

6/11/24 Tuesday

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Russian Ships Entering Cuba Give US a Dose of Its Own Medicine

On Wednesday, a squadron of Russian ships, including a frigate capable of firing hypersonic missiles will arrive in Cuba as part of an international partnership program. A nuclear-powered and capable submarine will also be making the trip, along with support vessels.

The decision to send Russian ships to Cuba is giving America a taste of what they do to the rest of the world, international relations and security expert Mark Sleboda [told Sputnik's The Critical Hour](#) on Tuesday.

"I think we can definitely see this as a direct Russian reply to the general US declaration of conducting what it calls 'Freedom of navigation' exercises. Although, as far as we know, no one has challenged the freedom of navigation," Sleboda explained. "They patrol their navy up and down off Russia's and China's and Iran's coast, saber-rattling and threatening as part of their policy of containment."

The United States has frequently run "military exercises" off the coast of its nominal adversaries, including China, North Korea, Iran and Russia. Earlier this week, NATO kicked off [BALTOPS 2024](#) in the Baltic Sea, the largest exercise in the program's history.

The Russian trip to Cuba is "a reminder to the US... that two can play this game," explained Slaboda. "It needs to be said that in [BALTOPS 2024] the US sent B-52 Stratofortress bombers from the United Kingdom. They conducted— according to Russian reports— a simulated nuclear attack on the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad."

Noting that this is not the first time the US simulated nuclear attacks on Russia, they've done so in Crimea in the past, Sleboda called BALTOPS 2024 "incredibly provocative and irresponsible and dangerous," noting that while Russia is sending ships to Cuba, it is not simulating nuclear strikes on US soil.

"We see Russia and NATO on a precipice of direct confrontation between the two sides in Ukraine," he noted.

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Don't Expect EU Elections To Change Ukraine Policy

Over the weekend, populist right parties won big in EU Parliamentary elections, along with some conservative right parties. The biggest losers were the Greens and center-left parties.

The shocking election results in Europe have, in many countries, come at the expense of the parties more supportive of funding Ukraine, but that doesn't mean a policy change will be forthcoming.

Foreign policy is not the purview of the European parliament. That is decided by the individual governments within the EU and, of course, NATO. So while there is growing discontent over

their governments' support of the Kiev regime, that was not the focus of the voters and even if it were, the voters in this election were focused on immigration and EU policy.

"The European Parliament doesn't actually do anything. I mean, it doesn't actually do the minimum that you expect from a parliament, which is legislate. So it doesn't really do that. But, of course, foreign policy is not at all within the bailiwick of the European Parliament," [explained](#) George Szamuely on Sputnik's Fault Lines. "So these kinds of issues about deployments in Ukraine, that's determined at, [the] NATO level and at the level of [French President Emmanuel] Macron and [German Prime Minister] Olaf Scholz."

While the election does potentially portend a change in mood in Europe, it is difficult to predict how much that will translate into an election that has a focus on foreign policy. There is also the issue, familiar to most voters in the West: politicians changing once they get into office.

Early in her campaign, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni had a populist message. She spoke about EU sanctions on Russia hurting Italy's economy. She spoke about bucking EU immigration policies, but after the election, she said Italy will continue to follow NATO policies towards Russia and she has yet to address the immigration issue.

"[Meloni's] platform was pretty much like all populists in Europe, which is 'We have to do something about immigration.' And, of course, she hasn't done anything about immigration; in fact, immigration has continued and actually increased under her rule. But there's not much she can do. She can just throw her hands up and say, 'Well, immigration policy is sent by the EU,'" explained Szamuely.

That sequence of events could be repeated elsewhere in Europe. In France, the National Rally party picked up a dozen seats and received more than twice the votes of [Macron's Renaissance Party](#). While Presidential elections in France aren't until 2027, and Macron will not be able to run due to term limits, it did compel him to call for snap elections where he could be forced to work with Marine Le Pen's 28-year-old protege Jordan Bardella.

As much of a disaster that will be for Macron, it again does not mean we will see substantive changes in France, even if Le Pen takes the Presidency in 2027.

"Le Pen doesn't really stand for too many things any more than Meloni does. When you read the media, you think 'Oh, she's very skeptical about Ukraine and so on, but that's not really true,'" explained Szamuely. "She's basically been on board with the EU-NATO policy towards Ukraine. She said in the past she's going to leave the Euro. She's walked back on that. She's promising now that she will withdraw France from the integrated NATO military command, I think she's going to walk back from that."

The first test to see if the EU parliamentary elections will carry over to domestic European elections will come later this month. The [snap elections initiated by Macron](#) will take place on June 30, with the second round on July 7.

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Dangerous Heatwaves Forecasted For the US

The first heat wave of the year is set to smack into the central US by Wednesday, and by Thursday some states will experience triple-digit temperatures.

The US is forecasted to be hit with extreme heat this week. On Tuesday, temperatures were forecasted as reaching up to 103 degrees Fahrenheit (39 degrees Celsius) in Sacramento, California; 108 in Las Vegas; and 110 in Phoenix.

Things are predicted to only worsen by Wednesday and Thursday, with the record heat spreading into [Colorado](#) where temperatures will soar to the lower and mid-90s, with similar temperatures forecasted for [Texas](#).

Finally, those high temperatures will plow through to the East Coast, where New York City is forecasted to reach 90F degrees and Washington, DC, could reach 93F degrees. Atlanta, Georgia will also be hit with temperatures of 96F degrees.

More than 11,000 Americans have died from heat-related causes since 1979, the US Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)) has said. And last year, extreme heat was the cause of about 120,000 emergency room visits, according to a report from [The Guardian](#), citing the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The report emphasized that even indoor areas, including peoples' homes, are no longer safe in a world which is getting increasingly hot.

"The home environment can actually be a substantial risk in and of itself," said Jaime Madrigano, a public health researcher with Johns Hopkins University. "We find, during extreme heat events, that more people die in their homes than in other types of places. They're not making it to the hospital."

Homes that have suffered damage to their infrastructure no longer have proper insulation to keep cool. And failing power grids as well as weak cooling systems don't do enough to combat the growing heat.

A [study](#) published last year showed that a heatwave-related blackout in the city of Phoenix has the capacity to kill more than 12,000 people.

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A Moral Crisis: Confusion Between the US and Israel Continues as Both Administrations Show Cracks

Biden announced that Israel had accepted a ceasefire deal a week ago, yet Israeli officials have continued to maintain that they did not agree to the proposal and said it was "not accurate". On Monday, confusion between the US and Israel appeared to continue as the UN Security Council adopted a US-drafted ceasefire [resolution](#) for Gaza based on a proposal that was outlined by US President Joe Biden. The US claimed that Israel accepted the proposal, however Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly rejected it and maintains little to no possibility of a ceasefire.

Radhika Desai, an author and professor in the Department of Political Studies and the director of the Geopolitical Economy Research Group at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, sat down

with Sputnik's [The Critical Hour](#) on Tuesday. Desai told the show's hosts that since the war first unfolded in October, one has at "every stage been at a loss for words".

"So on the one hand, the UN has passed this resolution. The US says that Israel supports it, Israel says it doesn't support it," said Desai. "I would say that one thing that has not changed in this situation is the US continued and dogged support for Israel no matter what. But what has changed is that there are now the beginnings of cracks within the coalition in Israel. [Benny Gantz has resigned](#) because he thinks that Netanyahu is not being aggressive enough."

"Meanwhile, I think the right-wing parties are probably even worse than him, are only hanging on because they figure that if they lose this government, they may lose the war. [...] But Netanyahu is not in control of the situation," she added. "The US, Israel, in particular - are pulled apart by different directions. They themselves don't know what they're doing. But there's one thing they seem to be agreeing on, which is that no matter what the continued murder of a genocide of civilians in Gaza can continue."

