

6/10/24 Monday

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Using American Money to Slander Americans To Get More American Money: Ukraine's New 'Enemies List'

Last week, a Ukrainian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) linked to the State Department published a study claiming that hundreds of Americans, including prominent media figures, politicians, and peace organizations, were "mirroring" Kremlin propaganda. The study claims that these figures and groups are hindering additional US aid to Ukraine.

The study was published by a "Data Journalism Agency" TEXTY, which according to The American Conservative was co-founded by Anatoly Bondarenko, [who worked as an instructor](#) for the US State Department's TechCamp program, where he worked as a trainer for the TechForum Ukraine conference that says it taught "60 local journalists, civil society, community leaders, and private sector partners."

In 2016, USAID and the UK Government [awarded an \\$18 million grant](#) to the Eurasia Foundation to partner with TEXTY and other Ukrainian entities to create the Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration and Services (TAPAS) program in Ukraine, purportedly to fight corruption in the country. Though the program has switched its focus since the start of the special military operation, TAPAS still lists TEXTY as a "partner" on its website.

USAID is a US government-funded NGO that is [often accused](#) of acting as a front organization for US intelligence agencies.

The list, titled "Roller Coaster, From Trumpist to Communist. The forces in the US impeding aid to Ukraine and how they do it" [consists largely of American individuals](#), outlets and politicians. Among them are several media outlets and their employees, including The Gray Zone, RT, The American Conservative, Antiwar.com and others.

It also lists 156 politicians, mostly Republicans, including former US President Donald Trump, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Reps Jim Jordan, Matt Gaetz, Rand Paul and Marjorie Taylor-Greene. The list also includes independent candidate for President Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Green Party candidate Jill Stein, and Libertarian National Committee chair Angela McArdle. Antiwar activist group Code Pink and its most prominent members were also listed, as was Rage Against the War Machine.

The study admits that most of the people on the list "do not have direct, proven ties to the Russian government or propagandists," but accuses them of "[echoing] key messages of Russian propaganda aimed at depriving Ukrainians of the ability to defend themselves with Western weapons and funds."

That this organization, funded at least in part through taxpayer money funneled through USAID on the promise of fighting corruption in Ukraine, is instead using that money to slander American citizens for exercising their constitutional right to free speech about how their taxpayer dollars should be spent.

"Americans should be able to sue their government [for sending] money over to a bunch of crooks who then come up with a list of evil people who are a bunch of Americans. Why are my

tax dollars paying for this?” asked the co-host of Sputnik’s [The Critical Hour](#), Garland Nixon, who is included on the TEXTY list.

Notably, not a single Democratic lawmaker was included on the list.

“We don’t have one stinking lawmaker on the left who’s representing [leftists who don’t support funding Ukraine] and says enough is enough,” podcast host Craig ‘Pasta’ Jardula told Sputnik. “While they’re listing people like [Nixon] and putting you in danger. This is ridiculous. This is Looney Tunes.”

TEXTY purports to be fighting Russian propaganda, and lists a series of stories it purports have been debunked but are still brought up by those it accuses of echoing Russian propaganda. Among those supposedly debunked stories are the [well-documented](#) issue of right-wing neo-Nazis in Ukraine, the publicly acknowledged US Biolabs in Ukraine and the assertion that the 2014 Maidan coup was in fact a coup [funded](#) and [managed](#) by the United States.

Jardula said it reminded him of “social engineers.”

“There are these people who actually believe that there were no Biolabs in Ukraine [and they] probably still believe the Russiagate story, right?” Jardula proposed. “It just makes me think that the social engineers, they understand how to move the people, how to dupe the people.”

Outlets like TEXTY depend on low-information viewers who receive most of their news from corporate media outlets. “They control the narrative,” explained Jardula. “[A lot of] people don’t understand that there’s alternative media out there. Most people don’t care because they’re consumed, whether it be with sports or fun, or just consumers trying to put a roof over their head and food on the table.”

Americans in particular are susceptible to anti-Russian propaganda because for decades they have been portrayed as the enemy in movies and TV shows. “You can go all the way back to cartoons and Boris Badenov and Natasha [from The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle],” The Critical Hour co-host Wilmer Leon noted.

“They have the mainstream media in their pockets, so they can just continue to repeat the lie over and over again,” explained Jardula.

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Neoliberalism Being Crushed in EU Elections Provides Opportunity For The Real Left

Over the weekend, European Union countries voted in EU parliamentary elections, with the conservative parties handily defeating Centrist neoliberal parties nearly across the board. Groups commonly described as “right-wing” won in France, Germany, Austria, Italy and elsewhere.

“The problem with the Left is that there are 10,000 socialist scholars in this country and not one ***** socialist.” - Abbie Hoffman.

The fall of Neoliberalism in Europe is typically interpreted as the “right-wing” being on the march, calling to mind images of Neo-Nazi skinheads marching through European capitals like their idolized, long-dead Führer.

But the elections in Europe can be interpreted differently: Europeans rejecting neoliberal imperialism, neocolonialism and neocapitalism. That should be seen as an opportunity, not a defeat, for those who truly subscribe to leftist values.

Yes, anti-immigrant groups with nationalistic rhetoric and symbology won big during the elections. Alternative for Germany became the second largest political group in the country, trailing only the more traditional conservative CDU/CSU.

In France, the National Rally party smashed the centrist coalition so thoroughly that French President Emmanuel Macron dissolved the National Assembly and called for a new election in a comeback bid that carries with it significant risk.

However, it is more important to look at who lost, not won, the elections. In France, most of the gains made by the National Rally party came at the expense of Macron's Renaissance party, a trend replicated in Spain, Romania, Denmark and Estonia. In Germany, the AfD's gains came from losses of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens, both center/left parties.

The centrist and so-called leftist parties in Europe were not advancing the needs of the working class. They were not fighting to end imperialism. They were not advancing any of the causes that launched worker movements at the turn of the last century. Instead, they asked workers to give up more so that the military machine could continue churning, and worse, they acted smug about it.

"If I give the promise to people in Ukraine, we stand with you as long as you need us," Germany Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said at the 2022 Forum 2000 conference. "Then I want to deliver, no matter what my German voters think." Baerbock is part of the German Greens Party, which came to prominence on a pro-environment platform.

"[The Greens] offer people no material solutions to the crisis that they see forming in their societies," activist and political commentator Phil Kelly told Sputnik's Political Misfits. "The big problem for Europe at the minute is there is no coherent, left-wing movement that's effectively rooted in the labor movement and the working class that can counter this kind of rise of the right."

"They've either abandoned that to join the centrist kind of parties the way the Greens have coalesced, or they've gone to the kind of lunatic fringe, which has nothing to offer ordinary people other than a kind of post-modernist drivel."

Kelly says that the centrist left and more extreme right "feeds off the other" ultimately keeping each other in power. "It's kind of like in US elections where things are framed around 'you have to vote for the lesser evil,' You know, the liberals will tell you, 'Yes, [US President Joe] Biden is awful. Yes, he is supporting genocide but Trump will be worse.'"

The Greens in Europe, who pushed for the Green Deal to be Brussels' signature issue for the past half a decade, saw their biggest losses in France and Germany, where farmers have been protesting what they see as overly stringent environmental regulations.

The neoliberal elites in Europe have been cannibalizing Western societies since the 2008 financial crash, Kelly argues, which has resulted in them having "nothing left to give."

"And then you have these moralistic Greens telling you that you need to pay more to save the environment," Kelly explained.

That call to action falls on deaf ears however, not only because it hurts workers economically, but because their imperialistic actions put the lie to their moral grandstanding and the working class in Europe sees that plainly.

“All the yogurt pots in the world that you rinse out and recycle cannot offset the carbon of a missile being fired at apartment blocks in Eastern Ukraine or the Donbass,” Kelly said. “It’s good to see them rejected,” Kelly continued. “As I’ve long said, especially the European Green Movement is not a leftist project. It is a distraction and it is a contagion within the body of the true kind of workers movement, the true movement you need to really challenge these failing elites, not only in Europe, but across the world.”

Last week, a Ukrainian NGO linked to the State Department released a study purporting that hundreds of Americans, including prominent media personalities and outlets, politicians and peace organizations that “mirror Kremlin propaganda,” to prevent further US aid to Ukraine.

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“Americans should be able to sue their government [for sending] money over to a bunch of crooks who then come up with a list of evil people who are a bunch of Americans. Why are my tax dollars paying for this?” asked the co-host of Sputnik’s The Critical Hour, Garland Nixon, who is included on the TEXTY list.

