

3/5/24 Tuesday

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

Election Year Pandering: VP Harris Calls for Temporary Ceasefire, Forgoes the Word 'Temporary'

Harris made her announcement following the Flour Massacre in Gaza. On Thursday, 118 civilians were reportedly killed when the Israeli army fired into a crowd of hungry and starving Palestinians. It was also reported that during the massacre, Israeli tanks ran over the bodies of dead and injured Palestinian people.

On Sunday, Vice President Kamala Harris called for a six-week cease-fire during a speech in Selma, Alabama. The call appears to be no different from the deal that US President Joe Biden has been pushing for between Israel and Hamas that would allow for a temporary cease-fire and the release of hostages. It has been reported that he hopes for such a deal to take hold on March 10.

"People in [Gaza](#) are starving. The conditions are inhumane, and our common humanity compels us to act. As President Joe Biden said on Friday, the United States has committed to urgently get more lifesaving assistance to innocent Palestinians in need," the vice president said during a speech in the US state of Alabama.

"And given the immense scale of suffering in Gaza, there must be an immediate ceasefire - for at least the next six weeks, which is what is currently on the table. This will get the hostages out and get a significant amount of aid, and the Israeli government must do more to significantly increase the flow of aid," Harris said, who also reiterated during her speech that the US supports Israel's right to "defend" itself.

Misty Winston, a political activist, organizer and co-host of the Misty Winston Show and Free Assange Vigils, spoke to [Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) on Tuesday about Harris' speech. Fault Lines' hosts and their guest pointed out that Harris chose to omit the word "pause" or "temporary" before announcing her call for a ceasefire.

"This clip makes me want to slam my head against a wall. The absolute audacity of this woman to get up there and pretend like she cares about the people of Palestine is just phenomenal," Winston said of Harris. "The pandering, the absolute pandering and the, it's just the opportunism of doing that, and of using that moment in time to - it's just so gross. All of it is so gross," said Winston, noting that the speech took place in Selma, Alabama, which was celebrating its 59th anniversary of the Bloody Sunday attacks on civil rights marchers.

"We're giving them money. We are the ones giving them the weapons to [blow up Palestinian children](#). How about we just stop doing that? How about we just stop funding and arming the genocide? We could just do that. Then we don't have to send aid. We don't have to airdrop aid, which is mind blowing to me that we have to airdrop aid. Israel is nothing without us. We should be able to run some trucks in there and be like, 'hey, we're we're doing some aid, deal with it.'"

Sputnik's Melik Abdul suggested that the Biden administration "knows what they're doing" as the mainstream media assumes Harris has gone rogue, but is instead, simply rearticulating the same stance the administration has had for weeks.

"People hear what they want to hear, people want to hear ceasefire," Winston explained. "So when she says the word ceasefire, not meaning a ceasefire, the people are like, 'oh, she said ceasefire.' People have been calling for politicians to say the word."

"Bernie Sanders, took forever to say ceasefire. I mean, people want to hear those words coming from elected officials. And so when she says it and then very quietly, as the applause is drowning her out a little bit, says for 'the next six weeks' very softly. People hear ceasefire, and that's the buzz word, that's what they want to hear, and so they cheer for that thinking, 'oh, she said ceasefire,' when that's not really what she means," Winston explained.

"It's election year pandering. They know that this is crushing them in the polls. They needed something to kind of rehabilitate that image desperately," she added.

"So they use Kamala Harris to trot out there and pretend like they support a ceasefire when they absolutely do not. And as Melik just said, the media is going to spin this and run cover for them the whole way through it. And people, unfortunately, the population of the United States will, generally speaking, fall for this, especially those who are already Democratic leaning and are looking for reasons to continue to support the Democratic Party."

The Biden administration's unfaltering support for Israel has been aggressively criticized by key constituents including [voters](#) who are young, Black and/or Arab and has divided the Democratic Party. During Michigan's primary last week, more than 100,000 people voted "uncommitted" instead of for Biden. And according to a recent [poll](#), 60% of Americans disapprove of Biden's handling of the conflict in the Gaza Strip, while a majority think Israel has gone too far in their fight to eliminate Hamas.

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

One Classified Doc Hides the Other -Cartoon

The president hit out against the release of special counsel Robert Hur's 388-page report in early February. The damning report did not seek charges, but painted an embarrassing image of the US president as a "well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory".

A recent report indicates that Hunter Biden, the son of US President Joe Biden, was the person who had recommended to the then-vice president two of his staffers who he blames for his mishandling of [classified materials](#) when he left the White House in January of 2017.

"I take responsibility for not having seen exactly what my staff was doing," the [president](#) said when asked if he took responsibility for being careless with classified materials.

According to the [report](#), documents have confirmed that the staffers Biden referenced may include Kathy S. Chung, who had worked with Hunter Biden at the Department of Commerce handling e-commerce policy issues sometime in the late 1990's or early 2000's during President Bill Clinton's presidency. And the other staffer could be Anne Marie Muldoon, nee Person, who worked for him at Rosemont Seneca Partners.

Hunter reportedly got Chung her position in the White House in 2012, a year before he traveled with the vice president on Air Force Two to Beijing to “seal a lucrative investment deal with the Chinese” the report claims. In an email to Chung he described the job as being a “primary gatekeeper for the VP [and the] conduit everyone goes through to get to [Joe Biden]”. Then in mid-2014 he offered a job to Muldoon as Chung’s assistant.

Chung stayed on as an assistant to the former vice president at the Penn Biden Center in DC, where Biden’s classified documents were then discovered by his lawyers. According to Hur, she didn’t notice any classified papers among the records that she had packed and unpacked before she filed them away in cabinets and closets in Biden’s office. Though, she and Muldoon reportedly received an email on January 3, 2017 warning them to not pack any classified documents.

According to a separate [report](#), Chung told associates that she was reportedly “distressed” that she may “inadvertently been involved in moving or storing classified material”.

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

Canada Warns of Wildfire Season That Could Break Record Set Last Year

The fires that raged through Canada last year never stopped, they simply moved underground. The “zombie fires” as they are being called in the media, persist during the winter and are fed by porous peat and sphagnum moss ground cover.

Last year, [Canadian wildfires](#) burned about 48 million acres of forest—roughly equivalent to the size of Finland. That was a 170% increase over the previous year, according to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Center. But Canada’s emergency preparedness minister is warning that this year’s wildfire could be even worse than the record-breaking season of last year, a recent [report](#) reveals.

The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Center found more than 150 “zombie fires” have been burning underground during this past winter—93 fires in British Columbia and 55 in Alberta. A majority of these fires have been labeled as [“under control”](#) by Canadian authorities, but experts fear that could change as early as this spring, as wind will soon pick up.

“We’ve seen this before but never at this scale,” said Michael Flannigan, a wildfire expert and professor at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia. “I’ve been watching fire in Canada and abroad since the late ’70s. I’ve never seen anything like this.”

“The perimeters are thousands and thousands of kilometers long. [Firefighters] haven’t gone and put all these hot spots out,” Flannigan said. “These fires can grow.”

Last year’s wildfire season shattered records for the amount of Canadian forests that burned and created plumes of smoke that darkened skies in the Midwest and East Coast during the summer. The fires’ smoke, especially fires that burned in Quebec, reached major cities in the East Coast and wreaked havoc on the [air quality](#) there.

The risk of wildfires across the world have increased due to human-induced climate change. This shift in weather patterns and temperatures creates an environment in Canada that is hot, dry and filled with wind gusts—and is therefore the “perfect storm” for creating wildfires. The

lack of snow and drought in Western Canada is also propelling fears that this year's fire season will outgrow last year's.

"Even on the -40, -42 Celsius days, we were still seeing smoke," said Sonja E.R. Leverkus, the senior fire lead at a private wildfire fighting [service](#) in northeastern British Columbia. "So much that as you drove you'd be smelling the smoke and coughing in your truck."

And both provinces have already seen new fires burning this year alone. Alberta was prompted to start its wildfire season in late February as a result.

[Harjit Sajjan](#), Canada's emergency preparedness minister, reassured that Canada was better prepared to fight fire this year and evacuate communities, while federal money has provided training for an additional 600 firefighters across the country. But Sajjan cautions that reports show this year's wildfire season could still be worst than last.

One positive in the face of such dismal news: some of the "zombie fires" burning in British Columbia and Alberta may not pose an increased risk of triggering wildfires in the spring because the vegetation there has already been burned from last year's fires.

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

'Israel is Destroying Itself': How Western Media Helps in the Slaughter of Palestinians

On December 28, 2023, the "paper of record" in the United States, The New York Times, published a piece that described acts of alleged sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas during the October 7 attack. Since publication, independent media outlets have revealed significant issues with the piece.

The New York Times and other Western media outlets paved the way for Israel's slaughter, Seyed Mohammad Marandi, an Iranian-American academic and political analyst, [told Sputnik's The Critical Hour](#) on Thursday.

"When The New York Times published that dishonest piece about rape on October the 7th, some Israeli [media] were rejecting those claims, [but] the Western media would not accept any of this. They closed their eyes and simply repeated the accusations in order to help the Israelis justify genocide and they continue to do so today," he said.

The Times article's co-author was later revealed as a former Israeli Defense Force officer who had no prior reporting experience and had liked posts that called Gazans "human animals" and advocated turning the Gaza Strip "into a slaughterhouse."

The family of one of the victims featured heavily in the article later said the newspaper misled them, and the victim's brother-in-law and sisters denied there was evidence that their family member was raped.

The Times has since said it is reviewing the author's social media accounts, but has not retracted the article.

"In other words, what the New York Times and others did was that they prepared the ground so that Israelis could slaughter Palestinians, and no one in the West would complain," he continued.

Marandi noted that anyone who is denying that “Israelis are intentionally massacring Palestinians” has been “closing their eyes to reality,” especially in the wake of videos released on Thursday that appear to show IDF forces firing on Palestinians gathering food from aid trucks.

“It’s quite clear that the Israelis use the trucks as bait and when starving people gather to find food for their starving children, the Israelis open fire.” More than 100 people were killed and more than 750 injured in the attack, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

But it is the mainstream media’s portrayal and non-coverage of these events that brainwash the masses, Marandi said.

“That’s exactly why the United States is not a democracy, why it’s never been a democracy. People are not allowed to have information,” he argued. “If people are being managed, if they’re being fed information that’s divorced from reality and then they make decisions based upon that information, that’s not democratic. That’s a brainwashed society that will do as it’s told.”

Despite the propaganda, the images coming out of Gaza are so horrific that even some of Israel’s most adamant supporters are turning against the US policy of unconditional support.

“Two-thirds of Americans [oppose] the current policy, according to one poll, the majority of even white evangelicals and the majority of American Jews are [in favor of a permanent ceasefire],” Marandi explained, referring to [a recent](#) Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) poll.

“The irony is that while the Israeli regime and its allies in Washington are the ones who are preventing a ceasefire from taking place, these are the ones who are going to lose the most by continuing the war,” Marandi argued.

“They can kill more Palestinians and they want to kill more Palestinians, but they are destroying their image. They are destroying their legitimacy in the eyes of those who thought they were legitimate previously across the world. So in my opinion, Israel is destroying itself.”

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

Scott Ritter: ‘No Reason’ to Doubt US, West Secretly Placing Soldiers in Foreign Conflicts

Speaking at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Turkiye on Friday, Russian Foreign Minister said that military officers from France, the UK and the US are operating in Ukraine. The comments came days after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz claimed UK and French troops are operating long-range missiles in Ukraine.

The United States has secretly placed soldiers in foreign conflicts before and there is no reason to believe they are not now, former UN weapons inspector and author Scott Ritter told [Sputnik’s The Critical Hour](#) on Thursday.

“That is something – for instance– we used to do extensively during the Vietnam War era,” Ritter explained. “A lot of the Air America pilots flew combat missions over Laos, where American military personnel was forbidden by Congress from operating, were American Air Force pilots who were... called into their commander’s office to be discharged from the Air Force, and then

they would go into the next office where a CIA official would be... and they'd go fly their missions."

"So we've done that in the past, and there's no reason for me to believe that we don't continue to do that to this day in certain parts of the world," he said, clarifying that he doesn't know if Ukraine is included in that, but we do know that it provides "significant logistical support" to the Kiev regime.

Actual active-duty officers would "be difficult to see," said Ritter, citing the legal and political constraints, but adds that contractors would be more plausible. On Friday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov alleged that there are US, UK and French troops, not just mercenaries, operating in Ukraine.

Ritter, speaking the day before Lavrov's comments noted that "there's reason to believe during the [Battle of Mariupol](#), there were active-duty French personnel, some who died when being evacuated... others who were successfully evacuated at the behest of the French President [Emmanuel Macron] who begged [the] Ukrainians to get them out."

Ritter also mentioned a "recent incident" where "[several dozen French nationals](#)" with "prior or even current French military status" were killed. Ritter did not specify which incident he was referring to but in late January, Russia claimed that 60 foreign soldiers, largely French mercenaries, had been killed during an airstrike in Kharkov. The French government denied the accusations but later admitted French citizens were among the dead and claimed they were humanitarian aid workers without providing further details.

"So, we do have instances where Westerners are definitely heavily involved in the support of the Ukrainian military," Ritter concluded.

At least in the case of the United States, Presidents are given legal cover for these actions through presidential findings which the president presents to the "small number of" lawmakers who "manage oversight committees" and says "the president is going to operate in violation of these laws, but he's notifying Congress [about it]."