"[And] the US makes all sorts of biased statements about how it wants Israel to stop murdering civilians. Meanwhile, we read in various papers and sources that they are [aiding and abetting](#) Israel all along, including in its most recent strike where it has managed to kill over 230 civilians in Gaza," said Desai of Israel's recent hostage rescue.

US officials who publicly resigned over the Biden administration's Gaza policy are now working together in an effort to support ongoing dissent, and to put pressure on the US government, [CNN reported on Sunday](#).

More than half a dozen people had left their jobs as a form of protest, with many officials saying they would pursue further action outside the government. Officials who spoke with the news outlet said they still have colleagues within the government who agreed with their decisions to leave.

"When you do something so wrong, you are going to generate a moral crisis within your own society, among your own people. And you are beginning to see that again. It's a moral crisis of two different sorts," the author explained. "In the US, people are resigning because they are horrified. In Israel, Benny Gantz has resigned because he thinks that Netanyahu is not doing, murdering enough Palestinians and bringing victory closer, faster."

"Inevitably, when you have this scale of carnage and even these resignations, by the way, began a long time ago," she added. "And the fact is that essentially what's new about this is that the scale of the carnage is prompting an unprecedented scale of resignations from various agencies of the US government."

"And they're now saying they're going to coordinate," Desai said. "They realize that this is something very big, that this represents their own country doing something far more wrong than they have been [...] trained to look away from a considerable amount of wrong."

Desai then drew a comparison between the US's actions in the Vietnam War to that of their actions in Gaza; citing campus protests as one major similarity. A "veil" had been placed around peoples' eyes at that point, during which voters had been told that what the US was doing was "liberating Vietnam" up until the point when the "veil" was suddenly torn off and people could see the "horror" of what the US was doing to Vietnam, she explained.

"If you look at the sheer number of bombs that had been dropped on this tiny strip of land called Gaza. It is now increased and beyond is now surpassed the level of all the bombs used in World War II. Just consider that," said Desai. "[Israel says] that Hamas is using civilians as human

shields. You left hardly any space for Hamas. Of course, Hamas and civilians are all going to have to take shelter in the same place.”

“Gaza itself was a tiny enough place that you could practically bomb anywhere and say that this is where Hamas is and there are civilians there. So, it really is, the sheer madness is spiraling itself out of control.”

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. Benny Gantz, an Israeli war cabinet member, resigned from his position following the assault. In a message to the families of captives who remain in Gaza, he apologized and said Israel had “failed”, and blamed Netanyahu for standing in the way of victory. “Even before the Netanyahu government was started on this genocidal madness, Netanyahu was already deep in trouble. Remember that they were all the so-called liberal sections of Israeli society who were up in arms because he was threatening to change the constitution in ways that would compromise their freedoms,” said Desai. “And Netanyahu is therefore at the head of a coalition that is already exceedingly right-wing, even by Israeli standards.”

“If this war continues its infighting then Israel is losing legitimacy internationally, everywhere. So, I just don’t see any way out other than for Israel to say, we cannot win, we have to negotiate,” she added. “So far the seed has all been behind killing Gazans. It has not been about rescuing the hostages. If it had been, we would have seen the cessation of hostilities a long time ago. So the zeal has been all behind killing civilians in Gaza on the pretext that they are going to destroy Hamas, which they know they are not going to do.”

Sputnik’s Wilmer Leon asked their show’s guest how it would be possible for Hamas to coordinate with a government they don’t trust.

Desai explained that with the current "extent of the demonization of the opposite side" Hamas can't "trust anybody in the West to negotiate with", stating that such approach [is rational](#).

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Apple Announces Deal With OpenAI, Officially Jumping Into AI Tech Wave

Unlike their competitors, Apple’s AI technology will not be cloud-based, which could change how billions of dollars in AI infrastructure is used per year.

On Monday, Apple announced that it had made a deal with the maker OpenAI, known for their ChatGPT tool, and as well as their own AI software: Apple Intelligence. Their announcement will help them better compete with their rivals, Google and Microsoft, which have claimed that AI makes their products superior to Apple, [The Washington Post reported](#).

Apple’s shift to the use of AI underscores the inescapability of this next big wave in technology. Speaking at Apple’s annual Worldwide Developers Conference in Cupertino, California, software chief Craig Federighi and AI chief John Giannandrea said Apple would take a different approach to the use of AI technologies compared to their competitors. They caution that their

use of the technology will only be for the devices they sell and will focus on the personal data that AI can use.

“We think AI’s role is not to replace our users but to empower them,” Federighi said.

Giannandrea added that the company created a 3-billion parameter model as part of Apple Intelligence - this is quite small when compared to ChatGPT’s GPT-3 model from 2020 which is 175 billion parameters (which requires more memory and running power).

The company has paired with OpenAI so that their phones, computers and iPads will have ChatGPT built in later this year.

Apple’s approach to have a series of smaller models seems to be a way to slowly offer their users access to AI in a way that will not drain their battery power. For example, if Siri cannot provide a user an answer, then ChatGPT can offer that same assistance if a user allows it, a separate [report](#) revealed. This system is being packaged as “Apple Intelligence”.

But one challenge Apple faces is that of privacy. The company has used privacy as one of its primary selling points for years; advertising its ability to offer consumers access to their tech products without the infiltration of ad targeting, spammers and data brokers. However, most AI companies use peoples’ personal data to improve their software.

“We’re not going to take that data and go send it to some cloud somewhere,” Giannandrea said. “Because we want everything to be very private, whether it’s running locally or on a cloud computing service, and that’s the way we want it so we can use your most personal data.”

The company added that they may offer different models in the future, and seemed to stress what is essentially a test run before jumping into the world of AI. Federighi suggested more tailored systems like those for medical or legal purposes, or even the possibility of incorporating Google’s technology such as the Google Gemini, which Federighi said was the company’s direction.

“There are already some really impressive chat tools out there,” said Federighi. “But these tools know very little about you and your needs.”

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“I think we can definitely see this as a direct Russian reply to the general US declaration of conducting what it calls ‘Freedom of navigation’ exercises. Although, as far as we know, no one has challenged the freedom of navigation,” Sleboda explained. “They patrol their navy up and down off Russia’s and China’s and Iran’s coast, saber-rattling and threatening as part of their policy of containment.”

The United States has frequently run “military exercises” off the coast of its nominal adversaries, including China, North Korea, Iran and Russia. Earlier this week, NATO kicked off BALTOPS 2024 in the Baltic Sea, the largest exercise in the program’s history. According to Russian reports, it included a simulated nuclear strike on the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.

“We see Russia and NATO on a precipice of direct confrontation between the two sides in Ukraine,” Sleboda said, calling the US action “incredibly provocative and irresponsible and dangerous,” also noting that despite Russian ships going to Cuba, they won’t be simulating nuclear attacks on US soil.

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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.

The list, titled “Roller Coaster, From Trumpist to Communist. The forces in the US impeding aid to Ukraine and how they do it” consists of largely 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.”

“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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ANALYSIS - Biden's D-Day Speech Inaccurate, Bellicose Propaganda to Distract From Domestic Failures

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden's speech in Normandy to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day was a historically inaccurate attempt to justify his support for Ukraine's war effort and divert attention from his domestic policy failures amid his reelection campaign, scholars told Sputnik.

Biden claimed in his speech that US troops who fought on D-Day would support his policy on Russia.

"It is appalling what Biden said. Obviously, it was historically inaccurate. The speechwriters should have known that. It was done for pure political propaganda," University of Illinois Professor of Law Francis Boyle said.

Boyle said Biden has been desperate to distract the American people from the obvious failure of his domestic economic and social policies.

The allied troops who landed on D-Day were deeply grateful to their Soviet allies for taking on the main burden of fighting and destroying the Nazi Wehrmacht in the East, Boyle recalled.

"They knew at the time that Hitler had more than 180 divisions directly engaged in fighting the Red Army in the East and only 28 divisions on the entire Western front," he said.