Notably, not a single Democratic lawmaker was included on the list, a fact that should not come as a surprise since not a single Democratic Representative or Senator has voted against Ukraine aid.

“We don’t have one stinking lawmaker on the left who’s representing [leftists who don’t support funding Ukraine] and says enough is enough,” podcast host Craig ‘Pasta’ Jardula told Sputnik. “While they’re listing people like [Nixon] and putting you in danger. This is ridiculous. This is Looney Tunes.”

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'An Endless Cycle of Brutality': Four Rescued as 274 Killed in Gaza

Speaking to Sputnik, Carrillo reported that starvation and the control of other humanitarian aid is being used as a weapon of war against the more than 2 million Palestinians who have been under a severe blockade for almost 20 years now.

On Saturday the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) announced that they had rescued four of their hostages, including a Russian national, who had been kidnapped from the Nova music festival on October 7. While news of the rescue was welcomed by the [US](#) - who helped aid the mission - many condemned Israel's actions after the Gaza Health Ministry said that at least 274 Palestinians had been killed as a result.

Esteban Carrillo, a Beirut-based Ecuadorian journalist and crime editor for The Cradle, joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) on Monday. Carrillo commented that the Nuseirat refugee camp is one of the "last few remaining places in Gaza" where Palestinians have managed to find a "modicum of shelter".

"On Saturday morning, as there were crowds of hundreds of Palestinians in the camp, at a marketplace waiting for the delivery of humanitarian aid, Israeli ground troops infiltrated the camp, hiding in the back of what Israeli media describes as a furniture delivery truck. Right. Because in the middle of a genocide, is it common practice to get furniture deliveries?" Carrillo commented.

"The reality is: this is one of the many civilian vehicles being used in Gaza to deliver humanitarian aid. Because any working vehicle in Gaza at this point has to be used for the delivery of humanitarian aid," he continued. "According to eyewitness reports, this force came from the US-built Gaza pier and, essentially, all hell broke loose. As these forces are trying to infiltrate, [there was] heavy artillery fire, heavy tank fire, swarms of drones. The eyewitnesses say upwards of 150 missiles landed on the camp within 10 minutes."

"This massacre that happened on Saturday [occurred] in the span of about an hour," he added. "Almost 300 Palestinians [were] killed. The Gaza Health Ministry [said] the death toll [on Saturday was] at [274 killed](#) and almost 700 injured, and it was just complete devastation. And, yes, the rescue of four Israeli captives being held in that camp, according to Hamas, ...the Israeli raid killed three other Israeli hostages, although Tel Aviv has denied this."

Carrillo added that the West expressed "jubilation" on Saturday following Israel's rescue efforts, which included praise from French President Emmanuel Macron and US President Joe Biden. However, [Macron](#) has criticized the humanitarian crisis in the southern city of Rafah, and said the number of those killed following nine months of war is unacceptable.

"Benny Gantz, who is often described as a moderate - never mind the fact that he was behind some of the most bloody operations in the Gaza Strip between 2012 and 2021 - he [has pulled] from the coalition," Carrillo reported. "He had already warned that he was going to withdraw from Netanyahu's war cabinet. And in his speech, he apologized to the families of the captives who remain in Gaza, of which there are more than 100, not all of them alive. I believe a small number of them remain alive and he apologized to them, saying 'we have failed', and says that Netanyahu is standing in the way of total victory.

Sputnik's Melik Abdul then asked Carrillo what Gantz's resignation will mean for Israel's war strategy in Gaza, and if it will affect Netanyahu's policy and strategy.

"I will say that in the short term it's undoubtedly going to be business as usual. Now, this is not really going to hurt the way the war has been fought or the lack of a plan, right? There's not even a plan currently, much less for after the war. So in that sense, I think we're just going to continue to see more of the same," said Carrillo of the situation in Gaza.

"I would not advise anyone to really expect a ceasefire, because the resistance themselves said it yesterday that the massacre of these 300 Palestinians at the Nuseirat camp was also an attempt by Israel to implode any attempt at a deal, because how can [they] sign a deal with a government, with an army, with an administration that is so willing to go in and just massacre people in such a horrible way," the journalist added.

"If you were in Hamas's shoes, why would you trust the Israelis? Why would you trust the US who allowed their pier to be used in this way? Because there's videos of the captives being taken out of Gaza via the US-built pier and, like I said, eyewitness accounts that say that these trucks that were carrying the Israeli commandos came from the [US pier](#)," he said. "CENTCOM has denied this, but as we know from history, the US loves to deny the things that they're actually plotting."

Last week, US President Joe Biden announced that Israel had accepted a [ceasefire deal](#) that would lead to the release of all hostages. But even as the president announced the new ceasefire deal, he acknowledged that Israel had not fully agreed to the plan. Since then, Israeli officials have said that US description of the ceasefire proposal was "not accurate" and claimed that Biden had only announced a partial version of the plan in his speech.

The UN Security Council announced on [Monday](#) their plans to adopt the US-drafted resolution and called on Hamas to accept the deal.

"Hamas welcomes what was included in the Security Council resolution regarding a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, a complete withdrawal [of military forces] from the Gaza Strip, prisoner exchange, reconstruction, the return of displaced persons to their places of residence, the rejection of any demographic change in the Gaza Strip or reduction of its territory, and the provision of the necessary assistance to our people in the strip," the movement said in a statement.

"The US, what they want is a PR victory. They need something ahead of the elections," Carrillo said. "Joe Biden needs to settle this conflict before November so he has something to point at, right? Because before this broke out, his big victory in the Middle East was going to be Saudi-Israeli normalization and that completely fell apart. [He has] this genocide hanging over [his] head. [He has] the poll numbers not going [his] way and global outrage."

"Israel has been very clear. They are saying, 'we cannot allow a stop to the war'. And this is something that even the Israeli opposition is not looking for, they're not looking to actually stop the war," Carrillo explained. "They are completely on board with this idea of eradicating Hamas, despite the fact that this is impossible. You cannot eradicate the idea of resistance. And, as far as Hamas goes, they have been willing to play ball for months now as long as any deal calls for the immediate cessation of hostilities, for the withdrawal of the Israeli army and for the entry of humanitarian aid, for the reconstruction of the Strip, etc."

"When it comes to the Israeli government, it's about the continuation of the war, just like the eradication of Hamas. When they say Hamas, they generally - and I think by their actions they

have proven this - that they generally just mean Palestinians, right? Palestinians, no matter [if] they're women, if they are children, they just need to get rid of them," the journalist suggested. Describing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Carrillo reported that there is a famine spreading across the Gaza Strip. He added that just yesterday, the UN World Food Programme said they would stop the delivery of aid via the [US-built pier](#) due to security reasons following the pier's use for the IDF's military operation on Saturday. The program's announcement is tragically ironic, as the US-built pier was first announced by the Biden administration as a use for humanitarian aid.

On Saturday, the Gaza Health Ministry reported that the total death toll in Gaza is now at 37,084 people.

"Come Sunday, there were already many think pieces in Israeli media wondering was this even a victory, right? And not many with much concern for the Palestinian death toll but more to do with the fact that it's been eight months that they've killed 40,000 people or, you know, almost 40,000 people - more if you count those under the rubble - and they have only managed to rescue six captives - four this weekend, two a few months ago. And then, you know, the biggest amount of captives that they got back was in November when there was a two-week ceasefire deal that worked, right. But since then, they haven't wanted to stop."

"It's just on an endless cycle of brutality, of violence, of bloodbath that is being sponsored by the US government, that is being sponsored by NATO and the West."

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Bets and Threats: Macron Weighs Voters' Distaste for His Party Against Fear of the Right

The president announced that two rounds of voting would take place just a few weeks before the Paris Olympics - one round on June 30, and the other on July 7. His announcement came not long after Jordan Bardella, the National Rally's 28-year-old leader, called on the president to hold parliamentary elections.

French President Emmanuel Macron has [dissolved](#) the French National Assembly and called for snap parliamentary elections later this month following a major victory for his right-wing rival, Marine Le Pen's National Rally in the European Parliament vote.

Le Pen's party is slated to win 32% of the vote, according to exit polls which is more than twice the amount of Macron's Renaissance party.

Macron is essentially betting against his voters as his decision sends a message that, though they may be angry at him and his government, they are not so angry that they will turn to the right-wing pick of Le Pen - known for her nationalist ideology, Euro-skepticism, and anti-immigration policies - as their new head of state, the [Washington Post reported](#).

Sputnik's Ted Rall, a political cartoonist and syndicated columnist as well as co-host of The Final Countdown, joined [The Critical Hour](#) on Monday to discuss the possibility of a French presidency under Le Pen.

