank... We’ve seen that people have been ... forcibly displaced from their communities as well as killed. So, this is something that we are in direct communication and conversation with the Israeli government at the very highest levels, and something we’re tracking very carefully,” Blinken said during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing.

Austin noted that reports about violence in the West Bank are “fairly disturbing” and added that it will work against the Israelis going forward if they do not find a way to control the situation better.

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Blinken Says Palestinian Authority is Best Option to Govern Gaza

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that the Palestinian Authority taking over Gaza’s governance and security would “make the most sense” after the current conflict with Israel ends.

“What would make the most sense would be for an effective and revitalized Palestinian Authority to have governance and ultimately security responsibility for Gaza,” Blinken said at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing.

He said that having Hamas or Israel run Gaza were not options.

If the Palestinian Authority was not a possibility, he suggested that there could be temporary governance and security arrangements led by other countries in the region or international agencies, but ultimately, there would need to be a two-state solution.

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Blinken Says US Has 'Robust' Monitoring System for Gaza Aid

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken insisted on Tuesday that the US has a “robust” monitoring system to prevent assistance via the UN to Gaza from ending up in the hands of Hamas.

“We have a robust monitoring inspection verification system for the assistance that goes to any international organization,” Blinken said at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing.

At the same time, Blinken demurred when he was repeatedly pressed by Senator Bill Hagerty to “guarantee” that no US taxpayer money went toward funding Hamas’ October 7 attack on

Israel.

Hagerty argued that Hamas controlled all foreign aid money for Gaza, either by taxing or diverting it.

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Blinken Says Was Big Mistake to Leave JCPOA, Deal Took Iran's Nuclear Program Off Table

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that it was a big mistake for the United States to leave the Iran nuclear deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“I can simply say that it was a big mistake to walk away from the JCPOA because at least it took one problem off the table, which was Iran's nuclear program,” Blinken told the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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Guterres Deeply Alarmed Over Intensification in Fights Between Israel-Gaza- Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, October 31 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres is deeply concerned over the intensifying fights between Israel-Gaza and over the expansion of the ground operation by the Israel Defense Forces, UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

“I am deeply alarmed by the intensification of the conflict between Israel and Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza. This includes the expansion of ground operations by the Israel Defense Forces accompanied by intense air strikes, and the continued rocket fire towards Israel from Gaza,” Dujarric told a briefing.

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3 People Charged Over Alleged Exports to Companies Linked to Russian Military-Justice Dept

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The Justice Department on Tuesday charged a Brooklyn Resident and two Russian-Canadian nationals with massive sanctions evasion and export control scheme, according to a DOJ release.

"A criminal complaint was unsealed yesterday in Brooklyn charging Nikolay Goltsev, Salimdzhon Nasriddinov and Kristina Puzyreva, with conspiracy and other charges related to a global procurement scheme on behalf of sanctioned Russian entities, including companies

affiliated with the Russian military," said the release.

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Arab-American Support for Biden Drops 42% Since 2020, Falling Amid Israel Conflict - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - Support for US President Joe Biden among Arab Americans has declined by 42% since 2020, with the group's support dropping further in recent weeks amid the Biden administration's response to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, according to an Arab American Institute (AAI) poll released Tuesday.

Arab-American support for Biden fell from 59% in 2020 to 17% now, the poll report said. Less than one-quarter of Arab Americans, 23%, identify as Democrats, down 17% since April, the report said.

The poll marks the first time in AAI's 26 years of polling Arab American voters that a majority of the group did not claim to prefer the Democratic Party, the report added.

"This poll was rather shocking," AAI President James Zogby said during a briefing on the poll results. "The dissatisfaction with President Biden is really quite significant... His numbers are dangerously low, more so than I've ever seen for a Democratic candidate for president."

Two-thirds of Arab Americans have a negative view of Biden, the report said. Slightly over two-thirds, 67%, have a negative view of his response to the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, the report said.

