

6/28/24 Friday

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Declining West Inevitably Means a 'Rising Iran'

On Friday, Iranians went to the polls to elect a new President to replace the late Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash last month. While the election looks to be heading to a runoff that will take place next week, Iran is likely to continue its accession and increasing cooperation with the rest of the world.

Regardless of who secures the presidency in Iran, be it reformist candidate ex-health minister Masoud Pezeshkian or conservative former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, Iran is likely to continue improving relations with Asia and continue its ascension on the world stage.

"I think the declining West inevitably means a rising Iran," Mohammed Marandi, a professor of English literature and Orientalism at the University of Tehran [told Sputnik's Fault Lines](#). "And so we're gonna have a very different West Asia and Iran's allies continue to be on the rise. So, regardless of who wins the presidency, I think that in the coming years, Iran is going to have great opportunities."

Last year, Iran joined BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Council (SCO), enabling more cooperation and deeper coordination between it and other member states.

"I think that Tehran right now is taking advantage of the rise of Asia. It's improved its ties with Russia, with China, with India as well," Marandi noted.

On Tuesday, Russia said it [expects to sign](#) a comprehensive cooperation agreement with Iran in the near future. "We expect that this agreement will be signed in the nearest future, as work on the text is already almost complete. All the necessary formulations have been found," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko told Sputnik.

Marandi has hope that a declining West will force them into a more reasonable policy towards Iran. "That the West is on the decline and their foothold in Asia is declining, perhaps, will in the end or ultimately at some point that the [will] become more reasonable," he said. "Americans don't have the sort of leverage they had before and I think as we move forward, as the United States has greater difficulty in facing global challenges, but also challenges at home.

"As we've seen in the debates between Biden and Trump, I think the United States will feel greater need to solve its problems with Iran, and perhaps it will behave more reasonably towards the country."

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The DNC's Disastrous Delay

Democrats in the US are panicking after US President and presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden had a catastrophic performance on the debate stage against former US President Donald Trump.

Biden seemed to have trouble answering questions, often sputtering, mumbling, trailing off and freezing on stage. At one point, following nearly 10 seconds of silence, Biden declared that he “finally beat Medicare.”

At one point, Trump pointed out that Biden was becoming practically incomprehensible on stage. After one particularly rambling answer, the former President shot back “I really don’t know what he said at the end of that sentence – and I don’t think he knows what he said either.” Less than 24 hours later, The New York Times editorial board [called on Biden](#) to step aside and allow the party to pick his replacement.

“Mr. Biden challenged Mr. Trump to this verbal duel. He set the rules, and he insisted on a date months earlier than any previous general election debate. He understood that he needed to address longstanding public concerns about his mental acuity and that he needed to do so as soon as possible,” the paper wrote. “The truth Mr. Biden needs to confront now is that he failed his own test.”

The problem is, Biden’s failing mental abilities have been a known issue for years. In 2019, before Biden had secured the Democratic nomination, concerns were already bubbling to the surface even among Democrats.

“There is no question that what has propelled Vice President Biden to clear front-runner status [in the 2020 Democratic primaries] is his unparalleled experience in contrast to his primary counterparts,” a pollster and former Obama-Biden campaign consultant [told Politico](#). “But am I hearing gargantuan concerns among Democratic insiders about Biden’s advanced age, which is the very byproduct of that experience derived from a lifetime of public service? Absolutely yes.” But once Biden secured the nomination and especially after his election, Democrats brushed aside concerns about Biden’s age.

In May, MSNBC host Joe Scarborough said “This version of Biden, intellectually, analytically, is the best Biden ever. Not a close second and I’ve known him for years... if it weren’t the truth, I wouldn’t say it.”

On Friday, Scarborough had changed his tune. “If he were [a] CEO and he turned in a performance like that, would any corporation in America, any Fortune 500 Corporation in America, keep him on as CEO?” he asked.

Democrats were warned about Biden’s mental acuity. Five years later, they are forced to deal with it.