"A few months ago I said there was a strong chance [Macron] would not be the president of the republic by September. I think we are looking at that possibility and basically he sees that he's powerless at this stage," said Rall. "He had no political or legal requirement to call an election."

"This [is more so him] just taking the temperature of the electorate. It's a really bold move. What he's saying is, 'look, I can't govern effectively without a mandate. Right now, I don't feel like I have a mandate. Either give me a mandate or I'm turning over the car keys to Marine Le Pen, and you guys can enjoy her'. It's basically a threat."

The French president told his [voters](#) that he has "heard [their] message" and that he "will not let it go without a response." He added that "France needs a clear majority in serenity and harmony," but said that he could not resign himself to the right-wing's progress "everywhere in the continent".

Sputnik's Garland Nixon prompted Rall, and asked him what his prediction was for France's political future.

"Macron is a canny [person] and he could pull this [off]," said Rall. "But I think France is a very different country today. I mean, the politics are radically different. And if they're really personalized and they're very populist, the age of the technocrat embodied by Macron is really drawing to an end."

"The one detail out of yesterday's election results is that the left-wing party, La France Insoumise - which basically means France in uprising or rebellious France, led by Jean-Luc Melenchon who is also a left-winger but [is] a populist like Le Pen - they picked up seats, too," Rall explained. "Only the populist parties picked up seats in the EU elections. So, we'll see what happens, but my instinct tells me it's going to probably be Le Pen, which would be absolutely earth shattering."

"[Le Pen has] just played the long game. She's been a perennial candidate in cycle after cycle, just slowly increasing the share of the party, making alliances, reaching out to the young," Rall said.

"Her party, by American standards, would not really be considered that conservative. It would be sort of a centrist party in the US. The French right-wing, including her party, accept the welfare state. They accept climate change and science," he added. "And so, if she comes to power, yeah, she'll be pushing an agenda, but - and definitely France will move to the right - but the friendship of state takes a long time to turn around. It has an inertia of its own."

Nixon then asked Rall how a Le Pen presidency could affect the Ukraine conflict.

"Le Pen has not been [completely opposed](#) to supporting Ukraine. She was partly in the tank for Ukraine. I would say the best way to interpret her stance is that she's a tepid interventionist. She's not a total isolationist," Rall explained. "If you're Zelensky and you're looking to France, you're not going to get the kind of full-throated support that you're currently getting from Macron. This is bad news for Zelensky and for Ukraine, but it's not catastrophic."

"And I think fundamentally, most people who support the Rassemblement National are people who are isolationist, they don't want to see French tax dollars going overseas when the French standard of living is shrinking and the welfare state is imperiled. So most Frenchmen these days would like to see the money directed more toward their own domestic needs."

"I suspect she is deeply suspicious of deindustrialization. She's deeply suspicious of the project of expanding NATO eastward," the political cartoonist added. "That's something that her party and her people have always been against. So, I do think that you're going to be looking at a France that is pushing back in sort of the 1960s Gaullist tradition against the Americanization of France."

Sputnik [reported](#) on Sunday that during US President Joe Biden's trip to France to mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landing of Allied troops, Macron had been "playing host to the US leader with all the pomp and circumstance befitting a state visit".

However, the performance of peace between the two could not conceal the underlying tensions felt by both leaders. While the French are frustrated by the Biden administration's "overbearing approach to trans-Atlantic leadership", the US is equally as exasperated by Macron's "increasingly warmongering thirst for asserting his country's independence from the US. "It's weird because you're looking at a president who came in with the biggest, basically, National Assembly coalition in postwar parliamentary history. And yet, he never really somehow clicked with the average French voter," said Rall of Macron.

"So, he's really popular, but he had a lot of support, but that support wasn't deep. It was wide, but shallow. And now he's coming up against Marine Le Pen whose support was a little narrower than his, but was much deeper. In that sense, it's kind of like a Biden-Trump analogy. And now the problem for him is her support now is wide as well."

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Jurors in Hunter Biden Drug, Gun Law Trial Have Begun Deliberations - Report

As his father faces an uphill battle in a presidential campaign, the 54-year-old attorney and businessman is scheduled to face another trial in September for which he has been charged with failing to pay at least \$1.4 million in taxes.

Jurors in Delaware have begun deliberating on Hunter Biden's criminal trial on felony charges related to his efforts to obtain a .38 revolver from a gun shop in 2018 while allegedly battling addiction to crack cocaine. This is the first time that the son of a sitting president has faced a criminal trial.

The first son faces three felonies including: false statement in purchasing of a firearm, false statement related to information required to be kept by federal firearms licensed dealer, and possession of a firearm by a person who is an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance.

According to a recent report from [The Guardian](#), the jurors have heard emotional testimonies from "Hunter Biden's former romantic partners, read personal text messages and seen photos of him with drug paraphernalia or partially clothed."

One woman who said she met Hunter Biden at a strip club where she worked in 2017 described him smoking crack every 20 minutes or so while she stayed with him at a hotel.

The defense for the president's son tried to show that he did not consider himself an "addict" when he filled out a form to purchase a revolver. His defense attorney - [Abbe Lowell](#), who represented the daughter of former President Donald Trump, Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner in 2018 - also suggested that having a famous last name does not change the fact that he is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

His lawyers have also suggested that he was "trying" to turn his life around when he purchased the gun, and that he had completed a detoxification and rehabilitation program at the end of August 2018.

Hallie Biden - Beau Biden's widow whom Hunter Biden reportedly had a romantic relationship with following his brother's death - told jurors she "panicked" when she found a Colt Cobra revolver in Hunter Biden's vehicle on October 23, 2018. She said she threw it away in a trash can as a result. She also claims that Biden smoked crack on a "daily" basis or "frequently" during her testimony. However, she told the jury that she did not see Biden abusing drugs or alcohol for most of the month of October.

But the prosecution has shown texts that Biden sent to his brother Beau's widow. They have argued that the texts show drug use and drug deals in the days following the first son's gun purchase. Biden's attorney, Lowell, has suggested that Biden was "lying" to his brother's widow. The [jurors](#) are made up of six men and six women. During the jury selection, a "majority" of potential jurors told the court they have personally experienced addiction issues through their friends and family.

Biden's family members, including the first lady, have been present throughout the trial since hearings first began a week ago. The attorney and businessman has pleaded not guilty to all three charges and has accused the justice department of political sway from Trump and other Republicans after his plea deal with prosecutors fell through [last year](#).

If convicted, Biden could receive up to a maximum of 25 years in prison. The president told reporters last week that he would not pardon his son.

The trial comes on the heels of [Trump's own criminal trial](#), the conclusion of which found the former president guilty of 34 felonies in New York City, making him the first president in US history to be criminally convicted. The Manhattan case focused on a hush money payment Trump made to adult film actress Stormy Daniels with whom the former president allegedly had an affair.

'An endless cycle of brutality': 4 were rescued as 274 were killed in Gaza

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) announced that they had rescued four of their hostages, including a Russian national, who had been kidnapped from the Nova music festival on October 7. While news of the rescue was welcomed by the US - who helped aid the mission - many condemned Israel's actions after the Gaza Health Ministry said that at least 274 Palestinians had been killed as a result. "This massacre that happened on Saturday [occurred] in the span of about an hour," said Esteban Carrillo, a Beirut-based Ecuadorian journalist and crime editor for The Cradle, who joined Sputnik's Fault Lines. "Almost 300 Palestinians [were] killed. The Gaza Health Ministry [said] the death toll [on Saturday was] at 274 killed and almost 700 injured, and it was just complete devastation. And, yes, the rescue of four Israeli captives being held in that camp, according to Hamas, ...the Israeli raid killed three other Israeli hostages, although Tel Aviv has denied this." Describing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Carrillo reported that there is a famine spreading across the Gaza Strip. He added that just yesterday, the UN World Food Programme said they would stop the delivery of aid via the US-built pier due to security reasons following the pier's use for the IDF's military operation. The program's announcement is tragically ironic, as the pier was first announced by the Biden administration as a use for humanitarian aid. "When it comes to the Israeli government, it's about the continuation of the war, just like the eradication of Hamas. When they say Hamas, they generally - and I think by their actions they have proven this - that they generally just mean Palestinians, right? Palestinians, no matter [if] they're women, if they are children, they just need to get rid of them,"

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Growth in China Projected to Slow to 4.8% in 2024, Soften to 4.1% in 2025 - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The World Bank has revised its economic growth forecast for China in 2024 upward by 0.3 percentage points to 4.8% due to stronger-than-expected export activity, according to its latest Global Economic Prospects report published on Tuesday. "In China, growth is projected to slow to 4.8 percent in 2024, 0.3 percentage point higher than January forecasts, mainly reflecting stronger-than-expected activity in early 2024, particularly exports," the report said. "Growth is projected to soften further, to 4.1 percent in 2025 — 0.2 percentage point lower than forecast in January, owing primarily to a weaker outlook for investment — and 4.0 percent in 2026, as potential growth is weighed down by slowing productivity, softer investment, and mounting demographic headwinds."