University of Pittsburgh Professor of International Affairs Michael Brenner said that instead of using the D-Day anniversary as an excuse to further falsely condemn and demonize Russia, Western leaders should be thanking the Russian people for saving so many Western lives through their own combat sacrifices during World War II.

"Were it not for the Russians in World War II, the casualties suffered by Americans would have been double or triple," Brenner said.

American University in Moscow President Edward Lozansky pointed out that the lies in Biden's speech were just the latest in his record of false accusations against Russia.

"Saying during the D-Day ceremony that US troops who fought in World War II would want the United States to stand up to Russia today adds to the long list of Joe Biden lies," Lozansky said.

During his speech, Biden praised US war veterans and the allied war efforts, however, he did not mention the role of the Soviet Union in the war.

The Normandy landings of US, UK and Canadian forces took place on June 6, 1944, in what is the largest naval, air and land operation in history. Nearly 7,000 allied naval vessels and an estimated 156,000 troops landed in France's Normandy. Total allied casualties are estimated at 10,000 soldiers.

For comparison, more than 1 million Soviet soldiers fought, and hundreds of thousands were killed in the 1943 Battle of Kursk, which is commonly recognized as a turning point of World War II that determined Nazi Germany's defeat.

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US Consumer Prices Down a Touch in May, Boosting Rate Cut Hopes

(Adds comment, details and context in paras 5-12)

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US consumer prices posted an annual growth of 3.3% in May, down from the 3.4% in April, according to data on Wednesday from the Labor Department that raised expectations of an interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve.

"The all items index rose 3.3 percent for the 12 months ending May, a smaller increase than the 3.4-percent increase for the 12 months ending April," the department said.

Economists on Wall Street had expected the Consumer Price Index to show a flat year-on-year growth in May, compared with April. The cooling in price growth, although marginal, boosted to 70% chances for a Fed rate cut in July.

The central bank is poised to decide on rates later on Wednesday but most money market traders seem to think it will not pull the trigger on a rate decrease until its next policy meeting on July 31.

Some pointed to the possibility of a further rate cut at the September 18 meeting of the Fed's policy-making or Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC).

"The market is now fully pricing in two FOMC cuts this year, including [an] 80% [bet for a decrease] in September," economist Adam Button wrote on the ForexLive forum after the Labor Department's release of the May consumer price data.

Aside from the year-on-year retreat in consumer prices for May, the data showed an across-the-board retreat in other inflation measures.

Month-on-month inflation was flat versus Wall Street's forecast for a 0.1% growth and the April expansion of 0.3% growth.

Core inflation, a reading that excludes volatile food and energy prices, was at 3.4% year-on-year in May, versus the forecast 3.5% and April's growth of 3.6%. Month-on-month core inflation was at 0.2% against 0.3% on both the forecast and April growth.

The CPI hit a four-decade high in the aftermath of the 2020 coronavirus breakout, growing as much as 9.1% a year by June 2022.

The Fed, responding to runaway price growth, hiked interest rates 11 times since March 2022. The current range for rates, at between 5.25% and 5.5%, is at its highest since 2002. They compare with the pre-pandemic range of between zero and 0.25%.

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Blinken Says Cannot Tell If Negotiators Will Be Able to Bridge Gaps on Ceasefire Proposal

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that he is not sure whether it will be possible to bridge the gaps in the Gaza ceasefire proposal after Hamas put on the table a list of changes to the draft agreement.

"I can't tell you right now whether we'll succeed. I believe it's doable. I believe it's absolutely necessary to try our hardest to do it, but there's no guarantee," Blinken said during a press conference in Doha, Qatar when asked if there are any chances to reach an agreement on a ceasefire in Gaza.

While Blinken said there were some unworkable terms in Hamas' proposed changes to the deal, he did not disclose the details of those changes.

The United States, Qatar, Egypt, and Israel will work "with urgency" in the coming days to see if the gaps are bridgeable, the top US diplomat added.

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blinken says cannot tell right now whether we will succeed in bridging gaps to reach gaza ceasefire

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Blinken Says Will Propose Elements for a 'Day After' Plan for Gaza in Coming Weeks

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that proposals for a “day after” plan for Gaza will be put forward in the coming weeks and will include ideas for governance, security and reconstruction.

“In the coming weeks, we will put forward proposals for key elements of a day after plan, including concrete ideas for how to manage, governance, security, reconstruction. That plan is key to turning a ceasefire into an end to the conflict, but also turning an end of war into a just and durable peace,” Blinken said during a press conference in Doha, Qatar.

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Economists on Wall Street had expected inflation to be flat in May compared with April. The decrease in price growth, although marginal, boosted to 70% chances for a rate cut in July. The Fed is poised to decide on rates later on Wednesday but most money market traders seem to think the central bank will not pull the trigger on a rate decrease until its July 31 meeting.

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Blinken Says Hamas Has Proposed Numerous Changes to Gaza Ceasefire Proposal

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The Hamas response to the proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza contains several changes to the deal, some of which are workable while some are not, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday.

"Hamas has proposed numerous changes to the proposal that was on the table. We discussed those changes last night with Egyptian colleagues and today with the Prime Minister [Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani]. Some of the changes are workable, some are not," Blinken said during a press conference in Doha, Qatar.

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US Consumer Prices Up 3.3% In Year To May Vs 3.4% in April - Labor Dept.

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RPT - WWII Veterans Would Be Ashamed by Biden Warmongering Against Russia - Ret. Marines Officer

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - WWII soldiers would only feel shame at US President Joe Biden's D-Day anniversary address in Normandy last week in which he tried to draw links to Ukraine today and his handling of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, ret. US Marines Maj. Donald Vandergriff, a noted historian and military analyst, told Sputnik.

Last Thursday, Biden used his speech during the D-Day anniversary commemoration ceremony to rally support for Ukraine and made no mention of the crucial role that the Soviet Union played in defeating Nazi Germany. He also drew parallels between the allied fight during WWII and the West's support for Ukraine's current war effort.

The next day, in separate remarks in Normandy, Biden claimed that US troops who fought in the Second World War would want the United States to stand up against Russia in Ukraine today.

"Veterans would be ashamed of what Biden is doing today," Vandergriff said. "They wanted to prevent war through strength, and the last resort, having experienced war first-hand, is to prevent it through strength."

The US has not even tried to resolve the Ukraine conflict diplomatically, Vandergriff said.

"It is horrible that in two and half years, there have been no peace overtures even attempted by the United States," he said.

Biden's entire D-Day speech was "horrible" and was a "campaign speech" while it should have been dedicated to veterans and those who fought to free Europe from the Nazis, Vandergriff observed.

"In a horrible way, he was trying to emulate Reagan's speech in 1984. It was not even close," Vandergriff noted. "Biden in my opinion, based on 40 years of intense research on warfare, leadership and strategy, is the worst, most corrupt and weakest President we have ever had." Even though it was the Soviet Union that crushed Nazi Germany, Russia did not receive an

invitation from France to participate in the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

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US Astronauts Plan Three Spacewalks for ISS Maintenance in Coming Month - NASA

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US astronauts on the International Space Station (ISS) plan to conduct three extended spacewalks to replace equipment on the outside of the orbiting laboratory over the coming month, NASA officials have told a press conference.

On Thursday at 8.00 a.m. EST (12:00 GMT), astronauts Tracy Dyson and Matthew Dominick will seek to scrape microorganisms off the hull of the space station to give clues about how organic life survives in space, ISS Deputy Program Manager Dina Contella told reporters on Tuesday.

Dyson and Dominick will also seek to complete the removal of a malfunctioning electronics device called a radio frequency group from a communications antenna, NASA officials said.

In the second scheduled spacewalk on June 24, astronauts will remove and replace an external high-definition camera and also check the operation of the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer — a particle physics experiment on the station's exterior, NASA spacewalk officer Faruq Sabur said.

For the third spacewalk on July 2, crew members will remove and replace a rate gyro assembly and then attach a support bracket to support the future installation of a new solar array, NASA officials said.