Noting that in recent years the presidents have signed findings after being caught and faced no consequences, Ritter said this is a long-standing issue with the Executive Branch in the US. "No president has been held to account for things of this nature... Every [recent] president has signed multiple findings to excuse unconstitutional behavior [with] the employment of American military power."

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

Sanctions Debacle Left 'Dysfunctional, Fragmented' ECOWAS With 'Egg on Its Face'

Last summer, The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) threatened military action against Niger after that country's Western-supported leader was thrown out of office by the country's military leadership. It later backtracked from those threats, instituting sanctions instead.

In late January, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso announced they plan to leave ECOWAS “without delay.” Days later, ECOWAS announced the end of travel, commercial and economic sanctions on Niger and urged the three countries to reconsider their decision.

The debacle has left ECOWAS with egg on its face, Koffi Kouakou, an analyst and senior research fellow at the Center for Africa and China Studies at the University of Johannesburg, [told Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) on Friday.

“[It’s] too late [for Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali to rejoin ECOWAS] because, in fact, [leaving] is probably the best gift any African country has ever had, to get out [from under] the yoke of neocolonialism by proxy.”

ECOWAS officials have insisted that no members can leave without a year's notice, however, the three countries argue that the sanctions placed on Niger were illegal and enable them to leave immediately.

“ECOWAS now has egg on its face. It’s probably one of the most dysfunctional and fragmented regional bodies we have,” Kouakou explained. “It’s clear they’re not responding to the needs of the people but to the needs of a very small [number of] oligarchs, the elite who are the paymasters of Europeans and the West in general.”

Kouakou explained that the sanctions backfired on the ECOWAS countries who are now having significant economic issues on their own, pointing to inflation issues in Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire, Benin and Senegal as examples.

“The president of Nigeria, who’s heading ECOWAS, has been literally begging the three countries to come back. I can tell you, I can put my hands to God, they’re not going to come back because this is their best ticket to be economically and monetarily and even politically sovereign,” Kouakou predicted.

Kouakou argued that Africa is poised to be “the centerpiece” of geopolitics and geoeconomics in the coming years, due in large part because of its vast wealth of natural resources.

“There’s something that’s also developing, that’s called resource nationalism, which means many of the people, the leaders in Africa are thinking, ‘wait a minute, our resources must first benefit us, or at least benefit us before it goes somewhere else.’ And this is a movement that’s now growing more, making people aware that Africa, geo-economically, is very important,” he argued, while also pointing to [Egypt and Ethiopia joining BRICS](#) as evidence for Africa’s growing geopolitical importance.

“So that’s going to keep growing, and Africa is at the heart of it and the old colonial powers are now very worried,” Kouakou argued, adding later that “Africa is not a poor continent, it was made poor. And that’s where they now need to organize themselves to be able to face those challenges coming from outside. I think that’s going to be the challenge of the century for Africa.”

Show host Jamarl Thomas asked if he thinks Africa will be able to meet those challenges. “I think we have a chance,” Kouakou replied. “If we’re seriously supported by Russia and China... to really make sure we can get rid of all these potential attacks.”

Noting that a large cache of arms for a potential coup against Niger President Abdourahamane Tchiani was just found in Niger, Kouakou argued that Western powers in Africa have not given up. “You can see that they’re still there, they’re not giving up, they’re going to try to do what they did in the ‘60s killing ... all these African leaders [like former Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo] Patrice Lumumba,” he recalled. “But we think we’ve got a shot this time.

We need to get together, and I think the Sahelian alliance states [of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso] are at an excellent [starting] point to succeed.”

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

Ukraine is ‘Major Defeat’ for West Who Has Been ‘Dominating Planet Earth’

On Friday, French PM Emmanuel Macron stood by his earlier comments that NATO troops may be deployed to Ukraine, saying he wanted to maintain a “strategic ambiguity” on the situation. Meanwhile, other European leaders issued emphatic statements ruling out the possibility. The conflict in Ukraine represents a major defeat for powers who have gotten used to “dominating planet Earth for hundreds of years” and are going to have to “get accustomed to a bitter new reality,” Dr. Gerald Horne, a professor of History at the University of Houston told Sputnik’s [The Critical Hour on Friday](#).

The topic of discussion was French PM Emmanuel Macron’s comments that he would not rule out sending NATO troops into Ukraine to fight Russia, which led to several of Macron’s allies, including UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz ruling out the possibility.

Russian President Vladimir Putin in turn warned against the escalations, saying that it could lead to nuclear war. “Everything that they are thinking up now, that they are scaring the world with, it all really poses the threat of a conflict involving nuclear weapons, and therefore, the destruction of civilization. Don’t they understand this?” Putin asked during his annual state-of-the-nation speech.

“[Western politicians] have already forgotten what war is,” Putin said, adding later that they apparently “Think that these are just some cartoons.”

Horne explained that NATO’s position is “the worst of both worlds,” because “it is enmeshed in a war it cannot win, but it can’t afford to lose. And when you are in such a corner, inevitably, it leads to the kinds of intemperate remarks of Mr. Macron, it leads to Rishi Sunak of London dispatching the flower of British youth to an uncertain fate in Ukraine,” he said, referring to comments by Scholz that there are already UK personnel in Ukraine operating Storm Shadow missile launches.

“I think taxpayers and US citizens should ask themselves how all these think tanks and bureaucrats at the State Department and Pentagon... manage this kind of potential quagmire that NATO and the United States are now enmeshed in?”

The international situation is not what the White House bargained for, Horne said, but “rather than make a sober assessment and trying to make the best out of this rather daunting situation, they’re floating ideas about nuclear conflict, they’re floating ideas about escalation in Ukraine, they’re floating rather harebrained ideas concerning Russia, supposedly putting weapons in outer space.”

“We see that this is a major defeat that has been inflicted upon the powers that have been dominating planet Earth for hundreds of years, and now are going to have to get accustomed to a bitter new reality,” Horne said.

Horne also discussed the ongoing and expanding conflict in the Middle East, the Indonesian election and US Air Force service member [Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation protest](#) against the war in Gaza.

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

Ray McGovern: 'Sheer Incompetence and Ignorance' Led to Plan to Attack Crimean Bridge

On Friday, RT and the Rossiya Segodnya media group (Sputnik's parent company) Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan published leaked audio of a conversation involving four German senior military officers, including the head of the German Air Force, General Ingo Gerhartz.

The audio included operational and targeting details of Taurus missiles even though in public, sending Taurus missiles to Ukraine remains a matter of debate. Significantly, the four officers discussed hitting the Crimean bridge and how to maintain plausible deniability for their involvement in such operations.

Ray McGovern, a peace activist and former CIA analyst with over 27 years of experience, [told Sputnik's The Critical Hour](#) that only "sheer incompetence and ignorance" would lead NATO to consider such plans.

McGovern said that the leaked German conversation, which has since [been reportedly confirmed as authentic](#) by German officials, reflected comments that former CIA Director and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates made during an interview with Western media.

"If you want to give the Russians pause, if you want to interrupt that sense of momentum that they have, why not be able to do things like drop the Kerch Strait Bridge? That would have a big impact on the Russians, I think, psychologically as well as militarily," Gates said during the interview.

"Here's this wise man, Bobby Gates, saying 'Oh let's get into World War Three,'" McGovern said. "I mean, if he is speaking for an influential element not only in the White House but also the German Army, my God."

"It's just sheer incompetence and ignorance," McGovern continued later. "He reads the intelligence. Previous presidents and previous CIA directors are given special treatment, they can read the latest and most sensitive intelligence. ... The intelligence has been so bad that Bobby Gates could be led to believe this would teach the Russians a lesson."

After noting that Gates wrote in his autobiography that "it has never been on top of [Gates'] job jar to please the Russians," McGovern warned that "it may not be on top of the jar of people to make Putin or the Russians happy, but my God, they have to recognize that they don't want to alienate the Russians or make the Russians think that [the West is] so unpredictable that the Russians may have to use this advantage that they have now in strategic weaponry."

Co-host Wilmer Leon asked about comments from US Senator and vice chair of the Intelligence Committee Marco Rubio (R-FL) that Ukraine needs to end in a negotiated settlement. McGovern said he doubted Rubio's intentions but said the comments were still significant.

“He’s the same guy that voted vociferously to [give \[\\$60 billion\] more to Ukraine](#), and of course \$14 billion to Israel, X billion to Taiwan and whoever else. So I don’t know. A lot of this is rhetoric now, but it is significant that the rhetoric itself is changing,” McGovern explained. “If they don’t get a negotiated settlement or something they [can] depict as the same, it’s going to be just a disastrous loss.”

But anytime a world nuclear power is cornered, it can be extremely dangerous, McGovern warned.

“As John Kennedy said in that wonderful American University speech ‘Never give another nuclear power a choice between a humiliating retreat and using nuclear weapons’... Joe Biden is faced with humiliating retreat, he’s got lots at stake here,” McGovern warned. “If I were Putin, I would have my focus on full alert because one of these acolytes [might] say ‘hey, Mr. Biden... we did the cluster ammo, we did the depleted uranium, who’s going to complain if we do just a mini-nuke?’ So that’s the danger here.”

Asked if waning support for Ukraine among the American public could pull the world back from the brink, McGovern said it depends on the American people.

“The question is whether enough Americans will go to their representatives and say ‘no more money to Ukraine, it’s a fool’s errand.’ Because Mike Johnson, the Speaker of the House, is under incredibly big pressure to approve that,” McGovern advised.

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

NASA Shutting Down \$2 Billion Space Refueling Project

NASA announced on Friday that it will shut down its \$2 billion On-Orbit Servicing, Assembly, and Manufacturing 1 (OSAM-1) program after a year-long “in-depth, independent review.”

“Following Congressional notification processes, [OSAM-1] project management plans to complete an orderly shutdown, including the disposition of sensitive hardware, pursuing potential partnerships or alternative hardware uses, and licensing of applicable technological developments,” the NASA [announcement](#) reads.

The OSAM-1 program was started in 2015 at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland in collaboration with contractor Maxar, who was largely blamed by NASA for the skyrocketing costs and missed deadlines.

In October, the NASA Inspector General Report placed the blame for the costs and delays on “poor contractor performance and continued technical challenges.”

“NASA and Maxar officials acknowledged that Maxar underestimated the scope and complexity of the work, lacked full understanding of NASA technical requirements, and were deficient in necessary expertise,” the Inspector General’s report reads.

The report added that it lacked ways to incentivize Maxar to increase its performance because the project stopped being profitable for the company, “In our discussions with Maxar officials, they acknowledged that they were no longer profiting from their work on OSAM-1.”

The report noted that the program would have exceeded its \$2 billion price tag and missed its December 2026 launch date. The program was focused on resupplying the Landsat 7 Orbiter,

which launched in 1999, with the eventual goal of using methods and technologies developed to help other “satellite operators new ways to manage their aging fleets.”

It also would have used the Space Infrastructure Dexterous Robot (SPIDER) to assemble components in space, including a communications antenna and a 32-foot carbon composite beam, though that second function was already cut from the project. Delayed development on the SPIDER was cited as a major factor in the project falling behind schedule. It was originally hoped that the project would launch in 2020.

Funding was not an issue for the program, the US Congress regularly provided more funding for the program than was requested. More than \$1.48 billion was allocated to the project between 2016 and 2023 and NASA’s request for 2024 was included in both the House and Senate versions of the pending spending bills.

The project was originally estimated to cost between \$626 million and \$753 million.

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

New Documents Reportedly Link CIA Veteran to 2004 Haiti Coup

In 2002 a brazen jailbreak involving a bulldozer freed 155 prisoners, including notorious gang leader Amiot “Cubain” Metayer, in Gonaive, Haiti. The event weakened the national government and led to a violent military coup two years later, ousting the democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

An investigation by independent outlet [The Gray Zone](#) has revealed previously classified documents that were released as part of a Freedom of Information Act request, unintentionally, the outlet suspects.

The documents appear to show that a CIA veteran met with coup plotters and disloyal police officers the day before the Gonaive jailbreak. Janice L. Elmore was officially working as a State Department “political officer” at the Embassy in Port-au-Prince.

According to the documents, the Dominican ambassador said that Aristide, then president, saw an embassy vehicle in Gonaive, where embassy officials were told not to travel. Aristide reportedly told the Dominican ambassador that Elmore was meeting with police officers close to Dany Toussaint, who was later involved in the coup. The Dominican ambassador reportedly also said that Elmore had contacts with other “questionable individuals” including Hugues Paris, who was described as “a Haitian with ties to coup plotters here,” by the document. He has also been linked to funding the FLRN death squad, according to The Gray Zone.

The Dominican ambassador noted that “someone from the embassy” called Toussaint and warned him that Aristide planned to have him arrested. The document’s author, then-US Ambassador Brian Dean Curran, notes that “The department has designated me as the only person who should talk to Toussaint – and only with specific instructions from Washington,” seeming to imply that Elmore may have been the one who contacted Toussaint. “Janice [Elmore] has mentioned incidental contact with Toussaint at soccer matches, but nothing further,” it notes.

The cable also seems less concerned about whether Elmore was an agent, and more if her cover had been blown. It mentions concerns that the Haitian government could intercept cell phone calls and notes that a source indicated that it could. It notes that the government may be targeting her as “a rich source of information” and not because “she was comprised,” presumably a typo for “compromised.”