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World Bank Revises Russia's 2024 Economic Growth Upward to 2.9% - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The World Bank expects Russia's economic growth to slow down to 2.9%, a 1.6 percentage point upward revision from January, according to a World Bank report published on Tuesday.

"Growth in Russia is forecast to decelerate to 2.9 percent in 2024, 1.4 percent in 2025 and 1.1 percent in 2026, near its potential rate," the new Global Economic Prospects report said.

Russia's economic growth picked up to 3.6% in 2023, a 1 percentage point upward revision from January's estimate.

"The upgrade largely reflects stronger-than-expected private demand, supported by subsidized mortgages, fiscal measures, and a tight labor market (figure 2.2.1.B). Increased military expenditures also boosted activity. After cuts in early 2024, oil production hovered around 9.2 mb/d in the second quarter, down by 0.4 mb/d from 2023 (IEA 2024)," the report said.

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Brent Oil Price Forecast to Rise Slightly to \$84 Per Barrel in 2024 - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The World Bank expects Brent oil prices to rise to \$84 per barrel this year before decreasing to \$79 per barrel in 2025 as OPEC+ partially winds down its supply cuts, according to its latest Global Economic Prospects report published on Tuesday.

"Against a backdrop of continued geopolitical risks, the average price of Brent oil is forecast to

be slightly higher this year than last, at \$84/bbl, before receding to \$79/bbl in 2025 amid the partial unwind of OPEC+ supply cuts and expanding non-OPEC+ production. The near-term oil price forecast is notably uncertain, however, given the potential for price spikes resulting from conflict-related supply disruptions," the report said.

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Growth in China Projected to Slow to 4.8% in 2024, Soften to 4.1% In 2025 - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The World Bank has revised its economic growth forecast for China in 2024 upward by 0.3 percentage points 4.8% due to stronger-than-expected export activity, according to its latest Global Economic Prospects report published on Tuesday.

"In China, growth is projected to slow to 4.8 percent in 2024, 0.3 percentage point higher than January forecasts, mainly reflecting stronger-than-expected activity in early 2024, particularly exports," the report said. "Growth is projected to soften further, to 4.1 percent in 2025 — 0.2 percentage point lower than forecast in January, owing primarily to a weaker outlook for investment — and 4.0 percent in 2026, as potential growth is weighed down by slowing productivity, softer investment, and mounting demographic headwinds."

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EU Growth Projected as 0.7% in 2024, 1.4% in 2025 – World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – The World Bank has projected EU economic growth to settle at 0.7% in 2024 and increase to 1.4% in 2025, according to its latest Global Economic Prospects report.

"Growth is forecast to firm only slightly in 2024, to 0.7 percent, supported by an ongoing recovery in real incomes but dampened by still-subdued investment and export growth," the report said.

It added that "growth is forecast to pick up in 2025, to 1.4 percent, as the recovery in export and investment growth gathers pace, with the latter benefiting from lower policy rates and the absorption of EU funds."

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US Growth to Average 2.5% in 2024, 1.8% in 2025 – World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – US economic growth is expected to average 2.5% this year and fall to 1.8% next year, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report.

"In the United States growth is forecast to average 2.5 percent this year, and moderate to a

below-trend rate of 1.8 percent in 2025," the report said.

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Ukraine's Growth to Average at 5.8% in 2025-26 If Hostilities Moderate - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The Ukrainian economy is expected to grow by 3.2% this year before rising to an average of 5.8% a year in 2025–26, according to a World Bank report published on Tuesday.

"In Ukraine, growth is anticipated to rise from 3.2 percent in 2024 to an average of 5.8 percent a year in 2025–26, under the assumption that active hostilities continue throughout 2024 and subsequently moderate," the new Global Economic Prospects report said.

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RPT - Ukraine Reconstruction Costs Estimated at \$486Bln Over Next Decade - World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Ukraine reconstruction costs are estimated at \$486 billion over the next decade, according to a World Bank report published on Tuesday.

"Reconstruction costs are estimated at \$486 billion over the next decade, approximately 2.8 times nominal GDP in 2023, and a significant increase from previous estimates," the new Global Economic Prospects report said.

More than 6.4 million people have fled the country, according to the report.

Loss of jobs, incomes and assets, and high inflation have reversed 15 years of poverty reduction in Ukraine, the report added.

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Global Growth to Stabilize at 2.6% in 2024, Increase to 2.7% in 2025 – World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – Global economic growth is expected to stabilize at the first time in three years in 2024 at 2.6% and increase to 2.7% next year, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report.

"Global growth is projected to hold steady at 2.6% in 2024 before edging up to an average of 2.7% in 2025-26," the World Bank said in a press release.

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Ukraine Reconstruction Costs Estimated at \$486Bln Over Next Decade - World Bank

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Hamas Backing UN Resolution 'Hopeful Sign,' But Final Word on Ceasefire Needed - Blinken

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Hamas' support for a UN Security Council resolution that welcomes the recent ceasefire proposal outlined by President Joe Biden is a "hopeful sign," but the United States is still waiting to see the Hamas leadership's meaningful response to the proposal, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"Well, I'd say it is a hopeful sign, just as the statement that they issued after the President made his proposal ten days ago was hopeful, but it's not dispositive. What is dispositive, at least what's so far been dispositive one way or another, is the word coming from Gaza and from the Hamas leadership in Gaza. That's what counts, and that's what we don't have yet. And that's why I say we're waiting to see," Blinken told reporters in Tel Aviv.

He also said that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaffirmed his commitment to the ceasefire proposal during their meeting last night.

Blinken noted that the UN Security Council adopting the US-drafted resolution with 14 votes in favor and no votes against "speaks volumes."

The longer the war in Gaza goes on, the more chance there is for the conflict to spread, Blinken warned.

On May 31, Biden said that Israel had offered Hamas a new three-phase proposal with a road map that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and the release of all hostages.

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RPT: ANALYSIS - Ukraine's Use of US Weapons in Russia Dangerous Escalation, May Extend Conflict

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is prolonging the conflict in Ukraine and taking another step toward a "dangerous escalation" by allowing Kiev to conduct limited strikes on Russian territory with US-supplied weapons, experts told Sputnik.

On Sunday, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Ukraine has already started firing US-provided weapons on Russian territory following President Joe Biden's approval to do so. Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned NATO member nations that they should realize "what they are playing with" by allowing Ukraine to use Western weapons to strike Russian territory. Putin also said Russia will use all means at its disposal if the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity are threatened.

Russia also asked for a meeting of the UN Security Council to be held on June 14 to discuss the West's approval for Kiev to use their weapons on Russian territory.

US PUSHING DANGEROUS ESCALATION

Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned economist and president of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, told Sputnik that Washington's decision is a dangerous escalation.

"This is yet another escalation. It is dangerous," Sachs said. "The only sane course is Russia-US negotiation, based on ending the US plan for NATO enlargement to Ukraine, establishing Ukraine's neutrality, ending the war, and settling other pending issues."

Sachs further said that establishing Ukraine as a neutral state would resolve the crisis and save vast numbers of lives.

"This entire conflict could have been and should have been avoided, based on neutrality, collective security, and mutual respect," Sachs said.

Former Iranian Ambassador to Germany Seyed Hossein Mousavian said Biden's decision is in line with the West's strategy to prolong the conflict in Ukraine, and the consequences from this policy will not contribute to international peace and security.

"Unfortunately, there is no credible international initiative to end the Ukraine war, and the strategy of NATO member countries is based on prolonging this war," Mousavian told Sputnik.

Mousavian suggests that the conflict in Ukraine could be resolved through an international peace initiative that prohibits NATO from expanding its territory to Russian borders and holding free elections under UN supervision in territories gained by Russia in Ukraine.

"The majority vote will determine the fate of these territories," Mousavian said.

EX-US OFFICIALS EXPECT NO ESCALATION

Former American officials who support the US decision do not expect it could lead to an escalation. They claim it could pave the path to new Ukraine peace talks.

However, Russia has repeatedly shown an interest in participating in fair negotiations that take into account Moscow's serious security concerns, including NATO's expansion to its border. Russian officials have made several attempts to resolve the crisis in Ukraine through meetings with key Western nations.