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Russia Ready to Deepen Cooperation With All States on Basis on Mutual Respect - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov has said Moscow stands ready to deepen and expand cooperation with all nations on the basis of mutual respect and consideration of each other's interests, a Sputnik correspondent has reported.

The ambassador made the remarks on Tuesday at a reception held at the Russian mission in Ottawa on the occasion of Russia Day.

"Russia is ready to deepen and expand reciprocal and beneficial cooperation with each and every nation on the basis of mutual respect and consideration of each other's interest," the ambassador told the event.

Stepanov said that Russia is going through a difficult and "existential" momentous stage of its development, a situation driven by some members of the international community opposed to the concept of an equal all-centric world proposed by Moscow.

"They want to impose a unipolar neocolonial mindset on everyone else, the mindset where the UN Charter and International Law are replaced by certain rules invented by who knows who," the ambassador said.

Stepanov, however, noted that there was a "magic catch," being that no one has seen or has

been authorized to see the said rules.

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State of Missouri Executes 69-Year-Old Inmate Convicted of Double Homicide in 2013-Reports

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The state of Missouri has executed 69-year-old death row inmate David Hosier who was convicted of a double homicide in 2013, the Associated Press reported.

The state of Missouri executed Hosier by lethal injection on Tuesday at 6:14 p.m. Central Time, the report said.

Hosier, who claims he's innocent, was sentenced to death in 2013 after being convicted of capital murder in the 2009 deaths of Angela Gilpin and Rodney Gilpin at their home in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Hosier dated Angela Gilpin and reportedly killed the couple about a month after his relationship with his ex-lover came to an end.

Missouri Governor Mike Parson denied Hosier's request for clemency.

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US House Panel Advances \$895B In Defense Authorization Bill for Fiscal Year 2025

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The US House Rules Committee advanced the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which approves \$895.2 billion in national defense discretionary programs.

The panel advanced the legislation in a vote on Tuesday of nine in favor and four opposed.

The bill authorizes \$9 billion, or 1%, more than levels enacted in Fiscal Year 2024, according to a House Armed Services Committee summary.

The legislation includes measures to improve the quality of life for US military servicemembers, such as a 19.5% pay raise for junior enlisted servicemembers and a 4.5% for all others.

The bill also includes measures to end affirmative action at US military service academies, prohibit the Defense Department from pursuing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, prevent the authorization of new climate change programs, and ban the Pentagon from contracting with advertising firms that blacklist conservative news sources.

The legislation features measures to address competition with China as well, including an extension of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative and increased funding for hypersonic, cyber and artificial intelligence technologies to deter China.

Moreover, the bill cuts the procurement for new F-35 Joint Strike Fighters from 58 to 48 aircraft. The legislation addresses contractor waste by cutting more than \$4.3 billion in weapons programs that have not met development milestones or are experiencing excessive cost growth.

In May, the US House Armed Services Committee also approved an amendment to the bill to ban Russian and Chinese nationals from US nuclear weapons production sites and national

security laboratories.

On Tuesday, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said that the Biden administration supports the enactment of the NDAA but looks forward to working with lawmakers to address some concerns about the legislation.

The Biden administration opposes a measure that restricts the Defense Department from sharing information with Russia required by the New START Treaty, OMB said in a statement. Although the United States is not currently sharing information as a countermeasure to Russia's "ongoing violations" of the treaty, the measure would unduly constrain the ability of the executive branch to adopt or loosen the countermeasure as appropriate, the statement said.

The Biden administration also opposes the restrictions on DEI and climate change programs, the statement said.

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Musk Files Motion to Drop Lawsuit Against OpenAI - Court Filing

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk has filed a motion to drop his lawsuit against OpenAI, a court filing revealed.

Musk's legal team filed a request for dismissal in the Superior Court of California on Tuesday but did not disclose a reason for the motion.

Musk, who co-founded OpenAI in 2015, had initially filed a lawsuit in March against OpenAI and the company's CEO Sam Altman in response to the tech firm's plans to explore outside of its nonprofit business model by looking into opportunities to make profits by offering its most advanced AI technology to private customers.

Musk wanted Altman and co-founder Greg Brockman to pay back any profit they received from the business, media reported.

However, OpenAI published a blog post that included several of Musk's emails from OpenAI's early days, which purportedly appear to show Musk agreed that there would be a need for the company to make profits in order to fund the computing resources needed to improve the company's AI technology.

A hearing is scheduled on Wednesday related to OpenAI's motion to dismiss the case, according to media reports.

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US Authorities Say Arrested Several Non-Citizens in Coordination With Terrorism Task Force

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested several non-citizens in coordination with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, the FBI and US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said in a joint statement shared with Sputnik.

"Over the last few days, ICE agents arrested several non-citizens pursuant to immigration authorities. The actions were carried out in close coordination with the FBI's Joint Terrorism

Task Forces,” the joint statement said on Tuesday. “The FBI and DHS will continue working around the clock with our partners to identify, investigate, and disrupt potential threats to national security.”

ICE is holding the arrested individuals in detention pending removal proceedings, the statement said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Fox News reported that ICE arrested eight Tajikistan nationals with ties to the Islamic State terrorist group (banned in Russia) in New York, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia.

The eight individuals entered the United States illegally through its southern border, the report said, citing a federal source familiar with the operation. However, no derogatory information was flagged by DHS or US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) during processing, the report said.

National security concerns were flagged after the suspected terrorists were released into the US, the report said.

Last month, US Congressman Paul Gosar said that some 330 illegal immigrants on the FBI’s terrorist watchlist have entered the US in the past three years, including at least 80 in 2024.

The US has experienced three consecutive record-breaking years of illegal crossings at its southern border since US President Joe Biden took office, according to CBP data.

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US Navy Orders \$81Mln Upgrade on Harpoon Coastal Missiles For Taiwan - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Boeing has received a more than \$81 million order from the US Navy to provide engineering on the Harpoon Block II Missile upgrades for Taiwan, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"The Boeing Company [of] St. Louis, Missouri is awarded an \$81,064,959 modification ...order ...to provide continuing non-recurring engineering ...for the ...Harpoon Block II Update Grade B Canister Launch All Up Round Missiles ...for Taiwan," the release said on Tuesday.

The order also includes work on the Harpoon Coastal Defense System (HCDS), the HCDS launch system, and Harpoon weapon station test and production equipment for Taiwan, the Defense Department said.

Most of the work on the project will be performed in St. Charles, Missouri (47%); Randolph, Vermont (16%) and Baltic, South Dakota (15%) with the rest at various locations within the continental United States, the Defense Department said.

Work on the Harpoon system upgrades is scheduled to take two and a quarter years and is expected to be completed in August 2026, the Defense Department said.

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Antonov Says Reports on US Lifting Arms Supplies Restrictions to Azov Radicals Outrageous

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador in Washington Anatoly Antonov called the reported decision by the United States to lift arms supplies restrictions to Ukraine’s

terrorist Azov battalion (banned in Russia) - outrageous.

On Tuesday, the Washington Post reported, citing the US State Department, that the Biden administration has lifted the ban on arms supplies to and training of the Azov battalion.

"Such steps [lifting restrictions] by Washington with respect to an openly nationalist formation can cause nothing but extreme outrage," Antonov told reporters on Tuesday.

Antonov also said Washington's decision regarding Azov raises serious concerns about the United States' readiness to fight terrorism.

Established in 2014 by Ukrainian extremists and ultra-nationalists in the wake of the Maidan coup, Azov was included in the National Guard of Ukraine in November of that year. The battalion has come under severe criticism for its support of Nazi ideology and use of Nazi symbols as well as its human rights violations against the the Russian-speaking population of Eastern Ukraine.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The Netherlands has decided to contribute \$64 million to increase Ukraine's offensive drone capabilities, Defense Minister Kajsa Ollongren said on Tuesday.

* NATO must commit to providing \$43 billion in military support for Ukraine annually to show the bloc's determination to stand with that country for as long as it takes, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

* Germany will supply Ukraine with additional sniper rifles, missiles for Patriot systems and several thousand strike drones, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said.