Aristide, who was captured and sent to live in exile in 2004, said that the US kidnapped him and accused Washington of being behind it. Additionally, in 2022, the French Ambassador admitted that France and the US were behind the coup that removed Aristide, pointing to the Haitian President’s repeated demands that France return the “reparations” Haiti was forced to pay for its independence.

US officials have maintained that they had no involvement in the coup and only entered the country after to restore order.

In 1825, 21 years after Haiti gained its independence, a flotilla of French warships arrived off the coast of Haiti, demanding compensation for the property – including slaves and slave plantations – that France lost during the 1791 revolution. It took more than 122 years for Haiti to pay its enforced debt, which by that time had been transferred to The National City Bank of New York, a precursor to the modern financial services giant Citigroup.

It was Aristide’s second time being removed from power. In 1990, the then-37-year-old was elected in a landslide, becoming Haiti’s first democratically elected President. But seven months later, he was removed from the Presidential office by US-trained Haiti forces. Following a years-long bloody military junta that killed thousands, including the 1994 Robateau massacre, Washington reinstated Aristide, who enjoyed support both abroad and at home. His hand-picked successor easily won the election in 1996 but after he became less popular, Aristide was elected again in 2001, securing more than 91% of the vote.

Then-US President George W Bush cut off US aid and worked to cut off international aid to the country, citing alleged irregularities in the election, including a boycott by the opposition. However, polls from the time showed that Aristide received mass support from the Haitian population.

The Gray Zone also laid out the evidence that Elmore was a CIA veteran using previously released reports. She was fingered as a CIA agent in a 1997 US Department of Justice probe into former US President Ronald Reagan’s administration operation to fund contras in Nicaragua using cocaine sales.

In that probe, a CIA operative, Celerino Castillo, claimed that he had evidence that the CIA trafficked cocaine to fund the contras and said that Elmore was his CIA handler while he operated in El Salvador. Elmore claimed during that probe that she merely worked at the embassy as a narcotics coordinator. She was also called to testify in front of the House Intelligence Committee investigation into the CIA’s involvement in drug trafficking but that testimony has never been released to the public.

The independent outlet also obtained a 2001 State Department email, showing that Elmore was CC:d on sensitive conversations between the State Department and Inter-American Bank Officials who sought to counter a Haitian government press release over the blocking and delaying of financial aid.

In 2010, then US President Barack Obama tapped former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W Bush, one of whom sent US troops to Haiti and the other who cut off aid, to run the US Aid efforts following the devastating earthquake that shook the country.

On Sunday, several armed gangs attacked the National and Kwadèbouke prisons in Port-Au-Prince, noting that prison guards and prisoners had been killed in the attack.

“The National Police are taking all measures to find the escaped prisoners and arrest those responsible for these criminal acts as well as all their accomplices so that public order can be restored,” The Communication Ministry of Haiti wrote on Twitter.

According to US media, hundreds of inmates escaped, with some reports from the ground saying the number could be in the thousands. The attack came as interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who took power following the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in 2021, was abroad attempting to revive a plan to bring UN troops to stabilize the country.

Haiti has been hit with an increase in violence and protests calling on Henry to resign. Last month, a Haitian judge indicted Moise’s widow Martine Moise, Henry’s immediate predecessor Claude Joseph and former National Police chief Leon Charles for being responsible for Moise’s death. Joseph, who was injured during the attack on Moise accused Henry of being behind the assassination.

Henry has pledged to hold elections sometime next year.

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

Jewish Think Tank Tasks Iraq War Architects to Develop 'Day After' Plan for Gaza

On March 16, 2003, days before the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, then-Vice President Dick Cheney told US media that the American forces “would be greeted as liberators.” Nearly 21 years later, US troops are still being attacked in the country.

Some of the architects of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq have been tapped to create a plan for the “day after” in Gaza for the Jewish Institute of National Security of America (JINSA) and the Vandenberg Coalition.

Dubbed the “Gaza Futures Task Force” and [first pointed out](#) by Responsible Statecraft, the group issued a report calling for a “multibillion-dollar private organization” funded by “interested nations” to govern Gaza after the hostilities end.

The group consists of nine members, four of whom - including the chairman - played critical roles in the Iraq war and occupation. The chairman, John Hannah, served as the deputy national security adviser to former US Vice President Dick Cheney before taking over as Cheney’s national security adviser for Lewis “Scooter” Libby after he resigned following a perjury indictment.

Libby also sits on the Gaza Futures Task Force alongside Elliott Abrams, who served in the National Security Council (NSC) under former US President George W. Bush and as the director for democracy in the NSC, he played [a significant role](#) in funding a failed coup in Gaza by Hamas’ chief political rival Fatah in 2007, which led to a short-lived civil war. Abrams also

served as the special envoy to Venezuela and Iran during the administration of former US President Donald Trump.

The fourth member of the nine-member board with Iraq war connections is former Ambassador Eric Edelman, who was the principal deputy national security adviser to Cheney, the number three position at the Pentagon, under former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates between 2005 and 2009.

Much of the document focuses not only on restoring stability in Gaza but countering Israel's rivals in the region.

The report lists two goals of the task force:

1.

"Restoring the deterrence and security needs of Israel, both for its own people and its standing as a powerful regional ally and essential component of resisting Iran's ambitions

2.

"Dismantling Hamas as a military and governing force and protecting against its reconstitution through Israel's continued freedom of action against it and against Palestinian Islamic Jihad; and by de-militarizing, de-radicalizing, and improving conditions in Gaza such that major terrorist attacks like October 7 can't and won't happen again"

The document also parrots Israeli demands that the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) should be disbanded and "serve[s] to perpetuate and deepen the Palestinian crisis." It recommends that the organization be replaced with "local Palestinian institutions or other international organizations committed to peace that should be developed and implemented."

Further, the "multibillion-dollar private organization," which it dubs the "International Trust for Gaza Relief and Reconstruction," should be led by a "group of Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates" and supported by the United States "and concerned states that accept Israel's role in the region."

The group should initially be focused on providing aid, the task force argues, including "humanitarian islands of stability," with "large prefabricated housing communities." But the next step, the Task Force argues, should focus on "de-radicalization" efforts, reflecting the disastrous "de-Baathification" efforts in Iraq. The task force recommends that "moderate" Palestinians from Gaza, the West Bank and in the diaspora be utilized to help with the efforts to de-radicalize the region's schools, mosques and media.

However, considering that Israel's bombing campaign has displaced 85% of the population and killed more than 30,000 (and rising) Gazans, it may be difficult to find Gazans the JINSA will find acceptably "moderate" to perform this task. The task force did not address this issue.

The Task Force also recommends that the International Trust goals should be within the broader context of countering "Iran's aggressive campaign to derail peace efforts, including by constraining the threat posed by Hezbollah [in Lebanon] and resuming progress towards normalizing [relations between] Israel and Saudi Arabia."

Since the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, an estimated 315,000 people have died directly from the conflict.

As of 2020, the US spent an estimated \$1.922 trillion invading and stabilizing the country, where at least five US military bases and roughly 2,500 troops remain.

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

It's an 'Indignity' For US to Resort to Aid Airdrops

On Saturday, the United States conducted an airdrop of humanitarian aid in Gaza, dropping roughly 38,000 meals into a country that the World Health Organization said on Monday that at least 576,000 people are facing "catastrophic levels of food insecurity" including one in six children who are suffering from acute malnutrition.

The United States resorting to airdrops is an "indignity" for the nation, Esteban Carrillo, a journalist and editor for The Cradle, [told Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) on Monday.

"[It is an] indignity for the United States to be there dropping aid when they're supposed to be not just a partner of Israel [but] their patron. They're the people giving them the bombs that are being dropped on Gaza... They should be the ones dictating what is happening, but of course, they're not."

Later, he added that the aid dropped by the US is "not even a significant amount of aid. They're just [doing] that so, I guess, people back home can clap and [say] 'yeah, we're helping.' Sadly, you're not."

Speaking on what has been dubbed the "Flour Massacre" during which Israeli forces fired on crowds of Palestinians crowding aid trucks. Israel blamed the incident on the crowd, saying they approached troops aggressively, and that most of the over 100 dead were caused by the subsequent stampede. However, the drone footage released from Israel appears to show IDF forces attacking the group and subsequent videos posted on social media showed IDF soldiers crushing Palestinian bodies with tanks.

"[This] is supposed to be one of the strongest armies in the world. They feel so threatened by... a group of famished Palestinians who haven't seen a piece of bread for so long. [That] they opened fire, they ran over [them]," Carrillo described. "They feel they're in their rights to do this. Today, it's 150 days since this campaign of genocide started in Gaza... what's the difference between where they stood on October 7 and today? It's the same, they face no consequences." Israel has flouted US public efforts to ease the situation, publicly saying that they plan to attack the southern Gazan city of Rafah, regardless of ongoing ceasefire negotiations. "There's such arrogance in their statements. They've said 'No matter even if there is a ceasefire, we're still going to go into Rafah, there's nothing to stop us.' Essentially, this has been their public message," Carrillo explained. "It's past the time that Joe Biden's White House [should have] taken a stand and stopped this," he added.

Carrillo argued that Israel won't stop at Gaza, because Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is facing corruption charges, needs the war to continue to keep him in office. "Yes, Israel is trying to start a war in Lebanon because, this war, Benjamin Netanyahu needs it to last at least until November [and] in Gaza, all military targets have been destroyed."

"What are they bombing right now?" Carrillo asked rhetorically. "That's why they're bombing tents. They're bombing the humanitarian shelters because it's just tent cities. That's where they're dropping bombs. This morning they dropped a bomb at the Jabalia mass grave. They

bombed a mass grave this morning... because they don't have anything else to drop bombs on but civilians and the last remaining hospitals.”

Ultimately, Carrillo argues, the situation is also significantly harming Israel. “Yesterday, the Israeli media reported that there was a wave of resignation in the army. So, it's not all roses for them either. At some point, they need to get a reality check. But sadly, Israel has been awaiting a reality check for the past 75 years.”

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

Losing to Russia is 'Shattering' Western Leaders' Belief in Their 'Exceptionalism'

On Monday, German media reported that German military officials were speaking about plans to attack Russia on unencrypted video conversations and it is possible that unidentified numbers simply joined the conference call when it was intercepted.

There is “sincere panic” among Western leaders who are forced to “face the inevitable fact” that they are losing to Russia, Mark Sleboda, a foreign relations and security analyst told Sputnik's Fault Lines on Monday. “It is shattering both their preconceptions of this conflict and also shattering their belief in their own exceptionalism and seniority,” he told co-hosts Melik Abdul and Jamarl Thomas.

The comments came after discussing [the leaked German plans](#) to coordinate a strike on the Crimean bridge or an ammo depot in Krasnodar, which Sleboda said was “planning an act of war on the Russian Federation” noting that Russia would have “every right” to respond.

“They were plotting an act of war and [the] Ukrainians in all of this, they weren't doing the planning, they wouldn't be doing the implementation, the programming of the missiles on the ground. They were talking about having it be done by German officials and the number [of] people with American accents and civilian clothes,” he said, adding “Their biggest concern, other than which was the more feasible target... was their plausible deniability.”

Sleboda noted that it is an open question if German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who has been publicly [against sending Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine](#), was lying or if “he [was] unaware of what his own military was doing.”

Recently, Scholz -seemingly on accident- revealed that British and American personnel are [on the ground in Ukraine](#) to help coordinate the long-range missiles provided by those countries to the Kiev regime.

“That's exposing that America and the UK have military people on the ground in the guise of volunteers or mercenaries or humanitarian workers... which means they are at war with Russia. It's simply undeclared,” Sleboda argued. Noting that the plans violated the “rules” of the conflict by planning a strike inside of Russia's mainland.

“Russia had two options,” Sleboda explained. “They could escalate back or [which they tried] instead expose this, hoping that it will at least dampen down.”

“The West has two options in response, they can either back down or they can escalate in response,” he added.

However, the West has a lot of stake in Russia because they bet Western hegemony on the conflict. "We've heard from every Western leader... a Russian victory in Ukraine would be a defeat of NATO. They did this to themselves, they invested this much political and geopolitical capital. They've said... that US global leadership... is at stake in the outcome of this conflict." "The world might not have originally reached the same conclusion, but now they forced them to because they... said it so authoritatively."

Host Jamarl Thomas lamented how the West didn't need to provoke Russia into the conflict, but Sleboda disagreed, saying that it was inevitable from the perspective of the "deep state."

"They are fighting for US hegemony over the world - that's why. From their point of view, this was also an inevitability, from [the perspective of] the people who run the United States, the blob, the deep state... this war was absolutely essential."

Sleboda noted that the US did manage to gain one advantage in the war, it made Europe more subservient to them.

"They tied Europe more directly to them. Europe is now spending their money [on two to four times more expensive](#) [Liquefied Natural Gas] LNG than they were on Russian energy, which means that Europe's economy, yes, is facing de-industrialization. But, on the plus side, a lot of those European businesses are going to the US. So they achieved very real geopolitical results out of this conflict."

"We had to devour part of our neighbors, our own allies, in the process of this, but at least they are cut off from the Russians now," Sleboda concluded.

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

South Korea Still Seeking Compensation from Japan for World War II Era Atrocities

Relations between Seoul and Tokyo have been complicated in recent years as the issue of Imperial Japanese atrocities during World War II has arisen once again.

One year after South Korea announced a new initiative to compensate Korean victims of World War II era Japanese forced labor, Seoul is still waiting for a response from Tokyo.