Similarly, 68% of Arab Americans do not believe that the United States should send weapons or other military equipment to Israel, the report said. Sixty-eight percent of Arab Americans also believe that the U.S. should use its influence to urge a ceasefire, the report said.

However, the decline in support for Biden and the Democratic Party may not necessarily translate to a significant increase in support for Republicans, third parties or other alternative presidential candidates.

"The category, as it comes to mean something for voters, is that 'I'm not in this one, I'm not in that one, I'm not voting in their primaries and so here's where I am.' It's a parking lot," Zogby said, in response to a question from Sputnik. "As far as voting for a third party, Arab Americans don't have a history of that."

The poll found that 17.4% of Arab Americans would vote for Biden, 40% for former US President Donald Trump and 25.1% were unsure. Furthermore, 13.7% said they would vote for independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and 3.8% for People's Party candidate Cornel West.

Zogby said that he does not expect Kennedy or West to do "significantly well" with Arab Americans, despite the drop in support for Biden. It is a "likely prospect" that Arab Americans stay home instead of voting.

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US Working With Ukraine on Grain Exports, But No Substitute for Black Sea Deal - Blinken

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that the United States is working with Ukraine to facilitate its grain exports via new routes, but there is no substitute for the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

"We have been working with the Ukrainians and Europeans to find other ways of getting these products out of Ukraine and to world markets, but nothing fully substitutes for the Black Sea," Blinken said during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing.

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Austin Says Helping Ukraine Also Way to Revamp US Defense Industrial Base

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – By helping Ukraine the United States is actually investing in the modernization of its industrial base, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Tuesday.

"This supplemental [request] doesn't just help meet today's urgent challenges. It also invests in our defense industrial base. When we send our friends munitions from our stockpiles, the money to replenish our supplies strengthens our military readiness, and we invest in American industry and American workers," Austin told a Senate Committee on Appropriations hearing.

Some \$50 billion in the new supplemental request for Israel and Ukraine would flow through the US defense industrial base and create jobs in more than 30 states, Austin said.

Earlier in October, the White House sent to Congress a request for an additional \$106 billion. 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.

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FBI Says War in Mideast Has Raised Threat of Attack Against Americans in US

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict has brought the threat of an attack against Americans in the United States to a whole other level, FBI Director Christopher Wray said on Tuesday.

"The reality is that the terrorism threat has been elevated throughout 2023. But the ongoing war in the Middle East has raised the threat of an attack against Americans in the United States to a

whole other level," Wray said during a Senate hearing.

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Blinken Says Aid to Gaza Way to Find Partners in Enclave for Future Without Hamas

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – Helping Gaza with humanitarian assistance is also a way of finding partners in the enclave who have a different vision for the future than the one Hamas offers and means to secure Israel, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

“Humanitarian assistance is also vital to Israel’s security. Providing immediate aid and protection for Palestinian civilians in the conflict is a necessary foundation for finding partners in Gaza who have a different vision for the future than Hamas – and who are willing to help make it real,” Blinken told a Senate Committee on Appropriations hearing.

Over 130 trucks with humanitarian aid have entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt through the Rafah border crossing since October 21, Egyptian newspaper Shorouk reported on Monday, citing Egyptian Red Crescent chief in North Sinai, Raed Abdel Nasser.

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 on both sides.

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Russia Will Win Conflict if US Does Not Provide Ukraine Supplemental Aid - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Tuesday that Russia will succeed if the US does not provide supplemental aid to Ukraine.

"It's hard to put an exact timeline on how long it would take ... but I can guarantee that without our support, Putin will be successful," Austin said at a Senate appropriations committee hearing.

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UNSC Unanimously Votes to Extend UN Somalia Mission for One Year

UNITED NATIONS, October 31 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution to extend the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until the end of October 2024, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

The resolution is asking UNSOM to work in close cooperation with the Somali government and the African Union.