Former US ambassador-at-large to the Soviet Union Stephen Sestanovich told Sputnik that Biden's decision was a "necessary step" to respond to the scale of Russia's special military operation.

Russia made gains on the battlefield in Ukraine amid a months-long delay in the United States for new Ukraine aid funding.

Sestanovich added that he thinks there's a risk Russia could ramp up its military operation in Ukraine in light of the US decision, but he does not expect Russia intends to expand its operations beyond the country's borders.

"NATO's leaders, including president Biden, have made clear they want to avoid such an expansion of the war," Sestanovich said, adding that Russia's leaders have the same desire.

Charles Kupchan, a former Europe expert at the White House National Security Council, told Sputnik that the Biden administration's decision is "a good one" with low chances of escalation. "I think the chances of escalation are low," Kupchan said. "Enhancing Ukraine's ability to defend itself is critical to ending the war."

Kupchan was part of a group of former US national security officials that met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in New York in April 2023 to discuss matters related to Ukraine. Kupchan noted that Russia will not easily give up its goal to steer Ukraine away from the West. US officials have declined to confirm to Sputnik whether US bombs are already falling on Russian territory, but they reiterate that Ukraine "understands" that its use of US weapons on Russian territory is only for limited defensive strikes just across Russia's border. US policy with respect to prohibiting the use of ATACMS or long range strikes inside of Russia has not changed, according to US officials.

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Illegal Migrants Still Let Into US Amid No Help From Mexico on New Border Policy - Source

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Migrants who cross the US southern border illegally continue to be released into the United States because President Joe Biden's new executive order to limit illegal entries has been difficult to implement with no agreement from Mexico to cooperate, a US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) source familiar with the matter told Sputnik.

"It hasn't been easy because there was no agreement made with Mexico yet," the source said on Monday. "What we're seeing is the majority who are being deported are people from Mexico."

Last week, Biden issued a new executive order barring migrants who illegally cross the US southern border from claiming asylum in the United States. The new restrictions went into effect on Wednesday, but the suspension will be removed when daily illegal entries hit or fall below 1,500 for seven-consecutive days. The restrictions will snap back if daily illegal entries on the US southern border exceed 2,500 illegal crossings for seven straight days, according to the White House.

Media recently reported, citing a leaked CBP memo, that Border Patrol agents on the Mexico-California border have been instructed to release most illegal migrants caught crossing the border unlawfully unless they are adult migrants from Georgia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, who will all be subject to expedited removal from the United States.

The San Diego sector in California is the new hot spot for illegal migration on the US southern border.

The migrants released into the United States are given a court date to appear before an immigration judge to decide whether they will be deported, but they will not be able to seek asylum, media reported.

Migrants are usually given court dates that may be several months or more than a year away due to the massive backlog in the US immigration system.

The Mexican Embassy in Washington and CBP did not immediately respond to Sputnik's requests for comment on this matter.

Illegal migration on the US southern border has gone through three consecutive record-breaking years since Biden assumed office in January 2021, totaling nearly 8 million illegal encounters during that period, according to publicly available CBP data.

Since October 2023, an estimated 1.5 million migrants have been apprehended for illegally crossing into the United States on the southern border, CBP data shows.

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US President Joe Biden Announces Record Drop in Violent Crime - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) — US President Joe Biden said in a statement that violent crime is dropping at record levels in America, calling it good news for families and communities.

"Violent crime is dropping at record levels in America. It's good news for our families and our communities," the statement said on Monday.

According to the statement, earlier today, the FBI released preliminary data from over 11,000 law enforcement agencies showing a 26% decrease in murders, a nearly 18% decrease in robberies, and a 15% decrease in overall violent crime in the first quarter of this year.

"This progress we're seeing is no accident. My Administration is putting more cops on the beat, holding violent criminals accountable, and getting illegal guns off the street – and we are doing it in partnership with communities. As a result, Americans are safer today than when I took office," the statement read.

Furthermore, Biden will continue fighting for funding for an additional 100,000 police officers and crime prevention programs to ensure public safety, the statement added.

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Pentagon Denies Israel Used US Pier Off Gaza Coast in Deadly Hostages Rescue

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department has refuted reports that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) used the temporary pier off the coast of the Gaza Strip to conduct its hostage rescue operation over the weekend.

"The humanitarian pier facility - including its equipment, personnel and assets - were not used in the IDF operation to rescue hostages in Gaza," the Pentagon quoted spokesperson Pat Ryder as saying during a press briefing on Monday. "Any such claim to the contrary, is false."

On Saturday, Israel conducted a special operation and rescued four hostages held by the Palestinian movement Hamas.

According to media reports, the IDF used the US humanitarian pier and humanitarian-marked vehicles in the operation, which resulted in 274 Palestinians killed and more than 400 injured.

In late May, the US military pier attached to the Gaza coastline to facilitate deliveries of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian enclave was damaged by bad weather only two weeks after

it began operating. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) had to temporarily dismantle the pier to conduct repairs after being damaged by bad weather.

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Austin to Host Ukraine Contact Group Meeting in Brussels June 14 – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will be traveling to Brussels, Belgium to host the 23rd meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group on Friday and meet with his NATO counterparts, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Monday.

“The secretary and chairman will join ministers of defense and senior military officials from nearly 50 nations to discuss the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and the continued support from the international community to provide the Ukrainian people with the means necessary to defend their sovereign territory,” the US Department of Defense quoted Ryder as saying during a press briefing.

The discussions on Friday will focus on supplying Ukraine with air-defense capabilities and efforts to enhance the defense industrial base within Ukraine and across the military bloc, Ryder said.

Since April, the United States has announced six packages of military assistance to Ukraine after US President Joe Biden signed a bill providing about \$60 billion in new funding for the country.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) -

GAZA CEASEFIRE

* The UN Security Council on Monday adopted a US-drafted resolution for a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, a complete withdrawal of military forces from the Palestinian enclave and a prisoner exchange.

* The Palestinian movement Hamas welcomed the resolution which also stipulates the return of displaced persons, the rejection of any demographic change or reduction of territory and the provision of the necessary assistance to Palestinians.

* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem to discuss the US proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the State Department said.

* Blinken called on Israel to develop post-war plans for Gaza that covered security, governance and reconstruction.

* The United Nations decided to pause its humanitarian operations via the US pier off the Gaza Strip coast following Israel's deadly hostage rescue operation over the weekend is "only

normal," UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

ENERGY MARKETS

* The BRICS nations on Monday agreed to enhance their energy cooperation and push for a fair energy transition that reflects national circumstances, according to a joint statement released by their foreign ministers at the close of the first day of talks.

* Oil prices on Monday increased 3% to their highest level in ten days as traders looked beyond recent builds in US crude and fuel supplies to bet on forthcoming summer travel, typically the busiest period for oil consumption in the United States.

US-SOUTH KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS

* The United States and South Korea held the third meeting of the bilateral Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) to discuss the impact on nuclear deterrence and response capabilities, the two countries said in a joint statement.

TERRORIST ATTACK IN NIGERIA

* Some 50 people were killed and dozens more injured in a series of terrorist attacks in the Nigerian state of Katsina, the newspaper Guardian Nigeria reported on Monday.

UKRAINE CONFLICT

* Heavy fighting is taking place near the settlement of Urozhaynoye, also known as Urozhaine, located at the junction of the Zaporizhzhia region and the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), Vladimir Rogov, a senior official of the Russia-appointed Zaporizhzhia regional administration, told Sputnik on Monday.

* The village of Staromaiorske, near Urozhaynoye, also came under the control of Russian military earlier in the day and is of great tactical importance for operations in the Vremenaya direction, Rogov said.

* The Russian military disrupted the rotation of Ukrainian units in the Orikhiv direction, including nearby the settlement of Luhivske, Rogov said.

* Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Brazilian counterpart Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva discussed by telephone the conflict in Ukraine and the upcoming alleged peace conference in Switzerland as well as the strategic partnership between Russia and Brazil, the Kremlin said.

* The BRICS foreign ministers have welcomed proposals of mediation of the conflict in Ukraine, according to a joint statement released after the ministerial meeting in Nizhny Novgorod.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

* The June 6-9 European Parliament elections have been held under severe elections, and the EU institution will keep "ideological basis" to continue its Russophobia-based policy after the results of the vote, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Monday.

* The political forces that advocated against confrontation with Russia have faced discrimination and even direct pressure, Zakharova said.

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Jury Deliberations Begin in Hunter Biden Firearm Form Trial - Reports

(Update: adds details in para 4)

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Jury deliberations began in a trial involving Hunter Biden's alleged lies about his drug use on a firearm purchase form, CNN reported on Monday.