"When we make progress in our resolution, we believe that Japan will respond to it," said South Korean foreign ministry spokesman Lim Soo-suk during a press conference on Tuesday. Tokyo has so far refused to clarify whether the Japanese government will contribute to a South Korean public foundation to compensate the victims, but Seoul hopes cooperation will be forthcoming as the initiative moves forward.

"We will strive to carry out the follow-up measures so that they will serve as yet another turning point for bilateral relations between South Korea and Japan," Lim added.

South Korea's highest court ruled in favor of a group of 15 forced labor victims in 2018, ordering Japanese companies responsible for the World War II era atrocities to pay restitution to the victims. The move damaged relations between Seoul and Tokyo, which have only recently begun to recover after South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol announced the public foundation one year ago, urging the Japanese government to cooperate on a voluntary basis.

The United States has worked with regional powers, including South Korea, Japan, Australia, and India, to expand military cooperation in recent years in light of the threat the US perceives from China. Most recently the efforts resulted in [a \\$75 million weapons package for local authorities](#) in Taiwan allowing the island's armed forces to integrate with foreign weapons systems. China has not been at war since the short-lived Sino-Vietnamese conflict in 1979. Despite US-led efforts to unite regional players against China, the would-be coalition is beset by its own political divisions, as demonstrated by lingering tensions between Seoul and Tokyo. [Imperial Japan](#), which allied with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy during the second World War, committed mass atrocities in China and Korea, including mass rapes, massacres, sexual slavery, human experimentation, starvation, and forced labor. The abuses have been a source of diplomatic strife for decades, with denial and apologetics for the atrocities remaining widespread even among top Japanese leaders.

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe generated [outrage](#) in 2013 by expressing support for Imperial Japan's notorious Unit 731, which conducted human experimentation on prisoners of war from China, Russia, and Korea. Many have compared Japanese abuses of the period to the crimes of Nazi Germany although critics say Japan's atrocities have generated far less scrutiny.

The United States succeeded in balkanizing Korea after World War II as a socialist movement took root in the north of the peninsula. Meanwhile, [the United States](#) backed an anti-communist dictatorship in the South which was responsible for its own set of atrocities. Liberal democracy only emerged in South Korea in the late 1980s, but tensions remain high with communist-led North Korea.

Previous South Korean President Moon Jae-in attempted to improve relations with [North Korea](#) amidst a diplomatic effort led by former US President Donald Trump, but current President Yoon Suk Yeol has broadly reversed Moon's achievements. Recent polling reveals Yoon's approval rating stands at around 39%.

South Korea is still seeking compensation from Japan for the World War II era atrocities

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

One year after announcing a new initiative to compensate Korean victims of World War II era Japanese forced labor, the South Korean government is still waiting for Japan to signal its cooperation in the effort.

"When we make progress in our resolution, we believe that Japan will respond to it," said South Korean foreign ministry spokesman Lim Soo-suk, expressing hope that Tokyo would voluntarily contribute funds to a new Seoul-backed public foundation.

Imperial Japan, which allied with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy during the second World War, committed mass atrocities in China and Korea, including mass rape, human experimentation, starvation, forced labor, sexual slavery, and massacres. The abuses have been a source of

diplomatic strife for decades, with denial and apologetics for the atrocities remaining widespread even among top Japanese leaders.

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe generated outrage in 2013 by expressing support for Imperial Japan's notorious Unit 731, which conducted human experimentation on prisoners of war from China, Russia, and Korea.

The diplomatic tensions have undermined the United States' efforts to unite regional players against China, which is viewed as a threat to global Western hegemony.

👉 Follow the link for more details

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

Caracas Rejects US Extension of National Emergency Order on Venezuela - Minister

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) – The United States' decision to extend its national emergency order with regard to Venezuela is justification for its ongoing economic aggression against the Latin American country, Foreign Minister Yvan Gil said on Wednesday.

"Venezuela energetically rejects the renewal of the executive order that has since 2015 been used to justify the sustained campaign of aggression against the Venezuelan people, violating all rules of international law and constituting a case of collective punishment," Gil wrote on X.

The latest "unnecessary, absurd and hostile" action by the United States demonstrates that its "decaying" leadership is unable to design a coherent foreign policy that is not based on coercion, blackmail or disrespect, an official communique attached to Gil's statement said.

Instead of seizing the opportunity to correct its wrongdoings, the White House chose to further extend its "financial terrorism" on Venezuela, the communique said.

Washington remains today a hostage of its own policies of aggression, the communique said.

In March 2015, then-US President Barack Obama issued Executive Order 13692, declaring a national emergency with respect to the situation in Venezuela. The order cited the alleged erosion of human rights guarantees, the persecution of political opponents and the curtailment of press freedoms in the country.

On Tuesday, President Joe Biden extended the national emergency, saying that the situation in Venezuela continued to be an "unusual" and "extraordinary" threat to the US's security and foreign policy.

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

US Interest Rates Likely at Peak, But Cuts Unlikely Till Inflation Under Control - Powell

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - US interest rates are likely at the highest level desired by policymakers, but cuts on these will probably happen only when the Federal Reserve is convinced that inflation is under control, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday in testimony prepared for Congress.

"We believe that our policy rate is likely at its peak for this tightening cycle," Powell said. "If the economy evolves broadly as expected, it will likely be appropriate to begin dialing back policy restraint at some point this year."

But the Fed chair was quick to add that economic outlook remained "uncertain," and progress towards the central bank's long-term objective of reining inflation at or around 2% per year was "not assured."

The Fed's closely watched inflation indicator — the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index — grew at a rate of 2.4% year-on-year in January.

Commenting on inflation, Powell said on a positive note, it has eased substantially from the post-pandemic four-decade high of above 9% seen in June 2022, even as price growth remained above levels desired by the Fed.

"And the slowing in inflation has occurred without a significant increase in unemployment," he noted. "As labor market tightness has eased and progress on inflation has continued, the risks to achieving our employment and inflation goals have been moving into better balance."

But the Fed chair also explained that reducing policy restraint too soon or too much could result in a reversal of the inflation progress seen over the past two years. "At the same time, reducing policy restraint too late or too little could unduly weaken economic activity and employment," he said.

As such, the central bank's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee will carefully assess incoming economic data, the evolving outlook and balance of risks to determine rates going forth, Powell added.

"The Committee does not expect that it will be appropriate to reduce the target range until it has gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2 percent," he said.

The Fed's next policy meeting will begin on March 19, with a decision on rates set for the day after, March 20.

The central bank tightened policy at 11 meetings between March 2022 and July 2023, taking rates from a pre-pandemic level of just 0.25% to a range of between 5.25% and 5.5%.

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

Trump's Super Tuesday Big Wins Show Americans Prefer His Policies- Congressional Candidate

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump's big wins on Super Tuesday show that US voters prefer his leadership, US Republican congressional candidate Kathleen Winn has told Sputnik.

"Love Donald Trump or hate Donald Trump, his policies worked," Winn said on Tuesday night. "We wouldn't have been aware of that had the Biden policies not failed so miserably. This isn't

about personalities or even politics, it's about what works and what doesn't, and what Donald Trump does work."

Trump has won 11 of 15 Republican primary races with results still pending from the states of Alaska, Vermont, Utah, and California.

NBC News shows Trump has so far secured 664 delegates while Haley has 46. Trump needs 1,215 to secure the Republican nomination.

"I think you're seeing the average person under the Joe Biden presidency have not thrived, have not done better, and they did under Donald Trump," Winn said. "So I think that's what this vote is showing."

Winn, a Republican, is running for election to the US House to represent Arizona's 6th congressional district.

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

Troop Deployment to Ukraine Would Violate NATO's Consensus, Hungary Opposes - Szijjarto

UNITED NATIONS, March 6 (Sputnik) - A deployment of Western troops to Ukraine, which Hungary opposes, would violate NATO's common consensus, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron said Western leaders had discussed the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine and had neither reached a consensus on the matter or ruled out the possibility. The United States has since rejected the prospect of sending US troops to fight in Ukraine.

"I have to tell you that there's a NATO decision in place which we support and this common decision of ours does not allow any ground troops to be deployed to Ukraine because that will be a violation of our common NATO decision," Szijjarto said.

Szijjarto noted that it is reassuring to him to see a vast majority of the European leaders, including NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, oppose the prospects of sending Western troops to Ukraine in light of Macron's statement. A deployment of Western troops to Ukraine would increase the chances of igniting a third world war, he added.

A deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine would make a direct conflict between the alliance and Russia inevitable, the Kremlin said. Russia needs to stay on alert as the current generation of European politicians do not have a self-preservation instinct, the Kremlin stated in response to Macron's remarks.

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

Trump Demonstrated His Strength Among Republican Voters on Super Tuesday - EX-RNC Chair

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump has demonstrated his strength among Republican voters after securing big wins in a dozen Republican primary races throughout the United States, which will give him momentum through the rest of his presidential campaign, ex-Republican National Committee Chairman Jim Gilmore has told Sputnik.

"It's a fabulous landslide," Gilmore said on Tuesday night. "If you really look at the results, President Trump almost ran the table except for Vermont, which is a very moderate state in New England, but other than that, President Trump has demonstrated not only tonight but over the course of the primaries his strength among the Republican voters and beyond."

Tuesday's primaries was a very "fun night" for Trump, and it is going to do very well for him going forward in his presidential campaign, Gilmore said, adding that former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley should drop out of the race because it is clear she will not win the Republican nomination.

Trump has won 12 of the 15 Republican primaries held on Tuesday, with results still pending for the states of Utah and Alaska.

NBC News reported that Trump has so far secured 911 delegates while Haley has 78. Trump needs 1,215 to secure the Republican nomination.

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

Biden Loses Democratic Primary in American Samoa to Unknown Candidate Palmer - Results

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has lost the Democratic primary in American Samoa to unknown presidential candidate Jason Palmer, the American Samoa Democratic Party said in a press release.

The release said on Tuesday that the US territory cast 91 votes, of which 40 went to Biden and 51 to Palmer.

Palmer is reportedly a Baltimore resident who has worked for various businesses and non-profit organizations that are often involved in issues related to technology and education.

Palmer had reportedly been campaigning for the Democratic bid in Samoa.

Biden secured his Democratic bid in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Maine, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah. Results are still pending for the state of California.

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

Trump to Win California's Republican Primary, Secure Largest Number of Delegates - NBC

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump is projected to win the Republican primary in the state of California and secure the largest number of delegates a US state has to offer in the election, NBC News has reported.

Trump leads former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley by 49 points, NBC projected on Tuesday night.

Trump has won 12 of the 15 Republican primaries held on Tuesday, with results still pending for the states of Utah and Alaska.

NBC News reported that Trump has so far secured 911 delegates while Haley has 78. Trump needs 1,215 to secure the Republican nomination.

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

Szjijarto on German Taurus Leak Scandal: NATO Must Avoid Direct Confrontation With Russia

UNITED NATIONS, March 6 (Sputnik) - NATO member states must do their best to avoid a direct confrontation between the military alliance and Russia, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szjijarto told RIA Novosti.

"We have to do our best in order to avoid any kind of direct confrontation between NATO and the Russian Federation," Szjijarto said, when asked about a leaked conversation between German military officers regarding a potential Taurus missile strike on the Crimean Bridge using a French fighter jet.

Last week, Margarita Simonyan — the editor-in-chief of RT and the Rossiya Segodnya media group — published a recording of the February 19 conversation between four German military officers. Germany has confirmed the authenticity of the recording.

On Saturday, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz ruled out the possibility of supplying long-range Taurus missiles to Ukraine and said that the government is investigating the leaked conversation.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the content of the leaked audio recording points to direct involvement of the collective West in the Ukraine conflict.

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

Haley Project to Win Republican Primary in Vermont - Associated Press

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley is projected to edge former US President Donald Trump in a close Republican primary race in the state of Vermont, the Associated Press reported.

Haley leads Trump by 4 points in Vermont with 84% of expected votes counted, the report said on Tuesday night.

Trump has won 11 of the 15 Republican primaries held on Tuesday, with results still pending for the states of Utah, Alaska, and California.

NBC News reports that Trump has so far secured 742 delegates while Haley has 78. Trump

needs 1,215 to secure the Republican nomination.

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

Trump's Super Tuesday Big Wins Show Americans Prefer His Policies -Congressional Candidate

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump's big wins on Super Tuesday show that US voters prefer his leadership, US Republican congressional candidate Kathleen Winn has told Sputnik.

"Love Donald Trump or hate Donald Trump, his policies worked," Winn said on Tuesday night. "We wouldn't have been aware of that had the Biden policies not failed so miserably. This isn't about personalities or even politics, it's about what works and what doesn't, and what Donald Trump does work."

Trump has won 11 of 15 Republican primary races with results still pending from the states of Alaska, Vermont, Utah, and California.

NBC News shows Trump has so far secured 664 delegates while Haley has 46. Trump needs 1,215 to secure the Republican nomination.

"I think you're seeing the average person under the Joe Biden presidency have not thrived, have not done better, and they did under Donald Trump," Winn said. "So I think that's what this vote is showing."

Winn, a Republican, is running for election to the US House to represent Arizona's 6th congressional district.

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

Trump After Super Tuesday Wins Says It Was 'Amazing Day, Inspiring'

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump, after his sweeping victories on Super Tuesday, said it was an amazing and inspiring day.