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Kamala to Be ‘Leapfrogged’ in Quest to Find Biden Replacement

US President Joe Biden’s performance in Thursday’s Presidential debate set off a panic in Democratic circles, with calls for the 81-year-old to step aside growing exponentially. However, Biden’s heir apparent, Vice President Kamala Harris, has nearly as low of an approval rating as Biden, causing many to call for an entirely new Democratic ticket.

US Vice President Kamala Harris will be skipped over if her running mate President Joe Biden decides to drop out of the race, attorney and civil rights organizer Robert Patillo II speculated on [Sputnik's Fault Lines](#) on Friday.

“President Biden had a very bad night. The worst part was that he reinforced the narrative about him, of being kind of this doddering old man who didn’t know where he was, couldn’t complete a sentence, kind of got lost midway through sentences, those sorts of things.”

The post-debate analysis, even on left-leaning MSNBC, focused heavily on finding a potential replacement for Biden, with the choices of Harris and California Governor Gavin Newsom being floated on the air.

Patillo described Biden’s performance as “Just an old man dying in front of us,” saying that “It got uncomfortable for people watching.”

In what appeared to be an attempt at damage control, Harris appeared on both MSNBC and CNN defending Biden’s performance and vehemently declining to call for him to step down. She may have been the only one. CNN analyst Van Jones called Biden’s performance “personally painful for a lot of people,” and openly noted that the Democrats could make a switch before the convention.

NBC analyst Chuck Todd said Democratic leaders are in “a full-on panic about this performance.” Almost 48 million viewers watched the debate, many more likely saw clips of Biden’s worst moments after they were posted online.

However, the Democrats may have difficulty finding a replacement for Biden because they [all but shut down](#) the party’s primary this cycle, making Harris the only potential candidate with a reasonable claim to the nomination as Biden’s running mate.

Unfortunately for Democrats, Harris is unpopular with the voting public, According to poll aggregator 538, only 39% of Americans view her favorably, leading commentators to speculate that another candidate may be chosen by party leadership. That causes its own set of problems, however, because Harris is the first woman vice president and the first Black vice president. Whoever is the eventual Democratic nominee will need support from both voting blocs if they hope to defeat Donald Trump in November.

“The problem then becomes you can’t hop over the first Black female vice president and put Gavin Newsom, let’s say, in the catbird seat,” explained Patillo. “Every once and a while the Democratic Black folks know exactly what their place is in the party and it’s pretty clear that the white feminists don’t hold Kamala Harris in the same regard that they held Hillary Clinton, for example,” he added later.

According to Sportsbook Review, Biden’s odds went from +137 on [May 31](#), to +400 [after the debate](#). That means a \$100 bet placed on May 31 would have returned \$237 (\$137 profit) if Biden won the presidency. Now, a \$100 bet will net you \$500 (\$400 profit) if Biden wins.

By comparison, Trump’s odds are -185, which means a \$100 bet will net you \$185 (\$85 profit). Even more interesting is how the odds of the other candidates not named Trump or Biden fared following the debate. Nearly every potential candidate— except Biden and Independent candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr.-- saw their odds improve, indicating that betters and sportsbooks are expecting a change at the top of the Democratic ticket.

The biggest jump was for Gavin Newsom, who saw his odds go from +5000 to as low as +500 on some sites. By comparison, Harris’ odds went from +6600 to +1400, a large jump but not nearly as large as Newsom’s. The Democratic nominee for the 2016 Presidential election also jumped up the boards: Hillary Clinton’s odds are now +4000, in May, a bet on Clinton would have gotten gamblers +15000. Patillo thinks she may be a dark horse candidate for the nomination.

“The reason is you have, what? Four months that you have to get 100% name recognition around the country. You don't have time to introduce the country to Gavin Newsom. You don't have time to introduce the country to Kamala Harris, quite frankly,” he explained. “You need someone who is a known commodity that is already recognized by every single person, whether good, bad or ugly, and who has the ability to fundraise, you know, the half billion dollars they're going to need to fundraise for the course of the next several months. And the only person who fits that bill will be Hillary Clinton or Michelle Obama, and Michelle ain't doing it.”