The jury will determine whether Biden is guilty on three charges linked to his alleged lies on the firearm purchase form, for which he faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

US President Joe Biden said last week that he will accept the outcome of the trial and not pardon his son if he is convicted.

The court dismissed the jurors on Monday evening, before they reached a verdict, the report said. Deliberations are set to resume on Tuesday morning.

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Elon Musk Says Will Ban Apple Devices if Company Integrates OpenAI at OS Level

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - US entrepreneur Elon Musk on Monday said he would ban Apple devices at his companies if the company integrates OpenAI at the Operating System level.

"If Apple integrates OpenAI at the OS level, then Apple devices will be banned at my companies. That is an unacceptable security violation," Musk posted on his X profile.

He followed his statement by adding that all visitors to his companies would have to "check their Apple devices at the door," storing them in a Faraday box.

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Nebenzia: Russia Has Unanswered Questions About Newly Adopted UNSC Resolution on Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - Russia has many questions regarding the newly adopted US-drafted UN Security Council resolution which welcomes a Gaza ceasefire proposal whose details are not known to the public, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.

"We have a whole host of questions about the American draft resolution, whereby this Council welcomes some deal, the ultimate outlines of which are not known to anyone, perhaps, except the mediators," Nebenzia said during a UN Security Council meeting on Palestine and Israel.

The UN Security Council earlier on Monday adopted a US-drafted resolution welcoming the Gaza ceasefire proposal announced by President Joe Biden on May 31 and calling on Hamas

to accept it. Russia abstained from voting on the text.

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Elon Musk Says if Apple Integrates OpenAI at OS Level, He Will Ban Apple Devices at His Companies

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Blinken Meets With Netanyahu in Jerusalem to Discuss Gaza Ceasefire - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem to discuss the proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the State Department said on Monday.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met today with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem," the State Department said in a statement.

Blinken reiterated numerous world leaders support US President Joe Biden's proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all hostages and increased humanitarian aid to the residents of the Palestinian enclave.

"He [Blinken] reiterated that the proposal on the table would unlock the possibility of calm along Israel's northern border and further integration with countries in the region," the statement said.

Blinken also updated Netanyahu on the ongoing diplomatic efforts for the post-conflict period and emphasized the efforts to prevent the conflict from spreading, the statement said.

The US State Department announced last week that that Blinken would visit Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Qatar from June 10-12 to discuss the proposed ceasefire deal. Blinken was received by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi in Cairo earlier on Monday.

In late May, Biden said that Israel had offered the Palestinian movement Hamas a new three-phase proposal with a road map that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and the release of all hostages.

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Oil Jumps 3% as Traders Bet on US Summer Demand Despite Stockpile Builds

NEW YORK, June 10 (Sputnik) - Oil prices jumped 3% to their highest in 10 days on Monday as traders looked beyond recent builds in US crude and fuel supplies to bet on forthcoming summer travel, typically the busiest period for oil consumption in the country.

The front-month July contract for US-origin West Texas Intermediate crude settled up \$2.21, or 2.9%, at \$77.74 per barrel. The US crude benchmark reached \$77.71 during the session — its highest since a May 31 peak of \$78.62.

The front-month August contract for UK-origin Brent crude, the global benchmark for oil,

finished the US session up \$2.01, or 2.5%, at \$81.63. Brent's high for Monday was \$81.86, also the highest since May 31, when it peaked at \$82.18.

"Traders have decided to buy the dip," Fawad Razaqzada, analyst at StoneX in London, said in a market commentary shared with Sputnik. "With the US driving season underway, demand is likely to recover, keeping the downside limited – for now."

Monday's turnaround comes after steep losses of late in oil.

The US crude benchmark slumped a cumulative 5.8% over the past three weeks, while Brent lost 5.3% in the same period.

Oil extended its declines this week on worries that global oil producing alliance OPEC+ will not provide adequate support with its output cuts to offset weak summer demand for fuels.

OPEC, the global oil producing alliance, affirmed on Sunday that it will carry out output cuts through 2025, extending commitments initially set until the end of summer. OPEC+, which groups the 13-member Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries with 10 other oil producing nations steered by Russia, will attempt to cut 2.2 million barrels per day from its joint production.

The problem for oil bulls though is nagging market fear that the reductions will not be enough to compensate for potentially weaker-than-usual demand for fuels this summer, especially with rising crude output from non-OPEC+ producers led by the United States.

To add to market consternation, OPEC+ suggested that if demand improved by the year end, the alliance would add more than 500,000 barrels per day to the market by December, and 1.8 million by June 2025.

US oil supplies are, meanwhile, climbing, adding to the weight on crude prices.

In inventory data for the week ended May 31, the Energy Information Administration said US crude balances rose by 1.233 million barrels during the week ended May 31 after a prior weekly drop of 4.156 million barrels. Energy analysts on Wall Street had anticipated a drop of 2.1 million barrels instead.

Gasoline stockpiles rose by 2.102 million, adding to the prior weekly build of 2.022 million.

Distillates showed a 3.197 million barrel gain after the previous rise of 2.544 million.

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UNSC Adopts US-Drafted Resolution Welcoming Proposal for Ceasefire in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council on Monday adopted a US-drafted resolution welcoming the Gaza ceasefire proposal announced by President Joe Biden and calling on Hamas to accept it, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

Fourteen members of the council voted in favor, with Russia abstaining.

On May 31, Biden said that Israel had offered Hamas a new three-phase proposal with a road map that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and the release of all hostages.

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US President Joe Biden said last week that he will accept the outcome of the trial and not pardon his son if he is convicted.

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UN Pauses Use of US Pier Off Gaza Coast After Israel's Deadly Rescue Operation - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United Nations' decision to pause humanitarian operations via the US pier off the Gaza Strip coast following Israel's deadly hostage rescue operation over the weekend is "only normal," UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"I think it's only normal after such an operation takes place, with such a large number of victims that are humanitarian colleagues, to take a pause," Dujarric said.

The spokesperson said the United Nations follows closely the situation on the ground and hopes the world body can resume humanitarian operations as soon as possible.

Dujarric made the statement in response to a request for comment given that the US humanitarian pier was not operational.

Earlier on Monday, the UN World Food Program said they would temporarily pause operations using the US pier until a thorough assessment of the security situation is made.

Israel conducted an operation on Saturday and rescued four of the more than 100 hostages held by the Palestinian movement Hamas. However, Israel used the US humanitarian pier and used humanitarian marked vehicles to reach the hostages and killed 274 and injured more than 400 Palestinians in the process.

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UNSC Extends Mandate of Monitoring Team on Sanctions Against IS, Al-Qaeda - Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council has adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the team monitoring sanctions against the Islamic State and al-Qaeda

(both terrorist groups, banned in Russia) until June 2027, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Monday.

Fourteen members of the council voted in favor, with Russia abstaining.

The current mandate of the team and the office of the ombudsperson expires on June 17.

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FBI Says Not Aware of Any Credible Threat to Upcoming NATO Leaders' Summit in Washington

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The US authorities are not aware of any credible threats to the NATO leaders' summit in Washington next month, FBI Assistant Director in Charge of the Washington Field Office Dave Sundberg said on Monday.

The NATO leaders' summit will take place from July 9-11 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

"We do not have any specific or credible threats to the NATO summit," Sundberg said during a press conference.

FBI intelligence analysts will be working to assess and share intelligence with the agency's partners leading up to and during the summit to ensure the safety of all participants, Sundberg added.

US Secret Service Special Agent in Charge of the Washington Field Office Matthew Stohler said during the press conference that Washington residents should expect increased traffic on roads and walkways due to street closures and other restrictions.

Washington Metropolitan Police Department Chief Pamela Smith said there will be a notable increase in motorcade volume and security presence outside of hotels and various embassies in Washington.

Smith further said the police department does not anticipate at present any protests activities during the summit, but said it is possible some may eventually take place.

6/10/2024 2:41:23 PM -04:00

Apple Integrating Artificial Intelligence Features Into Products - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US tech company Apple is integrating artificial intelligence (AI) features into its products, CNN reported on Monday.

The company seeks to add personalized AI technology, dubbed Apple Intelligence, to their products, the report said, citing presentations at the Worldwide Developers Conference.

"As we look to build in these new capabilities, we want to ensure that the outcome reflects the principles at the core of our products, it has to be powerful enough to help with the things that matter most to you," the report quotes Apple CEO Tim Cook as having said.