"They call it Super Tuesday for a reason," Trump said during remarks in Florida on Tuesday night. "This was an amazing night, an amazing day, it's been an incredible period of time in our country's history. It's been sad in so many ways, but I think it's going to be inspiring because we're going to do something that frankly nobody's been able to do for a long time."

Trump has won 11 of 15 Republican primary races, with results still pending from the states of Alaska, Vermont, Utah, and California.

NBC News shows Trump has so far secured 664 delegates while Haley has 46. Trump needs 1,215 to secure the Republican nomination.

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

Szijjarto on Leaked German Talk: NATO Agreed to Not Be Party to Ukraine Conflict

UNITED NATIONS, March 6 (Sputnik) - NATO member states are still in agreement that the military alliance is not a party to the conflict in Ukraine, despite leaked audio of German military officials discussing a possible missile strike on the Crimean Bridge with a French fighter jet, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"I'd like to say two things on that: first, that we have a decision in NATO in place, and this decision has not been questioned by anyone yet. This decision has been made a bit more than two years ago, and this decision says that NATO is not a party to this conflict," Szijjarto said, when asked about the leaked conversation.

Neither Germany nor France has challenged or requested a review of the NATO decision, Szijjarto said.

Last week, Margarita Simonyan — the editor-in-chief of RT and the Rossiya Segodnya media group — published a recording of the February 19 conversation between four high-ranking German military officers. The top brass were discussing a potential attack on the Crimean Bridge with long-range Taurus missiles. Germany has confirmed the authenticity of the recording.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the content of the leaked audio recording points to direct involvement of the collective West in the conflict in Ukraine. The West must bear responsibility for the results of the disruptive actions it has planned and implemented, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

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

Super Tuesday Shows Trump Leader of Republican Party, Haley Must Drop Out - Candidate

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump's overwhelming victories in the Republican primaries on Tuesday show he will be the Republican presidential nominee for the US general election in November and his rival, former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, must drop out, Republican candidate for US Senate from the state of Indiana, John Rust, told Sputnik.

"Donald Trump is the leader of the Republican Party. Plain and simple. It's well past time for Nikki Haley to drop out so we can unify behind Trump and beat Joe Biden in November," Rust said on Tuesday night.

Trump has won 11 of 15 Republican primary races with results still pending from the states of Alaska, Vermont, Utah and California.

NBC News shows that Trump has so far secured 664 delegates while Haley has secured 46.

Trump needs 1,215 delegates to secure the Republican presidential nomination.

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

Trump Projected to Win Republican Primary in Minnesota - AP

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump is projected to win the Republican primary in the US state of Minnesota, the Associated Press (AP) reported.

Fifteen states, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia, are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday, while Alaska and Utah are holding caucuses.

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

New York Times Projects Trump Win in Colorado Primary After Being Restored on Ballot

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - The New York Times projects former President Donald Trump will win the Republican primary in the state of Colorado where he was reinstated on the ballot by the US Supreme Court this week after being temporarily removed by state officials.

Trump leads former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley by 28 points with 41% of votes counted, the New York Times reported on Tuesday night.

Fifteen states, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia, are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday, while Alaska and Utah are holding caucuses.

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

Trump Projected to Win Republican Primary in Texas - NBC News

EL PASO, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump is projected to win the Republican primary in Texas, NBC News reported.

Trump is leading former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley in Texas by 57 points with nearly half of the expected votes counted, NBC projected on Tuesday night.

Trump will gain 161 delegates in the lead up to the Republican nomination for the general election.

California has the largest number of delegates to award to the winner with 169 delegates up for grabs.

With a majority of Republican primary races called on Tuesday evening, Trump leads Haley

606 to 46 in the race for the Republican presidential nomination. Trump needs 1,215 to secure his Republican bid.

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

Trump Projected to Win Republican Primaries in Alabama, Massachusetts - AP

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump is expected to win the Republican primaries in the US states of Alabama and Massachusetts, the Associated Press (AP) projected.

Fifteen states, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia, are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday, while Alaska and Utah are holding caucuses.

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

Trump Projected to Win Republican Primary in US State of Arkansas - NBC News

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump is projected to win the Republican primary in the US state of Arkansas, NBC News reported.

Trump is leading former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley by 59 points in Arkansas, NBC projected on Tuesday night.

Fifteen states, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia, are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday while Alaska and Utah are holding caucuses.

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

Trump Projected to Win Primary in US State of Maine - New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump is expected to win the Republican primary election in the US state of Maine, the New York Times reported.

The New York Times projected on Tuesday night that Trump will win the Maine primary election for the Republican party presidential nomination.

Fifteen states, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia, are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday, in addition to the caucuses in Alaska and Utah.

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

Trump Projected to Win Republican Primaries in Oklahoma, Tennessee - NBC News

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump is projected to win the Republican primaries in the states of Oklahoma and Tennessee, NBC News reported. NBC News on Tuesday projected Trump to win Oklahoma and Tennessee. Fifteen states, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia, are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday, in addition to caucuses in Alaska and Utah.

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

Trump Met With Musk on Sunday During Meeting With Republican Donors in Florida - Reports

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump met with billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk on Sunday during a meeting with wealthy Republican donors, the New York Times reported citing people familiar with the matter. The report said on Tuesday that it's unclear whether Musk will donate to Trump's campaign. However, Trump plans to have a one-on-one meeting with Musk soon, the report added. The Trump campaign is working urgently to gather more donors as the campaign prepares for a general election battle against President Joe Biden, the report noted.

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

Nuland Resigned Because Blinken Did Not Make Her No. 2 at State - Veteran US Diplomat

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, a driving force in keeping Ukraine at war with Russia, announced her resignation because she was passed over for further promotion in favor of Kurt Campbell, ex-US diplomat and former State Department consultant on US-Russia relations James Carden told Sputnik. "I was actually surprised she stayed this long," Carden said. "I figured her time was up once Campbell got the Number 2 job in the building. ... Why is she doing it [resigning]? Possibly because she was passed over for the Number 2 job by someone even more of a Swamp creature [a Washington insider] than she is, Kurt Campbell." Nuland, who had served under Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott in President Bill Clinton's administration in the 1990s, was a favorite of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and ran European and Eurasian affairs as assistant secretary of state under Hillary Clinton's successor,

John Kerry.

She then served as acting deputy secretary of state for seven months under Secretary of State Antony Blinken and was considered a leading candidate to take over the post, but the position then went to the highly experienced Campbell instead. Campbell was confirmed by the Senate on February 6.

Nuland was also feeling the heat for the disastrous failure of her long-term war-mongering policies in support of Ukraine, Carden suggested.

The latest massive \$61 billion armaments and aid package for Kiev, though approved strongly in the US Senate, has so far failed to make its way in the face of minority but fierce opposition from some Republicans in the House of Representatives.

The "long shot reason [for Nuland's resignation is that] she is taking the fall for the disastrous US-Ukraine policies that steered them into an awful, avoidable war," Carden commented, though he added, "But I doubt it."

However, Nuland's departure will not result in any significant change in the Biden administration's continued determination to support Ukraine and confront Russia, Carden advised.

"Will it make any difference? None whatsoever. The uni-party rules. She did harm, but she was not alone," he said.

Only two weeks ago, at a public meeting at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Nuland expressed her continued support for more massive US military aid to Ukraine and predicted that Ukrainian forces would have major battlefield successes against Russia in new offensives later this year.

Russia has repeatedly warned against the continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict. Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier this month that the US must stop supplying weapons to Ukraine if it wishes the conflict to be resolved.

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

US State of Maine Faces Low Voter Turnout in Super Tuesday Primaries - Election Officials

BANGOR, March 6 (Sputnik) - A smaller number of voters in Maine are heading to the polls for the Super Tuesday primaries than usual, leaving some local election officials underwhelmed.

"It's been really quiet here so far today. I expected it to be a little busier by this time," Marie, a volunteer at the Orono polling location, told Sputnik.

Several voters said they were not even aware of the election until they saw signs posted along the roadside reminding them to vote.

"I honestly haven't been keeping track of these things. I nearly forgot the primaries were even happening," Nicky, a 32 year old voter local to Bangor, told Sputnik.

Maine is utilizing for a first time a so-called semi-open primary vote for the presidential, congressional and state legislative elections whereby unenrolled voters have the option to choose to vote in the Republican or Democratic primaries.

Another voter, Robert, said he decided to take advantage of the new policy in order to cast his

ballot in favor of the contender for the Republican party presidential nomination - former US Ambassador to the United Nations - Nikki Haley.

"Last election, I voted with the Democrats but I just really think that she can use the help more than [Biden] can and it would be great to see someone young in the White House," Robert said.

Former President Donald Trump and Haley will compete for more than 850 Republican delegates. Candidates must secure 1,215 delegates to win the Republican presidential nomination.

Current President Joe Biden will also seek to secure his status as the Democratic presidential nominee by winning the more than 1,400 delegates at stake on Super Tuesday, with 1,968 required to earn the nomination.

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

Trump, Biden Projected to Win Their Primaries in North Carolina - CNN

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump will win their respective Democratic and Republican primaries in the state of North Carolina, CNN projected.

Fifteen states including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday, in addition to caucuses in Alaska and Utah.

Democrats are holding nominating contests in the same states, except for Alaska, as well as a caucus in the US territory of American Samoa.

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

Trump Projected to Win Republican Primary in Virginia - CNN

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump is projected to win the Republican primary in the state of Virginia, CNN reported.

Fifteen states including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday, in addition to caucuses in Alaska and Utah.

Democrats are holding nominating contests in the same states, except for Alaska, as well as a caucus in the US territory of American Samoa.

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

Biden Projected to win the Democratic Primary Race in State of Virginia - CNN

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is projected to win the Democratic primary race in the state of Virginia, CNN reported.

The report said on Tuesday night that Biden will secure 99 delegates in Virginia.

Fifteen states, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia, are holding Republican primary elections on Tuesday, in addition to caucuses in Alaska and Utah.

Democrats are holding nominating contests in the same states, except for Alaska, as well as a caucus in the US territory of American Samoa.

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

Orban to Discuss With Trump on Friday Prospects of Peace in Ukraine - Foreign Minister

(Updates with details in paras 3-9)

UNITED NATIONS, March 6 (Sputnik) - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban will discuss with former US President Donald Trump during their meeting in Florida on Friday the prospects of restoring peace in Ukraine, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"One of the main points on the agenda between President Trump and Prime Minister Orban will definitely be how peace will return to Europe, especially to the central and eastern part of Europe," Szijjarto said. "What we definitely would like to discuss with him is how to make peace in Ukraine and in the eastern part of Europe."

Szijjarto emphasized that Orban's visit to the United States is not meant to sway US voters to lean toward electing Trump in the upcoming presidential election in November, but it highlights that US-Hungarian relations thrived during the Trump administration and there were no major wars around the world then.

"Without him [Trump] being elected, we see a much, much, much smaller hope for peace in the foreseeable future in Ukraine," Szijjarto said. "We understand we do not represent the majority in Europe with this position of ours, but still we are convinced of it."

Szijjarto said he believes the conflict in Ukraine could have been avoided and the current Gaza conflict would have been resolved quickly had Trump been reelected to the White House in 2020.

In addition, Szijjarto noted that Western efforts have failed to give Ukraine an advantage on the battlefield against Russia.

"Those who have been delivering weapons to Ukraine have contributed to the prolonging of the war," Szijjarto said. "Our understanding of the situation is very simple: Russia cannot win against the entire West, but in the meantime, Ukraine cannot win against Russia. So this means

that this war must be ended by negotiations. This is unavoidable."

Negotiations to resolve the Ukraine conflict should begin soon to avoid further deaths and destruction, Szijjarto said.

Strong US leadership helps stabilize the world and it is currently lacking and leading to global instability, Szijjarto added.

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

Orban to Discuss With Trump on Friday Prospects of Peace in Ukraine - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, March 6 (Sputnik) - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban will discuss with former US President Donald Trump during their meeting in Florida on Friday the prospects of restoring peace in Ukraine, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told RIA Novosti.

"One of the main points on the agenda between President Trump and Prime Minister Orban will definitely be how peace will return to Europe, especially to the central and eastern part of Europe," Szijjarto said. "What we definitely would like to discuss with him is how to make peace in Ukraine and in the eastern part of Europe."

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

Texas Super Tuesday Primary: 'Somebody Could Get Sick, Somebody Could End up in Jail'

DALLAS, March 6 (Sputnik) - Voters in Texas are heading to the polls on Super Tuesday, with some of them expressing hope that Nikki Haley may still come out as the frontrunner, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

"I think there are a lot of variables between now and November," Elizabeth, one of the voters who came to vote on Super Tuesday in Terrell County, Texas, told Sputnik. "Somebody might get sick [referencing Biden], somebody might end up in jail [referencing Trump]."

Elizabeth also said that she would not want to have the same candidates again.

"I only would have to move to a different country," she added.

Another voter, Michael from the Fort Worth told Sputnik that the voters want to send Donald Trump a "strong message."

"We like Trump's policies ... But we just want him to keep his mouth shut. We want to send him a strong message," he said.

In 2016, Trump lost Dallas [Dallas is right next to Fort Worth] to Hillary Clinton, getting 35% while Hillary got 61%. In Fort Worth Trump received 52% and Clinton 44%. On the other hand, in more remote areas of Texas, Trump received nearly 90% and Clinton got 10%.