* US President Joe Biden and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy will have a chance meet on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Italy later this week to discuss the United States' support for Ukraine, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Tuesday.

GAZA

* Egypt and Qatar have received a response from Hamas and other Palestinian groups to a ceasefire proposal in the Gaza Strip and will evaluate it together with the United States, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

* Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi, Jordanian King Abdullah II and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on the international community to exert maximum pressure on Israel to end to its military operations in Gaza , Sisi's office said.

* Hamas has promised to free two Russian hostages but a ceasefire needs to be in place beforehand, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said.

* The United States and Armenia have agreed to upgrade their bilateral dialogue to a Strategic Partnership Commission in the coming year, the two countries said in a joint statement published by the US State Department on Tuesday.

TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS

- * Russia is satisfied with the development of relations with Turkey, President Vladimir Putin said during a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Tuesday.
- * Russia welcomes Turkey's interest in the work of the BRICS organization, Putin said
- * Russia notes with gratitude Turkey's dedication to resolving the conflict in Ukraine, Putin said.
- * Turkey and Russia saw decrease in trade this year due to commodity prices, and, hopefully, the situation will improve soon, Putin said.
- * Putin said he plans to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Astana next month.

NATO

- * The leaders of Latvia, Poland and Romania pledged to continue strengthening NATO's eastern flank, according to a communique released ahead of the Bucharest Nine (B9) summit in Riga on Tuesday.
- * Finland has sent seven fighter jets to Romania, marking the Nordic nation's first NATO deployment since joining the military alliance last year, NATO said.

US-ARMENIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

- * The United States and Armenia have agreed to upgrade their bilateral dialogue to a Strategic Partnership Commission in the coming year, the two countries said in a joint statement published by the US State Department on Tuesday.

CANADIAN COURT JUDGEMENT ON FLIGHT PS752

- * Ukraine International Airlines (UIA) is legally responsible for paying full compensation to the families and relatives of the victims of Flight PS752 that was shot down near Tehran, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled on Tuesday.

NEW US SANCTIONS

- * The United States has sanctioned three Guyanese citizens and one company for their alleged role in public corruption in Guyana, the Treasury Department said in a statement on Tuesday.
- * The United States will announce new sanctions and export control actions against Russia this week targeting the network that supports the country's defense industrial base, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.

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US, Armenia Upgrade Status of Dialogue to Strategic Partnership - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – The United States and Armenia have agreed to upgrade their bilateral dialogue to a Strategic Partnership Commission in the coming year, the two countries said in a joint statement published by the US State Department on Tuesday. "During the Capstone meeting, Armenia and the United States reviewed progress on

strengthening bilateral relations and outlined a vision for deepening ties in the coming year, to be formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding, to upgrade the status of our bilateral dialogue to a Strategic Partnership Commission," the statement said.

Washington and Yerevan will outline the specific efforts to deepen the US-Armenian relationship in the coming months, the statement added.

Earlier on Tuesday, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan hosted Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia James O'Brien and an interagency government delegation for the US-Armenia Strategic Dialogue (USASD) Capstone meeting in Yerevan, Armenia.

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Pope Francis to Join G7 Leaders to Discuss Harnessing AI – White House

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – Pope Francis along with G7 leaders will take part in a session on artificial intelligence during the upcoming summit in Italy, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"[G7] leaders will be joined by His Holiness, Pope Francis, for a session on artificial intelligence, among other topics," Kirby said during a press briefing.

During the session, Pope Francis and G7 leaders will discuss and work out a shared approach to "harnessing the benefits of AI" while managing the risks to national security, Kirby added.

In January, Pope Francis said in a message for the 58th World Day of Social Communication that AI poses many risks and can lead to "disturbing scenarios" in the wrong hands. He also called for AI to be regulated.

The G7 summit is set to take place in Italy's Apulia region from June 13–15.

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Biden, Zelenskyy to Hold Bilateral Meeting on G7 Sidelines – White House

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden and Volodymyr Zelenskyy will have a chance to sit down for a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Italy later this week to discuss support for Kiev amid the ongoing conflict with Russia, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"On Thursday, President Biden and President Zelenskyy will sit down to discuss our strong support for Ukraine, now and into the future, and following that meeting, both leaders, President Biden and President Zelenskyy will participate in a news conference," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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.

The G7 summit is set to take place in Italy's Apulia region from June 13–15.

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White House Says Cannot Confirm New Deployment of Patriot Missile System to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Tuesday that he cannot confirm reports that US President Joe Biden approved the deployment of another Patriot missile system to Ukraine.

"No, I cannot," Kirby said during a press briefing when asked whether he could confirm the reports.

The Kremlin has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that it would lead to further escalation of the conflict.

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Ukraine Airlines Responsible for Compensating Families of Flight PS752 Victims – Court

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – Ukraine International Airlines (UIA) is legally responsible for paying full compensation to the families and relatives of Flight PS752 victims, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice has ruled.

The latest judgment followed an 18-day trial in Toronto that concluded in January 2024.

"I [Justice Jasmine Akbarali] declare that the defendant has failed to prove, on a balance of probabilities, under article 21 of the Montreal Convention, that the plaintiffs' damage was not due to the negligence or other wrongful act or omission of the carrier or its servants or agents; or that such damage was solely due to the negligence or other wrongful act or omission of a third party," the court ruling issued on Monday reads.

Accordingly, Akbarali ordered UIA to pay close to C\$5 million (\$3.6 million) in costs to the plaintiffs – the families of 21 deceased passengers - within the next sixty days.

On January 8, 2020, flight PS752 crashed shortly after takeoff from Tehran's international airport. The incident claimed the lives of all 167 passengers on board the airplane - mostly Canadian and Iranian citizens - and nine Ukrainian crew members.

Iran admitted that the plane had been mistakenly shot down by its military, which mistook it for a cruise missile at a time when Iran's air defenses were active following strikes on a US military base in Iraq.

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white house's kirby says cannot confirm report that patriot systems to be sent to ukraine within next two days

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US to Announce New Sanctions, Export Control Actions Against Russia This Week - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The United States will announce new sanctions and export control actions against Russia this week targeting the network that supports its defense industrial base, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Friday.

"This week we will announce an impactful set of new sanctions and export control actions," Kirby told reporters. "The actions will target the entities and networks that are helping Russia procure what it needs for its war. They will make it harder for financial facilitators, for instance, to support Russia's defense industrial base, and they will further restrict Russia's future revenues in key sectors,"

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US Received Hamas' Response to Gaza Ceasefire Proposal, Evaluating – White House

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has received Hamas' response to the proposal on a Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal and is currently evaluating it, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"We were in receipt of this reply that Hamas delivered to Qatar and to Egypt, and we are evaluating it right now," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby declined to provide any more details on the response but noted that it is "certainly helpful" for Washington to receive any response from Hamas.

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US at G7 Will Unveil Steps to Unlock Value of Frozen Russian Assets to Aid Ukraine - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The United State will unveil new steps at the G7 summit this week to unlock the value of frozen Russian sovereign assets to benefit Ukraine, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"First, we will announce new steps to unlock the value of the immobilized Russian sovereign assets to benefit Ukraine, and to help them recover from the destruction that Mr. [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's army has caused" Kirby told reporters.

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Canada Confirms 'Elements' of Alleged Israeli Misinformation Targeting Lawmakers - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has confirmed "elements" of an alleged Israeli misinformation campaign targeting Canadian lawmakers with regard to the ongoing war in Gaza, Global News reported on Tuesday.

Last week, Israel's Haaretz newspaper reported that the Israeli government was behind a social media campaign that sought to influence lawmakers in Canada and the United States amid the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Reports of an ongoing divisive, coordinated, Islamophobic and inauthentic misinformation campaign targeting Canadian citizens and lawmakers have been corroborated, the report said, citing GAC.