Speaking at the UNSC meeting, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Anna Evstigneeva said that work should be intensified to implement last year's resolution on UNSOM, including recommendations for the strategic review of its activities and the eventual handover from UNSOM to the United Nations country team.

The negotiations on the new resolution appear to have been difficult. The United Kingdom, the penholder of the document, revised the original draft text several times following objections from Russia and China.

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UPDATE Canada Sanctions 39 Individuals, 22 Entities Over Support for Myanmar Military

(adds details in paras 3-5)

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – Canada has imposed sanctions on 39 individuals and 22 entities over their support for the Myanmar military government, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Tuesday.

“The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada, in coordination with the United Kingdom and the United States, is imposing sanctions against 39 individuals and 22 entities under the Special Economic Measures (Burma) Regulations in response to the February 1, 2021, military coup d’état that saw Myanmar’s democratically elected government overthrown by a military regime,” GAC said in a statement.

Today’s designations affected individuals and entities who have performed “key functions” for the military government by supplying them with weapons, natural resources, and revenues, GAC said. Those responsible for violating international humanitarian law and human rights were also targeted.

The ministry said the sanctions were part of a broader coordinated and targeted effort to exert pressure on the military junta while ensuring it does not affect the civilian population. GAC also reiterated its condemnation of the coup d’état on the democratically elected government.

“Canada remains committed to ending impunity and to holding the Myanmar regime accountable for serious violations of international law,” GAC continued.

In total, Canada has sanctioned 95 individuals and 63 entities over their support for the Myanmar military.

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Blinken Says Ceasefire in Gaza Would Give Hamas Opportunity to Repeat What It Did

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State said on Tuesday that a ceasefire in Gaza would give Hamas an opportunity to potentially repeat its attacks on Israel.

"When it comes to a ceasefire, in this moment, you are exactly right, that would simply consolidate what Hamas has been able to do and allow it to remain where it is, and potentially repeat what it did another day. That is not tolerable," Blinken said at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing.

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Blinken Says US Anticipates 'Spillages' of Humanitarian Aid Delivered to Gaza

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that Washington is confident that humanitarian aid delivered to Gaza will somehow end up in the hands of Hamas, but nevertheless believes that the overwhelming majority of assistance will be getting to people in need.

"Can I promise you in this committee that there will be 100% delivery to the designated recipients? No, there will inevitably be some spillage. We haven't seen it to date, but I think we have to anticipate that, But the overwhelming majority of assistance thus far is getting to people who need it, and we need more," Blinken said during a Senate hearing.

To date, neither the United Nations nor Israel has seen any evidence of the humanitarian assistance being diverted to Hamas or any other actors in the region, Blinken added.

Over 130 trucks with humanitarian aid have entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt through the Rafah border crossing since October 21, Egyptian newspaper Shorouk reported on Monday, citing Egyptian Red Crescent chief in North Sinai, Raed Abdel Nasser.

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 on both sides.

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US House Speaker Johnson Says Wants to Pay for Israel Aid With IRS Funds

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Tuesday that he intends to pay for more than \$14 billion in emergency aid for Israel using funds set aside for the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS), after splitting a request for Israel aid from a package that would also aid Ukraine.

"My intention and my desire in the first draft of this bill is to take some of the money that has been set aside for building and bulking up the IRS right now — they have about \$67 billion in that fund — and we'll try to take the \$14.5 [billion] necessary for this immediate and urgent need," Johnson said in an interview.

House Republicans unveiled an emergency supplemental appropriations bill that would rescind \$14.3 billion in funding from the IRS to offset the spending. The legislation includes \$4 billion for Iron Dome and David's Sling defense system procurements, as well as \$1.2 billion to help develop the Iron Beam defense system.

The House Republican bill departs from a \$106 billion emergency supplemental funding request from the Biden administration earlier this month, which would provide aid for both Israel and Ukraine. The standalone bill for Israel comes amid divided support for further Ukraine aid among House Republicans.