According to US polls, Trump should come out ahead of Haley by about 40 points across the 15 states. The former president, moreover, is also projected to be leading over the incumbent president Joe Biden, should the presidential elections be held today. A New York Times/ Siena

College poll said that 48% of voters would go for Trump, while 44% of responders would vote for Biden.

Former US President Donald Trump and former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley will vie for more than 850 Republican delegates; the candidates must secure 1,215 delegates to win the Republican nomination.

Current US President Joe Biden will also seek to secure his status as the Democratic nominee by winning the more than 1,400 delegates at stake on Super Tuesday, with 1,968 required to earn the nomination.

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

Ethiopian Airlines Confirms Deal to Buy Eight 777-9 Aircraft to Expand Fleet - Boeing

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Ethiopian Airlines has made a deal with Boeing to buy eight new 777-9 passenger airliners, the first sale of the aircraft to any African nation, the US aerospace company announced in a press release.

"Boeing and Ethiopian Airlines announced today an agreement for the East African airline to purchase eight 777-9 passenger airplanes and the potential for up to 12 additional jets," the release said on Tuesday.

The sale follows Ethiopian Airlines' previous purchase of 11 Boeing 787 Dreamliners and 20 737 MAX aircraft in 2023 to modernize and grow its fleet, the release said.

"The 777-9 will support Ethiopian Airlines' plans to grow and renew its fleet in size, range and passenger and cargo capacity to reach high-demand markets in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America," the release added.

Based on the 777 and with advanced technologies from the 787 Dreamliner group of aircraft, the 777-9 includes new carbon-fiber composite wings and engines to enable the airplane to achieve 10% better fuel efficiency and operating costs than its rivals, according to the release.

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

Boeing to Build \$439Mln Global Communications Satellite for US Space Force - Release

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Boeing has won an almost \$440 million contract to build the next global communications satellite for the US Space Force, the company announced in a press release.

"Boeing received a \$439.6 million contract to build the 12th Wideband Global SATCOM (WGS) communications satellite for US Space Force's Space Systems Command," the release said on Tuesday.

The WGS satellite is designed to deliver vital high-capacity, secure and resilient communications capabilities to the US military and its allies, the release said.

"The WGS's responsive, steerable, high-capacity beams provide assured connectivity via the Protected Tactical Enterprise Service (PTES) ground system and enhanced anti-jam communications by combining the US military's jam-resistant Protected Tactical Waveform with antenna nulling in the Ka band," the release added.

The anti-jam capability of Boeing's new Protected Tactical Satcom Prototype payload will also be integrated on WGS, providing a second protected wideband satellite to the US military and expanding anti-jam tactical communications capacity in multiple contested theaters, according to the release.

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

Biden Projected to Win the Democratic Presidential Caucus in Iowa - AP

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is projected to win the Democratic presidential caucus in the state of Iowa, the Associated Press reported.

The Iowa Democratic caucus was held in January, but the results were released on Tuesday, showing Biden has 91% of the vote in Iowa with most of the votes counted, according to the Associated Press.

Fifteen states including Alabama, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia will hold Republican primary elections, in addition to caucuses in Alaska and Utah.

Democrats are holding nominating contests in the same states, except for Alaska, as well as a caucus in the US territory of American Samoa.

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

ANALYSIS - Nuland's Exit May Reflect US Need to Cut Back on 'Unwinnable Ukraine War'

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) -Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland's announcement of her retirement could signal a US desire to scale down the conflict in Ukraine since it is increasingly clear that the war is unwinnable, former US diplomats and military analysts told Sputnik.

Nuland announced her resignation on Tuesday only a few weeks after visiting Kiev and confidently predicting a renewed Ukrainian military offensive and victories against Russia this summer on her return to Washington.

CATASTROPHE FOR UKRAINE

For more than a decade, in both the Obama and Biden administrations, Nuland has been the driving force to propel Ukraine into confrontation with Russia. Now, her sudden announcement of resignation from a post she long coveted and hoped to be the springboard for further advancement could herald a coming U-turn in US policies towards Kiev, Covert Action magazine managing editor and military/intelligence analyst Jeremy Kuzmarov said.

"Nuland was a supreme Ukraine hawk so her retirement could signal a US desire to scale down the conflict in Ukraine since it is increasingly clear that this war is unwinnable and a Vietnam-type disaster that has been a catastrophe for Ukraine. Ukraine is now facing a demographic problem as so many young men have been killed in a senseless conflict provoked by Nuland and her friends," he said.

Despite the relentless optimism Nuland continues to express in public about Ukraine's future military prospects against Russia, she may have finally been forced to confront the bloody consequences of her failed policies, Kuzmarov suggested.

"The [Ukrainian] counteroffensive failed and even if the United States provides billions more in weapons, Ukraine is unlikely to be able to push the Russian army back and reclaim territory that the Russians have taken," he said.

The Biden administration was now finally forced to confront the hard truth that the policies it had followed had failed utterly in Ukraine, Kuzmarov pointed out.

In addition, he said Nuland had also been frustrated by her wider ambition to bleed Russia dry in Ukraine and use the Russian suffering in the conflict to discredit and topple President Vladimir Putin.

However, Russia and its leaders had defied Nuland and her allies and turned the tables on them, Kuzmarov explained.

RATS DESERTING BIDEN

Nuland's resignation demonstrated that many of the people who had personally benefited the most from President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken's favor were now abandoning them and trying to escape their own responsibility for so many catastrophic policies, retired veteran Pentagon analyst Chuck Spinney observed.

Nuland's announced departure appeared to be "a sign that the rats are leaving the sinking ship of state," he said.

Former CIA analyst Phil Giraldi, founder and chair of Council for the National Interest and founding member of the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) agreed that Nuland's announced departure was a sign that more moderate policies might be emerging, at least temporarily from the Biden administration in order to boost the president's debatable re-election prospects in November's coming national vote.

DESIGNS FOR WAR

Independent commentator and journalist Sam Hussein agreed that Nuland's announced resignation revealed the failure of the aggressive war policies she had supported and sought to implement for so long in Ukraine, against Russia, across the Middle East, and around the world.

The wider implications of US aggressive policies manipulating Ukraine against Russia was part of a far wider agenda, Hussein explained.

"The Ukraine war has been bad enough, but part of it geopolitically is for the United States to have leverage over all other powers, enabling Israel to have more leverage," he said.

Nuland previously served as deputy foreign policy adviser (2003 – 2005) to Vice President Dick Cheney. Between 2005 and 2008, she served as US ambassador to NATO in Brussels.

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

US Stocks Fall Most in 3 Weeks as Federal Reserve Head Seen Stalling on Interest Rate Cuts

NEW YORK, March 6 (Sputnik) - The 2024 rally on Wall Street hit a bump on Tuesday as stocks experienced their sharpest fall in three weeks and their second biggest drop for the year thus far as investors braced for the eventuality of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell stalling on interest rate cuts expected by the market.

Powell is to testify before Congress over the next two days, with remarks likely to echo the refrain of other Fed policy-makers that the central bank is not ready yet for a pivot on rates, after its last hike of them in July.

Wall Street's top indexes are still up as much as 6% on the year, hitting record highs on 15 occasions since 2024 began, largely due to the boom in artificial-intelligence stocks. But for the rally to continue, fresh catalysts may be needed, analysts say.

The technology-laden Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises marquee tech names such as Google, Amazon, Apple and Netflix, fell 1.7% on Tuesday - the most since the 1.8% tumble on February 13. For the year, the Nasdaq remains up 6.2%.

The S&P 500, which tracks the top 500 US companies, slid 1.5% - the sharpest drop since the February 13 decline of 1.4%. Notwithstanding the drop, the S&P still has an annual gain of 6.5% to show.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which follows the stocks of 30 large US corporations as Wall Street's broadest equities indicator, slipped 1% after the February 13 tumble of 1.4%. The Dow is still up 2.4% on the year.

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

Nuland Recklessly Substituted Use of Force for Diplomacy - Ex-US Asst. Defense Secretary

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, who announced earlier that she would resign her position, substituted force for diplomacy and pushed through catastrophic policies on Ukraine consistently over the past decade, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Chas Freeman told Sputnik.

"Her war in Ukraine will be cited by diplomatic historians to underscore the consequences of recklessly substituting the use of force for diplomatic dialogue aimed at resolving disputes by measures short of war," Freeman, one of the United States' most recognized and respected diplomats, said,

Nuland's approach to Ukraine will be studied by future statesmen as an egregious example of misjudgment based on lack of empathy for the viewpoint and understanding of the national interests of a perceived adversary, Freeman said.

The policies Nuland spearheaded and repeatedly pushed to be implemented by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government led directly to the needless deaths of hundreds of thousands of young Ukrainian men in frontal attacks intended to kill as many Russians as

possible, he said.

"The deaths of a generation of Ukrainian young men in an unnecessary war would always be on her hands," Freeman said.

Freeman pointed out that Nuland actively resigned from the Biden administration and neither health nor age considerations prompted her to do so.

"Nuland is 62 years old, too young to 'retire.' She did not cite her health as a reason for leaving government service. This is properly termed a resignation, not a retirement," Freeman said.

But Nuland's departure from policymaking in Washington will be celebrated posthumously by the reported half million Ukrainians who needlessly gave their lives to her policies, he said.

For all her rhetoric about love and friendship for Ukraine, the Ukrainian people will only remember her as the author of appalling and avoidable suffering recklessly inflicted upon them, Freeman said.

She will be remembered with bitterness by the many Ukrainians that her failed attempt to weaken and isolate Russia drove into exile as well as by those still in Ukraine who were maimed and disabled by the war with Russia that she promoted, Freeman said.

Freeman also said Nuland's conduct and direction of US foreign policy would be long remembered as a case study in incompetence, bungling and irresponsibility.

Moreover, Nuland had proven herself to be a warmonger and an incompetent one at that, he said.

"Her war in Ukraine will be cited by diplomatic historians to underscore the consequences of recklessly substituting the use of force for diplomatic dialogue aimed at resolving disputes by measures short of war," Freeman said.

Despite Nuland's consistent false optimism, the US-backed Ukrainian war against Russia had now resulted in decisive and ruinous defeat, and her resignation from a position she had so recently been promoted to reflected this disaster, he said.

"There is, of course, an obvious justification for Nuland's departure and that is her leading role in the debacle in Ukraine, beginning at the Euromaidan in 2014 and culminating in the current disorderly retreat of Ukrainian forces under the pressure of a mounting Russian offensive," Freeman said.

Nuland had played a leading role in manipulating successive congresses to do her bidding on Ukraine and many other issues in the Obama and Biden administrations for more than a decade, but finally lost her credibility on Capitol Hill, he said.

"The US Congress has frustrated her efforts to double down on support for the tragedy she scripted in Ukraine," Freeman said.

Nuland's resignation also strongly suggested her influence even within the Biden administration was finally declining, as she had been passed over for promotion to the Number 2 slot of deputy secretary of state in favor of veteran diplomat Kurt Campbell, he said. "Now one is left to speculate that she lost a policy battle within the administration, which the embarrassing failure of her policies has forced into a defensive crouch," Freeman said.

Nuland's departure might well be followed by the adoption of more cautious and realistic policies on the Ukraine conflict by the Biden administration, he said.

"It is not unreasonable to predict that her departure will be followed by policies she would oppose," Freeman added.

Nuland had actually served as acting deputy secretary of state for some time after the

resignation of predecessor Wendy Sherman, but Campbell was appointed to the position instead last month.

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

Oil Down 2nd Day in Row, Ignoring China Ambitions for Bullish Economic Rebound

NEW YORK, March 6 (Sputnik) - Crude prices fell for a second day in a row as oil traders looked beyond China's ambitious economic rebound plans to the possibility that demand for the commodity may remain sluggish despite output cuts announced by producer group OPEC+.

US West Texas Intermediate crude for April delivery finished Tuesday's trade down 59 cents, or 0.7%, at \$78.15 per barrel. That was on top of Monday's loss of 1.5%.

London-traded Brent crude for May delivery settled down 76 cents, or 0.9%, at \$82.04. The global crude benchmark slid 0.9% in the previous session as well.

Concerns over China, coupled with uncertainty over the path of U.S. interest rates, have factored into anxiety over weaker oil demand so far this year.

China set a gross domestic product target (GDP) of 5% for 2024, the same as the prior year. The target and other economic proposals were both unveiled in an official report released during the annual meeting of the country's National People's Congress.

While Beijing outlined more economic changes to help shore up growth, the government's messaging was largely unchanged from its previous signals, providing investors with little cause for optimism over what has been a sluggish economic rebound in China.

China's private purchasing managers' index also came in on the weaker side of expectations on Tuesday, further weighing on the sentiment for oil.

Crude prices have fallen over the past two days despite the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia and known collectively as OPEC+, committed to maintaining their current run of 2.2 million barrels per day supply cuts until the end of June.

Traders took little solace from the cuts when putting them against the larger perspective of tepid demand forecast in the months ahead.

Notwithstanding the lower close of the past two days, crude prices are still up on the year, with US crude showing an annual gain of around 9% and Brent nearly 7%.

Crude prices are up on the year on fears that the Israel-Hamas war could disrupt shipments from oil-rich countries around the conflict zone. Houthi rebels supporting Hamas have attacked vessels in the Red Sea, delaying some oil deliveries to Europe and Asia.