The ministry did not indicate any direct link to the Israeli government, the report said. However, the investigation into the claims continues, spokesperson for the foreign affairs department James Emmanuel Wanki said in the report.

GAC noted that despite lacking a definitive confirmation of the involvement of a state actor, it has reached out to Israel to directly voice its concern over the allegations, the report said.

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us has received hamas response to gaza ceasefire proposal, is evaluating it right now - kirby

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Four People Shot in Atlanta Food Court, Building on Lockdown - Mayor

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Four people were shot at Peachtree Center Food Court in Atlanta on Tuesday, leading to a lockdown of the building, Mayor Andre Dickens said.

"Four people shot at Peachtree Center Food Court. Building is now on lockdown. I am at the public safety HQ with chief. More information to come," Dickens said in a statement.

The Atlanta Police Department said on X that officers are investigating multiple people shot at 235 Peachtree St NW and advised the public to avoid the area.

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US OK's Possible \$1.94Bln Sale of AIM-120C-8 Air-to-Air Missiles to Norway - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – The US State Department has approved a possible sale of 300 AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles and related equipment worth \$1.96 billion to Norway, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced on Tuesday.

“The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to

the Government of Norway of AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$1.94 billion," DSCA said in a press release.

The Norwegian government has requested to purchase three hundred AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM) and twenty AIM-120C-8 AMRAAM guidance sections, the release said.

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Johnson Says Hunter Biden Conviction Does Not Undercut Claims of Two-Tiered Justice System

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Tuesday that a Delaware jury's decision to convict Hunter Biden for lying about his drug use on a firearm purchase form does not undercut claims by Republican lawmakers about an alleged two-tiered justice system in the United States.

"It doesn't," Johnson said, when asked whether the conviction undercuts the Republican claims. "Every case is different, and clearly the evidence was overwhelming here."

The evidence was not so overwhelming in a case involving former US President Donald Trump's falsification of records related to a payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels, for which he was convicted in New York last month, Johnson said.

The charges against Trump were brought for political purposes, Johnson said.

Trump has repeatedly characterized the criminal cases against him as a form of election interference amid the 2024 US presidential election.

US President Joe Biden said that he will accept the outcome of his son's trial and not use his presidential authority to pardon him.

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Biden Plans to Remove \$7Bln in Medical Debt From Credit Reports by 2027 - Harris

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is removing medical debt from the credit reports of more than 15 million Americans, Vice President Kamala Harris announced on Tuesday.

"We will soon make it so that medical debts cannot be used against your credit score," Harris said. "One hundred million Americans struggle with medical debt and the harm that it does to a credit score. That is not fair."

The Biden administration had already forgiven \$650 million in medical debts and was going to take action to forgive or wipe out \$7 billion more by the end of 2026, Harris said.

Under the new rule, there would be no Americans with medical debt listed on their credit reports, down from 46 million in 2020.

"American Rescue Plan funds are being used to eliminate an estimated \$7 billion in medical

debt for up to nearly 3 million of Americans; the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) proposal would ensure that no Americans have medical debt on their credit reports," the White House said in a fact sheet accompanying Harris's remarks.

Harris and CFPB Director Rohit Chopra said the new moves would remove medical debt from the credit reports of more than 15 million Americans, raising their credit scores by an average of 20 points and lead to the approval of 22,000 extra mortgages every year. The debt would remain but it would not be included on credit reports.

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US, Armenia Upgrade Status of Dialogue to Strategic Partnership - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – The United States and Armenia have agreed to upgrade their bilateral dialogue to a Strategic Partnership Commission in the coming year, the two countries said in a joint statement published by the US State Department on Tuesday.

"During the Capstone meeting, Armenia and the United States reviewed progress on strengthening bilateral relations and outlined a vision for deepening ties in the coming year, to be formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding, to upgrade the status of our bilateral dialogue to a Strategic Partnership Commission," the statement said.

Washington and Yerevan will outline the specific efforts to deepen the US-Armenian relationship in the coming months, the statement added.

Earlier on Tuesday, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan hosted Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia James O'Brien and an interagency government delegation for the US-Armenia Strategic Dialogue (USASD) Capstone meeting in Yerevan, Armenia.

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Johnson & Johnson Settles for \$700M In Over Talc Containing Baby Powder - Attorneys General

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The Massachusetts Attorney General and 42 other state attorneys general have reached a \$700 million settlement with Johnson & Johnson over allegations related to marketing the company's talc-containing baby powder and other powder products, the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell and 42 other attorneys general have reached a \$700 million nationwide settlement, via a proposed consent judgment filed today in Suffolk Superior Court, with Johnson & Johnson to resolve allegations related to the marketing of Johnson & Johnson's talc-containing baby powder and body powder products," the statement said.

The statement said Massachusetts is set to receive \$14.5 million through 2027 as part of the multi-state consent judgment, pending judicial approval.

"The proposed consent judgment filed in this lawsuit addresses allegations that Johnson & Johnson deceptively promoted and misled consumers in advertisements related to the safety

and purity of some of its talc powder products," the statement added.

Johnson & Johnson has also agreed to stop manufacturing and selling its talc-containing baby powder and body powder products in the United States, according to the statement.

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Global Oil Benchmark Brent Seen Around \$84/Barrel Through 2024 - US Energy Agency

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Brent is expected to hover at \$84 per barrel through this year, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said on Tuesday, forecasting modest-to-flat gains for the global crude benchmark even as OPEC+ appeared determined to do more for oil prices with its production cuts.

"Although we expect crude oil prices to rise from early June levels, lower-than-expected Brent prices in May mean our forecast for 2024 is \$84/b, 4% lower than our May forecast," the EIA said in the Short-Term Energy Outlook monthly update.

With some 90 minutes to the settlement of Tuesday's trade, Brent's most-active August contract was at \$82.23 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, up 60 cents, or 0.7%.

Over the previous three weeks, Brent lost a cumulative 5.3% while US crude benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) tumbled 5.8%. Since this week began, both have rebounded about 3%.

Oil prices fell in the prior weeks on worries about whether OPEC+ will provide adequate support with output cuts to offset any weakness in demand during the summer - the busiest season for driving in the United States.

OPEC, the global oil producing alliance, has since resolved to cut output through 2025, extending commitments initially set till the end of summer. The alliance, which groups the 13-member Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries with 10 other oil producing nations steered by Russia, hopes to remove some 2.2 million barrels per day from the market.

But OPEC+ has also suggested that if demand improves, it might add more than 500,000 barrels per day to the market by December, and 1.8 million daily by June 2025. That took away some of the optimism of oil bulls.

US oil supplies have also climbed of late, diluting the outlook for 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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Biden Makes Last Minute Plans for Trip to Delaware After Son Convicted in Wilmington

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden made last minute plans to visit Wilmington, Delaware, later on Tuesday hours after a jury there convicted his son Hunter Biden on three gun-related charges, according to a White House press release.

"The President will depart Joint Base Andrews en route to Wilmington, Delaware," the White House said in an updated itinerary of the US president's schedule for Tuesday.

The president has said that he will respect the outcome of the trial and not pardon his son. Earlier on Tuesday, a jury in the state of Delaware found Hunter Biden guilty of making a false statement for acquisition of a firearm, making a false statement with respect to information required to be kept in records and possession of a firearm by a person who is an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance.

Hunter Biden faces up to 25 years in prison and a \$750,000 fine, although first-time offenders often receive a lighter sentence than the maximum.

Former federal prosecutor Ronald Sievert told Sputnik he expects Hunter Biden will only receive a sentencing of probation.

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Pentagon Says Information on GITMO Detainees' Transfer Remains Classified Until Completion

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The Pentagon refused to confirm media reports that the 16 remaining prisoners from Guantanamo Bay prison will be sent to Oman, citing the secrecy of this information, spokesperson Lisa Lawrence said on Tuesday.