However, Johnson said that the House Republican Conference is "100% united" on aid for Israel. Johnson said that he reached out to Congressman Thomas Massie personally to discuss the issue, after the lawmaker expressed opposition to the Israel aid bill.

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US Bans Certain Transactions With Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise From December 15

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – The US Treasury will prohibit certain financial transactions with Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise from December 15 onward, it announced in a release on Tuesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)

published a new directive that prohibits certain financial services by US persons to or for the benefit of Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE). This sanctions action against MOGE seeks to degrade the regime's ability to purchase weapons to carry out atrocities against the people of Burma," the release stated.

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FBI Chief Says No Information to Indicate Hamas Presents Threat to US Mainland

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The United States has no information to indicate that Hamas intends or possesses the capability to conduct operations within the country, but cannot rule out such a possibility, FBI Director Christopher Wray said on Tuesday.

"As of right now, we have no information to indicate that HAMAS has the intent or capability to conduct operations inside the US, though we cannot, and do not, discount that possibility, but we are especially concerned about the possibility of HAMAS supporters engaging in violence on the group's behalf," Wray said in prepared testimony to Congress.

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Austin Says Israel, Ukraine 'Battles' Will Define Global Security for Years to Come

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Tuesday that the ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine will define global security for years ahead.

"Today's battles against aggression and terrorism will define global security for years to come," Austin said in prepared testimony to Congress.

Austin pointed out that the United States has to lead efforts to ensure stability and security around the world.

"That is why we have submitted an urgent supplemental budget request to help fund America's national security needs, stand by our partners, and invest in our defense industrial base," he said.

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.

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BHP Group to Invest \$4.9Bln in Canada's Saskatchewan Jansen Potash Project – Statement

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) - The world's leading mining company, BHP Group, said on Tuesday that it has approved a \$4.9 billion investment for the second stage of the Jansen potash project in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan.

The mining company had previously approved another two rounds of investments in Saskatchewan's Jansen potash project worth \$10.2 billion in total.

"BHP has approved an investment of US\$4.9 billion (C\$6.4 billion) for stage two of the Jansen potash project (Jansen Stage 2) in Saskatchewan, Canada," the company said in a statement.

The new investment will place Jansen as one of the biggest potash mines worldwide and double its production capacity to nearly 8.5 million tonnes per annum, the statement said.

The construction of Stage 1 of the project is 32% complete, with first production expected in late 2026. Stage 2 will be built over the next six years and is scheduled to deliver first production in the financial year 2029.

BHP Group is an Australian mining multinational founded in the 1880s. The company operates in several countries including Canada, Brazil, Chile and Algeria.

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Blinken Says 'Humanitarian Pauses' Must Be Considered in Gaza - Testimony to Congress

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that “humanitarian pauses” must be considered amid the ongoing hostilities in Gaza after Israel began its ground military operation in the Palestinian enclave.

“Food, water, medicine, and other essential humanitarian assistance for civilians must be able to flow into Gaza. Civilians must be able to stay out of harm’s way – a task made even more difficult as Hamas uses civilians as human shields. And humanitarian pauses must be considered,” Blinken said in prepared testimony to Congress.

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Jen Psaki Announces Release of Book About Her Years at State, White House

WASHINGTON, October 31 (Sputnik) – Former White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Tuesday she will publish a memoir about her work under Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden next year.

"I wrote a book! It's called 'Say More' and it'll be out on May 7 next year," Psaki said on MSNBC.

The book is full of "behind-the-scene" stories from the campaign trail, the White House and the State Department, she stated.

The memoir, titled "Say More: Lessons from Work, the White House, and the World," will reflect on Psaki's work under Presidents Obama and Biden.

She promised that some of the stories will be funny, some are serious, and some are "even full of conflict" about hard decisions made in recent history.

Following her departure from the White House in May 2022, Psaki joined MSNBC as the anchor of her talk-show, "Inside With Jen Psaki."