Even so, supply disruption expectations have been countered by a jump in non-OPEC crude production and signs of waning demand from top oil importer China, which is struggling with an anemic economy.

Surging stockpiles of US crude have also raised worries about demand for oil. Domestic crude inventories rose for a fifth week in a row and by around 27 million barrels since late January, according to data last week from the US Energy Information Administration.

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

Sullivan, Qatari PM Say That Releasing Hostages Would Result in Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani underscored that releasing sick, wounded, elderly, and women hostages held by Hamas could immediately initiate a ceasefire in Gaza, the White House said in a statement.

"National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani of Qatar to discuss efforts to secure the immediate release of hostages held by Hamas. They underscored that the release of sick, wounded, elderly, and women hostages would result in an immediate ceasefire in Gaza over a period of at least six weeks," the statement said on Tuesday.

The statement said that the initial phase of the ceasefire would facilitate a significant increase in humanitarian aid to Gaza, allowing for the establishment of longer-lasting agreements and continuous peace.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from Gaza and breached the border, killing 1,200 people and abducting around 240 others. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. At least 30,410 people have been killed so far in the Gaza Strip, local authorities said.

On November 24, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a temporary truce and the exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The ceasefire was extended several times and expired on December 1. More than 100 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza.

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

US Official Says Over 100,000 Art Items Confiscated by Nazis Remain Unaccounted For

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - More than 100,000 art items confiscated by the Nazis in different countries during World War II remain unaccounted for and their locations are still unknown, as well as an even larger number of books and ritual objects, Stuart Eizenstat, special adviser to the US Secretary of State on Holocaust Issues, said.

"It is estimated that there are another 100,000 unaccounted for and even more of books and ritual objects," Eizenstat told reporters on Tuesday.

Eizenstat said it is impossible to know where the items are located but emphasized the importance of transparency that would allow the legal owners to make potential claims.

More than 600,000 have already been identified and some of them have been returned to the

countries from where they were taken, he said.

Many still remain in the Fuhrer-Museum in Austria, Eizenstat added.

Earlier on Tuesday, the United States along with other 13 states released the Best Practices for the Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art.

The State Department said in a statement that the act recognizes that forced sales took place and underscored the urgency of resolving the remaining claims for property, regardless of whether it concerns private or public collections.

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

UPDATE- US Expands Charges Against Senator Bob Menendez to 16 in Bribery Case - Indictment

(Updates with details in paras 4,5)

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) - Democratic Senator Bob Menendez has been indicted with new charges related to obstruction of justice in his foreign bribery case, court documents revealed on Tuesday.

Menendez faces 16 charges related to wire fraud, bribery, an official acting as a foreign agent, and obstruction of justice, among others.

The US Justice Department had recently indicted Menendez for allegedly receiving bribes in exchange for using his authority to assist the government of Qatar and benefit Egypt.

According to the court documents, prosecutors claim that from about June 2022 to 2023, Menendez and his wife engaged in a scheme to return the money they received as bribes by characterizing them as "repayment for loans."

The prosecutors accuse Menendez of using this scheme to knowingly interfere with the federal investigation into his bribery case.

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

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Sputnik) –

META SERVICES OUTAGE

* Several thousand users of Facebook and Instagram (both belong to Meta, whose activities are banned in Russia as extremist) on Tuesday reported outages of the popular social networks, according to reports compiled by the Downtechnology website.

* The technical issue that caused an outage of Meta (banned in Russia as an extremist organization) services has been fixed, the company's Communications Director Andy Stone (listed as a terrorist and extremist in Russia) said.

ISRAELI INVASION IN GAZA

* The October 7 attack on Israel conducted by Hamas fighters is an "absolute failure" of the Israeli intelligence, and its officials will have to face consequences, Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Director Sergei Naryshkin said.

* The Hamas leadership is not expecting any positive outcomes of negotiations with Israel, as mediators are unable to pressure Israel towards agreeing to a deal to end the Gaza war, a source in the Palestinian movement told Sputnik.

* Talks dedicated to achieving a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in Cairo continue despite some issues, Egypt's Al Qahera News reported, citing a high-ranking source.

* The United States rejects the notion that the killing of more than 30,000 Palestinian civilians, including women and children, is a "fair price" in Israel's military efforts to eliminate Hamas, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Statements made by French President Emmanuel Macron and other European leaders about deploying NATO troops in Ukraine are dangerous and push the world to the brink of a nuclear war, Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Director Sergei Naryshkin said.

* The United States have had a very negative reaction to the destruction of the Russian Il-76 aircraft transporting Ukrainian prisoners of war by Ukrainian military, Naryshkin said.

* The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has turned into Ukraine's "propaganda mouthpiece," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

* France is ready to participate in the Czech initiative on the procurement of shells for Ukraine from outside the European Union, French President Emmanuel Macron said.

* A statement made by Macron regarding a potential deployment of NATO troops in Ukraine did not lead to tensions between Paris and Berlin, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has said, adding that the US and most of Europe support Germany's stance on this issue.

NAVALNY DEATH

* Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny has died of natural causes, Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Director Sergei Naryshkin said.

* Belarusian former presidential candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido, and deceased Russian politician Alexei Navalny are examples of major strategic failures of the West, Naryshkin said.

RUSSIAN FROZEN ASSETS

* The seizure of frozen Russian assets in the European Union and their use to finance Ukraine contradicts the international law, the beginning of such a discussion will weaken the EU, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday.

* The EU Council has not yet agreed on the use of profits from Russia's frozen assets to finance military or economic aid to Ukraine, a high ranking European official said.

* The EU expects to reach an agreement in the coming weeks on the further use of the profits from Russian frozen assets and to earn 15 billion euros (\$16.2 billion) from them by 2027, EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders said.

NULAND RESIGNATION

* US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland plans to step down in the coming weeks, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

* US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland's resignation is related to the failure of

Washington's policy against Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

GERMAN MILITARY TALKS LEAK

* The conversation between high-ranking German military officers on security topics concerning Russia and Ukraine was leaked due to Brigadier General Frank Grafe, department head for operations and exercises at the Air Force Command in Berlin, who was in Singapore at the time, the Bild newspaper reported on Tuesday.

* German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius ruled out a possible participation of a "Russian spy" in leaked a conversation between high-ranking German military officers on security topics concerning Russia and Ukraine.

* The audio recording of a conversation between high-ranking German military officers on security topics concerning Russia and Ukraine was leaked because of unsecured connection of one of the participants, Pistorius said.

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

Israeli War Cabinet Member Gantz Grilled at White House Over Gaza - Reports

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - Israeli War Cabinet member Benny Gantz faced criticism and difficult questions about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza during his meetings at the White House this week, Axios reported on Tuesday, citing three Israeli and US officials.

The report said Gantz faced criticism during his meetings with Vice President Kamala Harris and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in an indication that the White House is losing patience with Israel after last week's tragedy which saw more than 100 Palestinians killed while attempting to receive aid from a convoy.

Gantz is a staunch political rival of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and went to Washington without his approval. The trip reportedly infuriated Netanyahu, who ordered the Israeli embassy in Washington not to facilitate Gantz's meetings.

According to a senior Israeli official cited in the report, Gantz's meetings drove home the fact that the Israeli government "is in deep s**t" with respect to how the US views Israel's role in Gaza's ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Both Harris and Sullivan informed Gantz that it is Israel's responsibility to find a solution that will allow much-needed aid to flow into Gaza, the report said.

"We hope that Mr. Gantz goes home informed by the conversations that we had, and the concerns that we expressed ... we think these conversations were constructive and productive, and hope that he goes home informed by them," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday when asked about the talks between Harris and Gantz.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from Gaza and breached the border, killing 1,200 people and abducting around 240 others. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. At least 30,410 people have been killed so far in the

Gaza Strip, local authorities said.

On November 24, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a temporary truce and the exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The ceasefire was extended several times and expired on December 1. More than 100 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza.

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

US Expands Charges Against Senator Bob Menendez to 16 in Bribery Case - Indictment

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - Democratic Senator Bob Menendez has been indicted with new charges related to obstruction of justice in his foreign bribery case, court documents revealed on Tuesday.

Bob Menendez faces 16 charges related to wire fraud, bribery, an official acting as a foreign agent, and obstruction of justice, among others.

The US Justice Department had recently indicted Menendez for allegedly receiving bribes in exchange for using his authority to assist the government of Qatar and benefit Egypt.

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

US Not Contemplating Sending Troops to Haiti to Support Police, Armed Forces – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) – The United States is not contemplating sending troops to Haiti to support the country's armed forces and police amid the deteriorating security situation there, Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"We are not contemplating sending US troops to Haiti to conduct security missions to support Haitian armed forces or police," Ryder said during a press briefing.

On Sunday, an armed gang stormed Haiti's largest prison, freeing an unconfirmed number of inmates, media reported, adding that another, smaller capital prison had also been stormed. In response, the authorities of the country's capital city of Port-au-Prince declared a 72-hour state of emergency and a curfew to detain the offenders.

Haiti has long been mired in a social and political crisis that escalated after the assassination of then-President Jovenel Moise on July 7, 2021. The country has faced an unprecedented increase in the activities of criminal groups, while the humanitarian situation has been further deteriorating due to natural disasters, such as severe floods, torrential rains, and earthquakes.

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

US Still Messaging N. Korea on Desire for Talks, Though Pyongyang Uninterested - Official

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - The United States is still conveying to North Korea its willingness to engage in diplomacy, even though Pyongyang has spurned calls to resume dialogue, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Jung Pak said on Tuesday.

"We continue to believe that the only viable way to achieve permanent peace on the Korean peninsula is through dialogue and diplomacy ... Even though the DPRK is uninterested in engagement, we will continue to message that we wish to resume dialogue without preconditions at any level and on any topic of concern," Jung Pak said during a Carnegie Endowment event.

Pak said that the US acknowledges North Korea's (DPRK) current lack of interest in talks. She added that in the event of continued non-engagement, there would be an intensified commitment, in collaboration with allies and partners, to counter DPRK aggression, enhance global security, support human rights, and disrupt financial flows.

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

Pentagon Says No Plans to Put US Forces on Ground in Gaza Strip

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Tuesday that the United States has no plans to put military forces on the ground in the Gaza Strip.

"At this time, there are no plans to put US forces on the ground in Gaza, to my knowledge," Ryder said during a press briefing.

The US Defense Department and Royal Jordanian Air Force have airdropped tens of thousands of meals into the Palestinian enclave as part of a joint humanitarian operation.

On October 7, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing 1,200 people and abducting approximately 240 others. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages.

At least 30,410 people have been killed so far in the Gaza Strip, according to local authorities. Earlier on Tuesday, the US State Department said that 30,000 dead civilians is not a fair price to eliminate Hamas.

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

Zelenskyy Not Asking for US Troops to Fight in Ukraine, Wants Security Aid - White House

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is not asking the United States to deploy troops to fight in Ukraine but has stressed the need for additional security assistance as its munitions dwindle, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"There's not going to be US troops on the ground fighting inside Ukraine...President Zelenskyy isn't asking for that, he's just asking for the tools and capabilities," Kirby said during a press briefing. "He's never asked for foreign troops to fight for his country. He and his troops want to do that, but they need the tools and that's what we need to help."

Kirby further said that the United States is worried that Congress' delay in approving additional funding for Ukraine security assistance is already having a detrimental effect on Ukrainian soldiers on the battlefield.

Ukraine's defensive lines are starting to shift in the "wrong direction" because the Russians continue to push west out of the Donbas, Kirby noted.

Moscow launched its special military operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Russian and Ukrainian delegations engaged in several rounds of peace talks, including in Turkey in March 2022, in the early days of the conflict. In October 2022, Zelenskyy signed a decree stating that Kiev could not hold peace talks as long as President Vladimir Putin is in power in Russia.

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

US House Lawmakers Introduce Bill to Prohibit TikTok, Other ByteDance Apps

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - US House lawmakers announced on Tuesday that they have introduced a bill to prohibit the distribution of applications (apps) owned and controlled by the Chinese technology giant ByteDance, including the video-sharing social media app TikTok, unless the company divests of the latter.

"[The measure seeks] to protect the national security of the United States from the threat posed by foreign adversary controlled applications, such as TikTok and any successor application or service and any other application or service developed or provided by ByteDance Ltd. or an entity under the control of ByteDance Ltd.," the text of the bill said.

The measure was introduced by US House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party members - Mike Gallagher and Raja Krishnamoorthi - and signed by 19 lawmakers.

The measure would impose civil penalties on app stores that distribute TikTok and other ByteDance-affiliated apps unless they are divested from Chinese ownership. A \$5,000 fine is proposed for each US user who accessed or updated an app.

The bill comes after a similar Republican-led bill was squashed in 2023 by Democrats over free-speech concerns.

The United States banned TikTok on all US government devices and on some state government devices.

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

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

US Senator Sinema Says Will Leave Upper Chamber of Congress at End of 2024

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - US Senator Krysten Sinema said on Tuesday that she will leave her seat in the upper chamber of the US Congress at the end of this year.

"Because I choose civility, understanding, listening [and] working together to get stuff done, I will leave the Senate at the end of this year," Sinema said in a video statement.

Sinema, a former Democratic Party member who became independent in 2022, has represented the state of Arizona in the US Senate since 2019. Prior to her role in the US Senate, Sinema served in the Arizona state legislature and US House of Representatives.