AI features on the iPhone will allow users to generate stylized pictures of real people, the report said. AI will also be used to make Apple's virtual assistant, Siri, smarter, the report said.

Apple will attempt to integrate AI features with user privacy in mind, the report added.

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US Statements on Ukraine's Resources Reflect Essence Of Neo-Colonial Approach - Antonov

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The statements by US legislators about Ukraine's resources show Washington's neo-colonial approach, Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said on Monday.

"Cynical public confessions of Russophobes, sitting on the Capitol Hill, indicate a desire to preserve for U.S. companies the opportunity to use the resources of the puppet republic. Such statements are the essence of the Americans' neocolonial approach," Antonov said. "When it comes to trillions of dollars, they are ready to sacrifice all Ukrainians."

Senator Lindsey Graham, who is on Russia's list of extremists and terrorists, said in an interview with CBS that the US cannot afford to lose in the Ukrainian conflict, since a defeat would mean the loss of access to Ukrainian natural resources, the value of which the politician estimates at \$10-12 trillion. Graham added that Ukraine is "sitting on a gold mine. Moreover, Graham said, if Kiev loses, these resources would go to Russia and China.

"This is the real economy of conflict for the U.S. The blood of thousands of people is a 'stock quote' for banal raw materials used in batteries. And also a chance to saturate the local military-industrial complex with contracts," Antonov said. "An opportunity to sell 'gas molecules of democracy' to one's own allies, and at a higher price that is."

Antonov stressed that it would not be possible to break Russia using such methods, especially amid the growing number of capitals that understand the true aspirations of Washington strategists and the real reasons for the special military operation.

"Including thanks to the amazing frankness of some of the local politicians," he concluded.

Western countries have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. Military aid shipments began in 2022 with artillery munitions and training and have escalated to include tanks, advanced air-defense systems, missiles, and cluster munitions.

The Kremlin has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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US, South Korea Hold Third Meeting of Nuclear Consultative Group - Joint Statement

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States and Republic of Korea (ROK) held the third meeting of their Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) to discuss the group's impact on nuclear deterrence and response capabilities, the US and ROK said on Monday in a joint statement.

"During this NCG meeting, both sides assessed that the NCG has bolstered nuclear deterrence and the response capabilities of the Alliance since the inaugural NCG through in-depth discussions on all areas of extended deterrence, including information sharing, consultative mechanisms, and joint planning and execution," the joint statement said.

NCG principles discussed joint and combined planning and execution of US-ROK conventional and nuclear integration options on the Korean Peninsula, the statement said.

The two sides reaffirmed that the integration of ROK advanced conventional capabilities with US nuclear operations strengthens the allied deterrence and response capabilities against the North Korean nuclear and missile threat, the statement said.

The US and ROK also reaffirmed their commitment to continue close cooperation to strengthen their combined deterrence and defense posture, the statement said.

The fourth NCG meeting will be convened in the US later this year, the statement said.

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ANALYSIS - Ukraine's Use of US Weapons in Russia Dangerous Escalation, May Extend Conflict

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States is prolonging the conflict in Ukraine and taking another step toward a "dangerous escalation" by allowing Kiev to conduct limited strikes on Russian territory with US-supplied weapons, experts told Sputnik.

On Sunday, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Ukraine has already started firing US-provided weapons on Russian territory following President Joe Biden's approval to do so.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned NATO member nations that they should realize "what they are playing with" by allowing Ukraine to use Western weapons to strike Russian territory. Putin also said Russia will use all means at its disposal if the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity are threatened.

Russia also asked for a meeting of the UN Security Council to be held on June 14 to discuss the West's approval for Kiev to use their weapons on Russian territory.

US PUSHING DANGEROUS ESCALATION

Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned economist and president of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, told Sputnik that Washington's decision is a dangerous escalation.

"This is yet another escalation. It is dangerous," Sachs said. "The only sane course is Russia-US negotiation, based on ending the US plan for NATO enlargement to Ukraine, establishing Ukraine's neutrality, ending the war, and settling other pending issues."

Sachs further said that establishing Ukraine as a neutral state would resolve the crisis and save vast numbers of lives.

"This entire conflict could have been and should have been avoided, based on neutrality, collective security, and mutual respect," Sachs said.

Former Iranian Ambassador to Germany Seyed Hossein Mousavian said Biden's decision is in line with the West's strategy to prolong the conflict in Ukraine, and the consequences from this policy will not contribute to international peace and security.

"Unfortunately, there is no credible international initiative to end the Ukraine war, and the strategy of NATO member countries is based on prolonging this war," Mousavian told Sputnik.

Mousavian suggests that the conflict in Ukraine could be resolved through an international peace initiative that prohibits NATO from expanding its territory to Russian borders and holding free elections under UN supervision in territories gained by Russia in Ukraine.

"The majority vote will determine the fate of these territories," Mousavian said.

EX-US OFFICIALS EXPECT NO ESCALATION

Former American officials who support the US decision do not expect it could lead to an escalation. They claim it could pave the path to new Ukraine peace talks.

However, Russia has repeatedly shown an interest in participating in fair negotiations that take into account Moscow's serious security concerns, including NATO's expansion to its border. Russian officials have made several attempts to resolve the crisis in Ukraine through meetings with key Western nations.

Former US ambassador-at-large to the Soviet Union Stephen Sestanovich told Sputnik that Biden's decision was a "necessary step" to respond to the scale of Russia's special military operation.

Russia made gains on the battlefield in Ukraine amid a months-long delay in the United States for new Ukraine aid funding.

Sestanovich added that he thinks there's a risk Russia could ramp up its military operation in Ukraine in light of the US decision, but he does not expect Russia intends to expand its operations beyond the country's borders.

"NATO's leaders, including president Biden, have made clear they want to avoid such an expansion of the war," Sestanovich said, adding that Russia's leaders have the same desire.

Charles Kupchan, a former Europe expert at the White House National Security Council, told Sputnik that the Biden administration's decision is "a good one" with low chances of escalation.

"I think the chances of escalation are low," Kupchan said. "Enhancing Ukraine's ability to defend itself is critical to ending the war."

Kupchan was part of a group of former US national security officials that met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in New York in April 2023 to discuss matters related to Ukraine.

Kupchan noted that Russia will not easily give up its goal to steer Ukraine away from the West. US officials have declined to confirm to Sputnik whether US bombs are already falling on Russian territory, but they reiterate that Ukraine "understands" that its use of US weapons on Russian territory is only for limited defensive strikes just across Russia's border. US policy with respect to prohibiting the use of ATACMS or long range strikes inside of Russia has not changed, according to US officials.

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Closing Arguments Begin in Hunter Biden Firearm Case - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - A trial involving Hunter Biden's alleged lies about his drug use on a firearm purchase form entered closing arguments on Monday, CNN reported.

Biden faces three charges for allegedly failing to disclose his drug use on the firearm purchase form, for which he could serve up to 25 years in prison if convicted.

The prosecution contended in their closing arguments that Biden was aware of his drug use around the time he purchased the firearm, the report said. The evidence against Biden is "ugly and overwhelming," the prosecution reportedly said.

The prosecution also urged the jury not to consider the presence of Biden's family, including

First Lady Jill Biden, in the courtroom as part of their decision, the report said.

Following the closing arguments, the jury will begin deliberating on whether or not to convict Biden on the three charges.

US President Joe Biden said last week that he will accept the outcome of his son's trial and not pardon him if convicted.

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US Should Stop Selling Arms, Cease Military Contact With Taiwan - Chinese Embassy in US

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States should stop selling arms to Taiwan and cease military contact with the island, Chinese Embassy in the US spokesperson Liu Pengyu told Sputnik on Monday.

US Indo-Pacific Command chief Adm. Samuel Paparo said that the US developed a plan, dubbed "Hellscape," to send thousands of aquatic and aerial drones to aid Taiwan in the event of an attempt by Beijing to reunify the island with the mainland, US media reported earlier on Monday.

"The US should earnestly abide by the one-China principle and the stipulations of the three China-US joint communiques, stop selling arms to Taiwan and having military contact with Taiwan, and stop creating factors that could cause tensions in the Taiwan Strait," Liu said in a statement, in response to a question about the reported plan.

Beijing will not allow anyone to separate Taiwan from China by any means, the statement said. No one should underestimate China's determination, resolve and capability to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the statement said.

The Taiwan question is purely China's internal affair and tolerates no external interference, the statement said.

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Canadian Government Seeks to Amend Income Tax Act, Regulations – Ministry

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) – Canada's finance minister has formally proposed changes to the country's Income Tax Act and Income Tax Regulations to increase the capital gains tax, the Finance Ministry said on Monday as it moved ahead with a measure that has drawn criticism from the country's business community.