"The DoD is supporting ongoing U.S. Government processes for both finding suitable transfer locations for the remaining 16 transfer-eligible GTMO [Guantanamo] detainees and for effectuating those transfers. The specific details of any detainee movement operation are classified until the transfer is complete," Lawrence said in a statement.

The New York Times reported in May that the White House stopped a planned secret mission to transfer Guantanamo Bay detainees to Oman in October after Congress raised concerns about Middle East security following the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel.

According to the report, the United States reached an agreement with Omani officials last year to transfer Guantanamo Bay prisoners there.

Established by the Bush Administration in 2002, the facility has long been criticized for mistreatment and abuses of prisoners, with human rights activists and international organizations calling for its closure. Former US President Barack Obama vowed to close the camp but faced strong pushback from Congress. His successor, Donald Trump, signed an order to keep the detention camp open indefinitely, while incumbent President Joe Biden has promised to close the facility.

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House Democrats Creating Task Force to Block Trump's Agenda if Wins in November - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Democratic lawmakers in the US House of Representatives are creating a task force that will aim to block former President Donald Trump's agenda if he returns to the White House, Politico reported on Tuesday.

The establishment of this group is reportedly in response to an initiative the conservative think tank group Heritage Foundation created to provide a policy road map for the next US administration.

The Democrats' task force will be made up of lawmakers, advocacy groups and others, who will all coordinate to respond to any actions a potential Trump administration may take that they find troubling.

The Heritage Foundation told Politico that their project will not be stopped by House Democrats.

An aggregation of national polls by RealClearPolitics shows Trump leading Biden by half a point, and leading in all seven swing states.

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UN Criminal Tribunals Mechanism Should Have Been Closed Long Ago - Russian Deputy Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, June 11 (Sputnik) - The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) should have been closed a long time ago, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Maria Zabolotskaya said on Tuesday.

"In fact, the mechanisms should have been closed long ago," Zabolotskaya said during a UN Security Council meeting on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

The main judicial proceedings have been completely concluded and at this point there are no more fugitives from justice, Zabolotskaya added.

The meeting is a biannual one of the UN Security Council on the issue of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

The mechanism was established in 2010 with the main focus of completing the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which closed in December 2017 and December 2015, respectively.

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Delaware Jury Convicts Hunter Biden on All 3 Charges in Firearm Case - Filing

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - A Delaware jury convicted Hunter Biden on all three criminal charges linked to lying about his drug use on a firearm purchase form, according to a jury verdict form filed Tuesday.

The jury found Biden guilty of making a false statement with connection to acquisition of a firearm, making a false statement with respect to information required to be kept in records and possession of a firearm by a person who is an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance, the filing said.

Biden faces up to 25 years in prison and a \$750,000 fine, although first-time offenders often receive a lighter sentence than the maximum.

US President Joe Biden has said that he will respect the outcome of the trial and not pardon his son.

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Biden Says Accepts Outcome of Son Hunter's Trial, Remains Proud of Him

(Updates with more details in paras 4-6)

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he accepts the guilty verdict against his son, Hunter Biden, for lying on a firearm purchase form and remains proud of him.

"As I said last week, I am the President, but I am also a Dad. Jill and I love our son, and we are so proud of the man he is today," Biden said in a statement. "As I also said last week, I will accept the outcome of this case and will continue to respect the judicial process as Hunter considers an appeal."

Earlier on Tuesday, a Delaware jury found Hunter Biden guilty on three criminal charges, for which he faces up to 25 years in prison. Joe Biden has said that he will not pardon his son.

Former US President Donald Trump's campaign said that the trial was a distraction from the "real crimes" involving the Biden family.

The Biden family has received tens of millions of dollars from Ukraine, China and Russia by selling government access for personal profit, Trump campaign spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said in a statement.

Joe Biden's reign over the "Biden Family Criminal Empire" will come to an end on Election Day in November, the statement added.

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Hunter Biden's Lawyer Says Disappointed by Guilty Verdict, Will Challenge It – Statement

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – Hunter Biden's lawyer Abbe Lowell said on Tuesday that he is disappointed by the guilty verdict in his criminal gun trial and will pursue all legal challenges available.

"We are naturally disappointed by today's verdict. We respect the jury process, and as we have

done throughout this case, we will continue to vigorously pursue all the legal challenges available to Hunter,” Lowell said in a statement.

Earlier on Tuesday, a jury in the state of Delaware found Biden guilty of making a false statement with connection to the acquisition of a firearm, making a false statement with respect to information required to be kept in records, and possession of a firearm by a person who is an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance.

Hunter Biden faces up to 25 years in prison and a \$750,000 fine, although first-time offenders often receive a lighter sentence than the maximum.

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UPDATE - Canada Border Strike Averted as Workers Reach Deal With Government - Union

(adds remarks by Canadian government in para 4-5)

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has reached a tentative agreement with the Canadian government that would avert major strike action, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) said on Tuesday.

“The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) and the Customs and Immigration Union (CIU) have reached a tentative agreement for more than 9,000 workers at CBSA, avoiding potential job action at Canada’s borders,” PSAC said in a statement.

PSAC said the full details of the tentative agreement will be announced on Friday once the ratification kits are made available.

“The renewed Border Services Group collective agreement will include wage enhancements and other benefits for employees,” the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat said in a statement. “The government will not share details of the tentative agreement at this time.”

If ratified, the renewed collective agreement will apply to approximately 11,000 employees, the board said. The government will have reached deals with eighteen bargaining units covering more than 84% of the public service, it added.

CBSA employees have been working without a contract for more than two years. PSAC seeks a deal that includes fair wages, flexible telework, and remote work options, as well as equitable retirement benefits and stronger protections around discipline, technological changes, and working hours.

In late May, PSAC announced that 96% of its 9,000 members affiliated with CBSA had voted in favor of a strike mandate to pressure Ottawa into answering their demands.

PSAC is the country's largest federal public union, representing nearly 230,000 workers in every province and territory in Canada.

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Trump Says US Media Claims About Mandatory Military Service Proposal 'Fake News'

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday Washington Post's claim that he plans to call for mandatory military service is fake news and is a continuation of the media's failed attempts to damage his reputation.

"The fake news Washington Post came up with the ridiculous idea that Donald J. Trump will call for mandatory military service. This is only a continuation of their eight year failed attempt to damage me with the voters. The story is completely untrue. In fact, I never even thought of that idea," Trump said via the social media platform Truth Social.

The Washington Post reported earlier that former Defense Secretary Christopher Miller proposed that all public high school students be required to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) as part of a broader plan detailed in Project 2025 by the Heritage Foundation.

The statement added that Miller's plan includes granting military recruiters greater access to secondary schools and halting the use of the Defense Department's electronic medical records platform to reduce delays and rejections for potential recruits with disabilities or other conditions.

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hunter Biden's lawyer says we are disappointed by today's guilty verdict, will vigorously pursue all legal challenges available - statement

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Hunter Biden Likely Faces Probation After Convicted of Gun-Related Charges - Ex-Prosecutor

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Hunter Biden will likely be sentenced to probation after a jury found him guilty of three gun-related charges, but his tax-related case in California could land him in prison for a short period of time, former US Justice Department prosecutor Ronald Sievert told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"The [sentencing] guidelines for this case would recommend probation and it is highly likely that will be the sentence," Sievert said.

Sievert added that the tax charges in Hunter's case in California are much more serious and some prison time is possible, though it would probably not be lengthy.

Earlier on Tuesday, a jury in the state of Delaware found Biden guilty of making a false statement with connection to acquisition of a firearm, making a false statement with respect to information required to be kept in records and possession of a firearm by a person who is an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance

Biden faces up to 25 years in prison and a \$750,000 fine, although first-time offenders often receive a lighter sentence than the maximum.