Sinema said in her video message that it had been an honor to serve Arizona for the past two decades,

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

US Inspector General Says Documented Dozens of Claims of Ukraine Aid Misconduct

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - The US Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Inspector General said in a report that it documented dozens of claims of misconduct involving aid sent to Ukraine by the United States since February 2022.

USAID's Office of Inspector General has received 15 complaints of alleged theft or diversion of aid, 12 complaints of program fraud, 11 complaints of procurement fraud and 11 complaints of conflict of interest, the report, released Monday, said.

The oversight office also received five complaints of alleged bribery, five complaints of mismanagement, and one complaint of sexual exploitation and abuse, the report said. In total, the office received 182 separate complaints.

The report includes summaries of closed complaint cases, but the office does not publicly disclose information about open investigations.

One closed case involved aid workers allegedly demanding fees from beneficiaries in order to receive assistance, the report said. Another case involved alleged corruption by a medical doctor in the city of Dnipro, the report said.

USAID Office of Inspector General personnel based in the US, Germany and Ukraine conduct investigations into misconduct claims, the report said.

The oversight team has held six meetings with USAID and other US government personnel, the report said. The team also met five times with Ukrainian entities and three times with aid implementers and subawardees, as well as conducted two fraud awareness briefings, the report said.

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

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

US Does Not Think 30,000 Dead Palestinians Fair Price to Eliminate Hamas - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - The United States rejects the notion that the killing of more than 30,000 Palestinian civilians, including women and children, is a "fair price" in Israel's military efforts to eliminate Hamas, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"No, and we do not want to see any civilians killed. We made that absolutely clear," Miller said during a press briefing when asked whether Israel's killing of 30,000 Palestinian civilians can be considered a fair price to eliminate Hamas.

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

US Congressman Says Bringing Assange's Brother to Biden's Annual Speech to Lawmakers

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Thomas Massie said on Tuesday that he will bring as his guest the brother of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange to President Joe Biden's annual State of the Union speech later this week.

"President Biden will be looking at Julian Assange's brother, Gabriel Shipton, in the House gallery Thursday night as Biden delivers the State of the Union," Massie said in a statement via the social media platform X.

Last month, a United Kingdom court held hearings to consider an appeal on the extradition of Assange to the United States, where he faces prosecution on espionage charges for obtaining and disclosing classified information. The court is expected to make a decision on the case sometime in March.

On Monday, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that he supports the United Kingdom granting protection to Assange.

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

Kerry Says Does Not Expect Relations With China to Deteriorate After He Steps Down

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - US Special Presidential Envoy John Kerry said on Tuesday that he does not expect the United States' relations with China on the climate issue to worsen after he leaves his post.

When asked whether he expects the United States' relationship with China to deteriorate after stepping down from his position, Kerry said, "No, I don't."

"I am hopeful that it won't," Kerry said.

Kerry noted that he held a very constructive virtual meeting with his new Chinese counterpart a

couple of days ago.

On Friday, Kerry said that nothing that the United States is trying to do regarding climate change would matter without China present at the table.

The United States and China announced in November that they had agreed to create a working group on the issue of climate change. The agreement came after Kerry met with his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua in California from November 4-7.

The working group will focus on the issues of energy transition, methane, the circular economy, resource efficiency, low-carbon, deforestation, among others, according to a statement issued by the two countries.

The climate envoys will head the activities and discussions of the working group, the statement said.

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

UPDATE- US Imposes Sanctions Related to Intellexa Spyware Consortium – Treasury

(Update: Adds paras 3-7)

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) – The US Treasury sanctioned two individuals and five companies associated with the Intellexa spyware consortium on Tuesday, according to a release.

“Today, the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated two individuals and five entities associated with the Intellexa Consortium for their role in developing, operating, and distributing commercial spyware technology used to target Americans, including US government officials, journalists, and policy experts. The proliferation of commercial spyware poses distinct and growing security risks to the United States and has been misused by foreign actors to enable human rights abuses and the targeting of dissidents around the world for repression and reprisal,” the release stated.

The Intellexa consortium has enabled the proliferation of commercial spyware and surveillance technologies around the world, including authoritarian regimes. Since its founding in 2019, it has acted as a marketing label for a variety of cyber companies that offer commercial spyware and surveillance tools to enable targeted and mass surveillance campaigns.

These tools are packaged as a suite of tools under the spyware brand name “Predator” and can infiltrate electronic devices through zero-click attacks that require no user interaction. Once a device is infected, the spyware can be leveraged for information stealing and surveillance capabilities, including data extraction, geolocation tracking, and access to a variety of applications and personal information on the compromised device.

The sanctions target key enablers of the consortium, including Tal Jonathan Dilian, its founder and architect of its spyware tools, and Sara Aleksandra Fayssal Hamou, a corporate off-shoring specialist who has provided managerial services to it. Hamou also holds a leadership role at Intellexa S.A., Intellexa Limited, and Thalestris Limited, all of which are also being sanctioned.

Intellexa S.A. is a Greece-based software development company within the consortium and has exported its surveillance tools to authoritarian regimes. Intellexa Limited is an Ireland-based

company within the consortium that acts as a technology reseller and holds assets on behalf of it. Thalestris Limited is an Ireland-based entity within the consortium that holds distribution rights to the Predator spyware and acts as a financial holding company for it.

The sanctions also target Cytrox AD, a company based in North Macedonia within the consortium that develops the Predator spyware, and Cytrox Holdings Zartkoruen Mukodo Reszvenytarsasag, a Hungary-based entity within the consortium that previously developed the Predator spyware for the group before production moved to Cytrox AD.

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

Blinken Welcomes Release Of Best Practices For Restitution on Nazi-Confiscated Art

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken welcomed the release of Best Practices for the Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art, the State Department said on Tuesday.

“Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken today welcomed the release of Best Practices for the Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art, which are the result of international collaboration on effective steps to implement the restitution of Holocaust-era art, books, and other cultural objects in line with the landmark 1998 Washington Conference Principles,” the statement said.

The Best Practices recognize that forced sales happen and underscore the urgency of resolving remaining claims for property, regardless of whether it concerns private or public collections, the statement said.

The US stressed that the Best Practices were prepared by 14 countries, including Albania, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The document will bolster restitution efforts by more precisely defining what is considered Nazi-looted art and remedying processes that favor current possessors over rightful owners, the statement added.

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

Kerry Says US Russia 'Sadly' Have Not Engaged on Issue of Climate Change

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - The United States and Russia have "sadly" not been able to engage on issues pertaining to climate change, US Special Presidential Envoy John Kerry said on Tuesday.

"Unfortunately because of the actions that Russia took in an unprovoked illegal war against another nation, we have not been engaged in discussions with Russia sadly," Kerry told

reporters. "I say sadly because it's a loss for the world not to be able to have Russia acting constructively on this issue."

Kerry shared that he has seen Russian Climate Envoy Ruslan Edelgeriyev at various meetings. "I haven't seen him being super engaged with a lot of people because the other countries are angry enough that they're unwilling to engage at this point," Kerry said.

Kerry told Sputnik in September that it is important to have a dialogue on climate with every country, including with Russia.

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

Kerry Says Will Stay Engaged in Fight Against Climate Change After Stepping Down as Envoy

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - US Special Presidential Envoy John Kerry told reporters on Tuesday that he will stay engaged in the fight against climate change after leaving his post. "I intend to not move away for this fight while I am leaving the job that I am in today," Kerry said. Kerry pointed out that he will be even more engaged in the transition by trying to bring capital to the table as well as necessary partnerships in the fight against climate change.

After stepping down from his current position and retiring, Kerry said he will also be working at Yale University in some capacity.

US media reported earlier this week that Kerry's last day on the job will be Wednesday.

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

Russian Ambassador to US: We Are Facing Threat of Direct Clash Between Russia, NATO

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) – There is a threat of a direct clash between Russia and NATO and this scenario can only come to life with Washington's approval, Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said on Tuesday.

"There are talks now about the participation of NATO soldiers in the hostilities [in Ukraine]. Such a scenario can only go forward with Washington's approval. Essentially, we are facing a danger of a direct clash between the armed forces of Russia and the North Atlantic Alliance [NATO] in eastern Europe," Antonov told Sputnik in a statement.

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

Musk Says US Will Collapse if Country Tries to 'Absorb' World Through Immigration

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - The United States faces the risk of collapse if it continues

to allow migrants from around the world to enter the country illegally, billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said on Tuesday.

"America will fall if it tries to absorb the world. That is why I am banging the drum so much about this issue," Musk said in a statement via social media platform X, in response to a post criticizing the Biden administration's handling of border security.

The Biden administration is "importing voters" through its immigration policy, Musk said in a separate post on Tuesday. Such actions constitute treason, Musk added.

Musk's statements come amid an increase in illegal immigration to the US under the Biden administration that has amounted to some eight million people officially, but substantially more according to unofficial sources.

The United States has experienced three conservative years of record illegal migration at the US southern border, according to Customs and Border Protection data.

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

US Has Abused Its UNSC Veto Power on Gaza Issue – China Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, March 5 (Sputnik) – The United States has abused its veto power in the UN Security Council when it comes to the issue of the conflict in Gaza, China's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Geng Shuang said on Tuesday.

"The results of the Security Council's vote clearly show that on the issue of a ceasefire in Gaza, the vast majority of council members are in agreement. However, the US has abused veto power," Geng Shuang said during the UN General Assembly plenary meeting.

He pointed out that such an approach causes widespread discontent in the international community.

The Chinese diplomat expressed disappointment that the US "forcefully blocked" the Security Council's most recent call for a ceasefire in Gaza. He stressed that a ceasefire is the only way to solve the conflict in Gaza.

On February 20, the United States vetoed an Algeria-drafted UN Security Council resolution that was calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. Thirteen members of the UN Security Council voted in favor of adopting the resolution, with the United Kingdom abstaining.

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

Thousands of Facebook, Instagram Users Report Outages – Downtdetector

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) – Several thousand users of Facebook and Instagram (both belong to Meta, whose activities are banned in Russia as extremist) on Tuesday reported outages of the popular social networks, according to reports compiled by the Downtdetector website.

As of 10:26 a.m. (15:26 GMT), as many as 315,817 users reported that Facebook was down for them with the first reports starting to be registered at about 10:11 a.m. (15:11 GMT), according to DOWNDetector data.

More than 50,000 users of Instagram also report problems with the social network and seeing an error message that reads "Couldn't refresh Feed."

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

US Imposes Sanctions Related to Intellexa Spyware Consortium - Treasury

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - The US government has sanctioned two individuals and five companies associated with the Intellexa Consortium, the Department of the Treasury said in a release on Tuesday.

"Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated two individuals and five entities associated with the Intellexa Consortium for their role in developing, operating, and distributing commercial spyware technology used to target Americans, including US government officials, journalists, and policy experts," the release said.

The proliferation of commercial spyware poses distinct and growing security risks to the United States and has been misused by foreign actors to enable human rights abuses and the targeting of dissidents around the world for repression and reprisal, the release added.

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

US Imposes 'Nonproliferation Measures' Against Russia's Wagner Group - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed "nonproliferation measures" against the private military company Wagner Group and the Russian Aerospace Forces, the US State Department said in a notice released Tuesday.

The measures were imposed pursuant to the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act (INKSNA) and became effective on February 27, the notice said. The measures were also imposed against LLC EltekhNord, Russian national Pavel Shevelin and North Korean national Rim Yong Hyok.

"No department or agency of the US government may procure or enter into any contract for the procurement of any goods, technology or services from these foreign persons, except to the extent that the Secretary of State otherwise may determine," the notice said.

The measures also ban the US government from providing any assistance to the designated people and entities, the notice added.

The measures will remain in effect for two years unless otherwise determined by the US Secretary of State, according to the notice.

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

Parents of Imprisoned Wall Street Journal Reporter to Attend US State of the Union Address

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) - The parents of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who is detained in Russia on charges of espionage, will attend the State of the Union address later this week at the invitation of US House Speaker Mike Johnson, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

"We are grateful to Speaker Johnson for inviting us to attend the State of the Union and for providing the opportunity to highlight Evan's wrongful detention," Ella Milman and Mikhail Gershkovich said in a statement, as quoted by the newspaper.

Milman and Gershkovich also said that they grateful to President Joe Biden for his continued work to bring Evan back to the United States.

"Evan is an American and he was doing his job as a journalist. He is most importantly a beloved son and brother, and we want him home," they said.

Milman and Gershkovich will also meet with Johnson in advance of the Biden's address on Thursday night.

Evan Gershkovich was detained on March 29 last year by Russia's Federal Security Service on allegations of espionage after he tried to obtain information on Russia's defense sector.

Gershkovich is currently being held in pretrial detention. The US government has designated Gershkovich as a person who is "wrongfully detained."

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

Israel Must Maximize Every Effort to Deliver Aid to People of Gaza - Blinken

WASHINGTON, March 5 (Sputnik) – Israel must do its utmost to ensure that people in the Gaza Strip get humanitarian aid amid the ongoing conflict, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

Israel has to maximize every possible means, every possible effort of getting assistance to people who need it," Blinken said before his meeting with Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

Blinken stressed that more crossings and more aid are required to address the situation that is currently "unacceptable."

On Thursday, at least 112 Palestinians were killed during an aid delivery in Gaza City after Israeli troops fired as people congregated in anticipation of food aid trucks.

The Israeli military claimed that most died from being trampled or run over by the trucks. The Israel Defense Forces admitted it opened fire on several Gazans who moved toward an IDF tank and troops.