On April 16, Freeland introduced Budget 2024 to the Canadian Parliament with C\$39.2 billion in net new spending and a C\$39,8 billion deficit. The government's economic plan includes a measure to impose a 66.7% tax, up from 50%, on individuals making more than C\$250,000 in capital gains over a fiscal year. By doing so, Ottawa hopes to offset part of the massive increase in spending by raking in up to C\$19.4 billion over the next five years.

"Today, the Honorable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, tabled a Notice of Ways and Means Motion in Parliament to deliver greater tax fairness and implement

the changes in capital gains taxation announced in Budget 2024,” the ministry said.

The measure will come into effect starting June 25, the ministry said. The ministry said the tax hike would support the construction of 4 million new homes, make life “cost less,” and help grow the economy.

The federal government intends to maintain and create certain exceptions. Among them are the principal residence exemption which ensures the sale of a primary residence is tax-free, and a new C\$250,000 annual threshold on the sale of a secondary property, the ministry said.

The significant hike created a national debate on its fairness and utility. Businesses, chambers of commerce, and even the Canadian Medical Association have openly opposed the changes. The latter warned that the measure would add financial strain to doctors who do not have pensions.

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UNSC to Vote on US-Drafted Resolution Backing Gaza Ceasefire Proposal -Diplomatic Source

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council members are to vote on a US-drafted resolution on Gaza this afternoon, a UN Security Council source told Sputnik on Monday.

“The Council will hold the adoption meeting for the draft today afternoon, after the 1267/1989/2253 committee resolution adoption meeting at 3 pm,” the UN Security Council source said.

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Biden Admin. Eyeing Policy to Protect Illegal Immigrants Married to US Citizens - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is eyeing a policy that would protect illegal immigrants married to US citizens from deportation, The New York Times reported, citing four officials familiar with the matter.

The program, known as “parole in place,” would allow undocumented spouses of US citizens to avoid deportation and obtain work permits, the report said on Sunday.

The program could also help undocumented spouses receive US citizenship, the report said.

The Biden administration has not made a final decision on the policy proposal, the report said.

The number of people whom the program would impact is unclear, the report added.

Last week, US President Joe Biden took executive action to restrict migrants who illegally enter the United States from claiming asylum. The US has experienced three consecutive record-breaking years of illegal crossings at the southern border under the Biden administration.

More than 60% of Americans support the deportation of illegal immigrants from the US, according to a YouGov/CBS News poll released on Sunday.

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Reinforcement of IS Has Negative Impact on Security in Lake Chad Basin - Russia's UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - The enlargement of the Islamic State terrorist group (banned in Russia) is having a negative influence on security in the Lake Chad Basin, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Anna Evstigneeva said on Monday.

"We see the concern of coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea. The reinforcement of the Islamic State in Western Africa is having a negative impact on the security situation in the states of the Lake Chad Basin region," Evstigneeva said at a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

Russia is worried by the destructive actions of groups such as Boko Haram, she added.

Russia stands "ready to continue to deliver comprehensive support to our Central African Republic friends in the establishment of peace and security in the country," Evstigneeva said.

The presence of Russian military instructors has enabled CAR to protect its citizens and stabilize the situation in the country in a historically short time, Russian Ambassador in Bangui Alexander Bikantov told Sputnik earlier this week.

Moscow and Bangui are continuing talks on the establishment of a Russian military base in CAR, Bikantov said.

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Blinken Calls for Israel to Develop Comprehensive Post-War Plan for Gaza

WASHINGTON, June 10 – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on Monday for Israel to develop post-war plans for Gaza that covered security, governance and reconstruction.

"It's imperative that there be a plan, and that has to involve security, it has to involve governance, it has to involve reconstruction," Blinken said at a press briefing in Cairo on the first day of his Middle East tour to promote the US' latest ceasefire proposal.

Blinken said that developing post-war plans would be a "big part" of his trip and it "would be very good if Israel put forward its own ideas on this."

He said that it was urgent to have these post-war plans in place in case of a successful ceasefire agreement. Otherwise there would be three unpalatable scenarios in their absence – Israel would have to assume security responsibilities in Gaza, Hamas would continue its authority, or there would be a total security vacuum.

Blinken also continued to solely blame Hamas for standing in the way of a ceasefire agreement, calling the group the "the only outlier in this moment."

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel and breached the border, attacking both civilian neighborhoods and military bases. Nearly 1,200 people in Israel were killed and some 240 others abducted during the attack.

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. Over 37,000 people have been killed so far by Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip, according to local authorities.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the situation in Gaza is not a war, but rather the total destruction of a civilian population

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Americans Increasingly Hold Liberal Views on Social Issues – Poll

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) – Americans have been increasingly identifying as liberal on social issues, according to a Gallup poll released on Monday.

Its Values and Beliefs survey conducted on May 1-23 found that Americans are about equally likely to report their views on social issues as conservative (32%), moderate (32%), or liberal (33%). This parity is also seen in five-year figures from 2020 to 2024.

The overall upward trend in liberal views has been driven exclusively by Democrats.

However, this shift is less evident in economic issues, where 39% of Americans describe their views as conservative and 35% as moderate.

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US Targets 10 People, Entities With New Sanctions Against Houthis, Hezbollah - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) – The United States is imposing sanctions on 10 individuals, entities, and vessels for allegedly being engaged in transporting oil for the benefit of Houthi financial facilitator Sa'id al-Jamal and Hezbollah, the US Department of the Treasury said on Monday.

"Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is sanctioning ten individuals, entities, and vessels, including tanker captains, in multiple jurisdictions that have engaged in the illicit transport of oil and other commodities, including for the network of Houthi financial facilitator Sa'id al-Jamal," the department said in a press release.

The new sanctions affect the network of companies controlled by Houthi financier Sa'id al-Jamal, including United Arab Emirates- and Oman-based Shark International Shipping LLC managed by director John Britto Aruldhas, according to the release.

The United States has sanctioned India-based Rayyan Shipping (OPC) Private Limited, its vessel, the Guyana-flagged OLYMPICS, and captain Vivek Ashok Pandey for delivering cargo for the Sa'id al-Jamal network, the release said.

Sa'id al-Jamal's Yemen-based nephew 'Abdallah Najib Ahmad al-Jamal has been designated for managing money laundering operations for the network.

Additionally, the United States has imposed sanctions on Hong Kong-based Lainey Shipping Limited operating the Panama-flagged JANET, and Panama-based Louis Marine Shipholding Enterprises S.A., the owner of the Panama-flagged BELLA 1, for delivering cargo on behalf of

Hezbollah, according to the release.

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US Would Send Thousands of Drones to Aid Taiwan Against Chinese Military - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States would launch a swarm of aquatic and aerial drones between mainland China and Taiwan in the event of an attempt by Beijing to unilaterally reunify the island, the Washington Post reported on Monday.

Beijing likely plans to overwhelm Taiwan with a quick and massive military operation, the report said, citing US Indo-Pacific Command chief Adm. Samuel Paparo.

The US developed a strategy, dubbed "Hellscape," to counter such an action, Paparo said. The strategy involves moving thousands of unmanned submarines, surface vessels and aerial drones to the area to buy Taiwan, the US and partner forces more time to respond, Paparo said.

The Hellscape strategy is designed to make Beijing's forces "utterly miserable" for a month, Paparo said.

The strategy involves utilizing a number of classified capabilities, Paparo added.

Earlier this month, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said that the United States ought to stop sending "erroneous signals" to separatist forces in Taiwan, in response to US President Joe Biden declining to rule out the possibility of the US military assisting Taiwan if Beijing launches a military operation.

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Majority of US Voters Believe Biden's 'Mental Sharpness' in Decline - Poll

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - A majority of likely voters in the United States believe that US President Joe Biden's mental sharpness is in decline, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released Monday.

Most respondents, 57%, believe that Biden is getting less mentally sharp over time, the poll report said.

One-third of respondents (33%) do not believe that Biden's mental sharpness is declining, the poll report said.

The poll surveyed 1,080 likely US voters from May 28-30. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

The poll was conducted in advance of the 2024 US presidential election, in which Biden is the presumptive Democratic Party nominee. Biden, 81, is the oldest US President in history and would be 86 at the end of a possible second term in the White House.

In February, Special Counsel Robert Hur found that Biden willfully retained and disclosed classified materials, but declined to pursue charges in the case, contending that a jury would likely view Biden as an elderly man with a poor memory.

In April, US Attorney General Merrick Garland said that Biden has no mental impairment. The White House has also disputed Hur's assessment.