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Delaware Jury Convicts Hunter Biden on All 3 Charges in Firearm Case - Filing

(Update: changes attribution in headline, lede; adds details in para 2)

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WWII Veterans Would Be Ashamed by Biden Warmongering Against Russia - Ret. Marines Officer

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - WWII soldiers would only feel shame at US President Joe Biden's D-Day anniversary address in Normandy last week in which he tried to draw links to Ukraine today and his handling of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, ret. US Marines Maj. Donald Vandergriff, a noted historian and military analyst, told Sputnik.

Last Thursday, Biden used his speech during the D-Day anniversary commemoration ceremony to rally support for Ukraine and made no mention of the crucial role that the Soviet Union played in defeating Nazi Germany. He also drew parallels between the allied fight during WWII and the West's support for Ukraine's current war effort.

The next day, in separate remarks in Normandy, Biden claimed that US troops who fought in the Second World War would want the United States to stand up against Russia in Ukraine today.

"Veterans would be ashamed of what Biden is doing today," Vandergriff said. "They wanted to prevent war through strength, and the last resort, having experienced war first-hand, is to prevent it through strength."

The US has not even tried to resolve the Ukraine conflict diplomatically, Vandergriff said.

"It is horrible that in two and half years, there have been no peace overtures even attempted by the United States," he said.

Biden's entire D-Day speech was "horrible" and was a "campaign speech" while it should have been dedicated to veterans and those who fought to free Europe from the Nazis, Vandergriff observed.

"In a horrible way, he was trying to emulate Reagan's speech in 1984. It was not even close," Vandergriff noted. "Biden in my opinion, based on 40 years of intense research on warfare, leadership and strategy, is the worst, most corrupt and weakest President we have ever had." Even though it was the Soviet Union that crushed Nazi Germany, Russia did not receive an

invitation from France to participate in the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

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US Sanctions 3 Individuals, Company for Role in Public Corruption in Guyana - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The United States has sanctioned three Guyanese citizens and one company for their role in public corruption in Guyana, the Department of the Treasury said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned members of one of Guyana's wealthiest families, Nazar Mohamed (Nazar) and his son, Azruddin Mohamed (Azruddin), their company, Mohamed's Enterprise, and a Guyanese government official, Mae Thomas (Thomas), for their roles in public corruption in Guyana," the statement said.

In addition, the Treasury Department sanctioned Mohamed's racing team for being controlled by Mohamed's Enterprise and Azruddin Mohamed, the statement said.

Nazar Mohamed expanded his activities to the United States as a moneychanger and grew it into a major gold exporter before Azruddin Mohamed took over and evaded taxes by underreporting gold exports, bribing officials between 2019 and 2023, the statement said.

"To conceal their illegal activity and operate with impunity, Azruddin and Mohamed's Enterprise have engaged in extensive bribery schemes involving government officials in Guyana," the statement added.

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Delaware Jury Convicts Hunter Biden on All 3 Charges in Firearm Case - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - A Delaware jury convicted Hunter Biden on all three criminal charges linked to lying about his drug use on a firearm purchase form, a reporter outside the courtroom announced on Tuesday.

Biden faces up to 25 years in prison and a \$750,000 fine, although first-time offenders often receive a lighter sentence than the maximum.

US President Joe Biden has said that he will respect the outcome of the trial and not pardon his son.

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US Senator Lankford Criticizes Biden Administration for Lack of Long-Term Trade Deals

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - US Senator James Lankford on Monday criticized the Biden administration for failing to form long-term trade relationships.

"In the last three-and-a-half years, the Biden administration has not advanced trade negotiations. They're not forming long-term relationships; they're tweaking existing relationships. One of the things that we need in this day and age is to lean forward and continue to find new ways to establish long-term trade partnerships," Lankford said at an event at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Lankford said the United States needed to develop lasting agreements that investors could count on, not executive agreements that were contingent on a particular administration.

Lankford also emphasized the need to sort out permitting issues regarding critical minerals in the United States, as the process currently takes seven to 20 years.

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Jury Reaches Verdict in Hunter Biden Firearm Trial - Court Official

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - A Delaware jury reached a verdict in the trial involving Hunter Biden's alleged lies about his drug use on a firearm purchase form, a court official confirmed to Sputnik on Tuesday.

"They have, I can confirm," the court official said, when asked whether the jury has reached a verdict.

Biden faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted on the three charges against him, which include lying on a firearm purchase form and possessing a firearm as a drug user.

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

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US Mulling Trade Sanctions on Canada Over Quebec's New Language Law - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – The United States is considering imposing trade sanctions on Canada over potential violations of trade agreements by a Quebec language law that seeks to protect French in the province, CBC news reported on Tuesday.

On June 1, 2022, the National Assembly of Quebec passed Bill 96 - an Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec.

The controversial legislation seeks to tighten language laws protecting the use of French as a sole official language in Quebec, and to ensure the reversal of what provincial authorities see as the declining use of French province-wide.

Draft regulations to implement the legislation were released on in early January 2024 and the final regulations are expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

US government officials have discussed behind closed doors the possibility of slapping trade sanctions on Canada over Quebec's language law, the report said, citing a document it obtained under the freedom of information law.

Officials from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative have debated whether the legislation poses a technical trade barrier, breaches trade-related intellectual property rights or violates Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, the report said. The officials are also considering whether these potential violations warrant sanctions.

The Canadian government is aware that several stakeholders are concerned by Bill 96, spokesperson for Global Affairs Canada Jean-Pierre Godbout said in the report. Those concerns have been shared with the Government of Quebec, he added.

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Biden Admin. Opposes NDAA Measure to Restrict New START Info Sharing With Russia - OMB

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration opposes a measure in the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to restrict the Defense Department from information sharing activities required by the New START treaty, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said on Tuesday.

"The administration strongly opposes Section 1231, which would restrict DoD [Department of Defense] from providing Russia with notifications, biannual data exchange[s], inspection activities, or telemetric activities as required by the New START treaty," OMB said in a statement.

Although the United States is not currently sharing information as a countermeasure to Russia's alleged "ongoing violations" of the New START treaty, the measure would unduly constrain the ability of the executive branch to adopt or loosen the countermeasure as appropriate, the statement said.

The Biden administration strongly supports enactment of the NDAA and looks forward to working with Congress to address concerns with the legislation, the statement said.

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US Worried Yemeni Houthis Might Provide Weapons to Somalia's Al-Shabaab - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - US intelligence is concerned about the Yemeni Houthis' alleged plans to begin supplying weapons to the al-Shabaab terror group in Somalia (banned in Russia), which could further destabilize the region, CNN reported on Tuesday.

The Biden administration is currently trying to find out whether the Houthis have already managed to deliver weapons to Somalia and whether Iran played any role here, the report said, citing three US officials.

In recent weeks, the United States has been issuing warnings to its partners in the region about this arrangement between the Houthis and al-Shabaab while African countries have voiced their concerns about this development.

Arms shipments to Somalia would give the Houthis a new source of income, which is a concern

for the United States after Washington has spent much effort trying to cut off Yemeni rebels' sources of financing their operations as much as possible.

Being able to sell some weapons would bring the Houthis much needed income, the report quoted one of the US officials as saying.

US officials still do not know what kind of weapons they're going through, but they suspect the Houthis could supply al-Shabaab with more than just rockets and mortars. The Houthis are known for using their aerial and underwater drones, which could certainly be of interest to their Somali counterparts.

Al-Shabaab is a Somalia-based jihadist militant group linked to the al-Qaeda terrorist group. It wages armed resistance against the Somali government and obstructs UN humanitarian missions in the country.

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US Unveils \$400Mln in Humanitarian Assistance to Palestinian Civilians – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) – The United States will provide \$400 million in humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians in Gaza, the West Bank, and the region amid the ongoing hostilities in Rafah, the US State Department said on Tuesday.

“The United States will provide an additional \$404 million in lifesaving humanitarian aid to support Palestinian civilians in Gaza, the West Bank, and the region, bringing the total US assistance to more than \$674 million over the past eight months,” the State Department said in a press release.

According to the release, the humanitarian package will include food, safe drinking water, health care, protection, education, shelter and psychosocial support.