While Clinton lost to Trump in 2016 and has polled unfavorably with the American public, she can at least appear competent on the debate stage, unlike Biden's performance on Thursday. “[Biden] was barely able to form a sentence last night and that is why it's a situation that's apocalyptic for Democrats because regardless of how much money you raise, regardless of how you try to paint Trump, if people think you're running essentially against 'Weekend at Bernie's' it's not going to really matter,” argued Patillo. “And that is why that Hillary train is going to be picking up over the course of the next several weeks.”

“How many times have you heard people say this is no time to panic?” constitutional historian Dan Lazare asked while speaking to Sputnik. “Well, if ever there was a time for Democrats to panic, this is it.”

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ICC Decision on Arrest Warrants For Israeli Officials Delayed By UK

The International Criminal Court's (ICC) decision over potential arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant will be delayed for weeks after the UK requested a review by the court on whether it has jurisdiction over Israeli citizens.

The request by the UK tracks closely with arguments made by the Israeli government that international agreements take precedence over the ICC. The Oslo Accords stipulated that the Palestinian Authority has no criminal jurisdiction over Israelis. Since the Palestinian Authority requested that the ICC open an investigation, Israel argues that it violated the agreement. The UK holds a special “friend of the court” status that enabled them to issue the request. Israel is unable to because it is not a member of the court. [Yedioth Ahronoth](#), the Israeli paper who first reported on the UK request said that “it is believed that the UK's move was made at Israel's request,” and speculated that other countries are being recruited to support the UK review.

The UK submitted the request on July 10, the court gave the country until July 12 to file any comments. That means the arrest warrants, if they come at all, will be delayed until at least then and likely longer. The decision will be made by a three-judge panel. If they rule that the court does not have jurisdiction over Israeli citizens, the court would be unable to issue arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant or any other Israeli official.

In May, ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan requested arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant and three Hamas leaders –Yahya Sinwar, Mohammad Deif and Ismail Haniyeh– for crimes against humanity. If the court rules in favor of Israel, the warrants for the Hamas leaders could still go forward because they are Palestinian.

The Israeli government is facing significant international pressure to halt its campaign in Gaza. In January, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a preliminary ruling that Israel was committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and ordered it to take measures to prevent genocide. In May, it ordered Israel to halt its offensive in Gaza, but Israel ignored the order. Thirteen countries have joined that case.

According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, more than 37,800 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces and at least another 10,000 are missing and presumed dead, a total number that represents more than 2.3% of the Gazan population as of 2020. Another 4.2% of the population has been injured.

Israel launched its attacks on Gaza after a surprise attack by Hamas resulted in the deaths of 1,189 Israelis and the capture of around 240 more.

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Stanford Quietly Removed Azov Battalion From Extremist Group List

Earlier this month, the State Department lifted its ban on providing weapons to the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion*. A month before, the Stanford Mapping Militants Project (MMP) quietly removed the group's profile from its list of "violent militant or extremist organizations."

The Azov Battalion was renamed the 12th Special Purpose Brigade Azov, which the State Department claims is a separate unit from the Azov Battalion. Azov began as an all-volunteer group created to fight separatists in the Donetsk People's Republic and was officially integrated into the Ukrainian National Guard in 2014.

However, despite the rebrand, the leaders of the "new" Azov Brigade have extensive connections with neo-Nazi groups, including Commander Denys Prokopenko and Deputy Commander Sviatoslav Palamar. It also continues to use Nazi iconography on its uniforms and social media posts, including its official logo, which features the Wolfsangel symbol, a Nazi symbol created by SS leader Heinrich Himmler and used by neo-Nazi groups across the world. Azov's removal from the MMP was first reported by the Noir newsletter and later [republished](#) by independent media outlet The Gray Zone.

The Stanford MMP has received funding from the US Department of Defense and Homeland Security but is often used as an authoritative voice in academic research, reports and testimonies to Congress. The change means the MMP list no longer contradicts State Department policy.

Last month, the State Department claimed that the Azov Brigade/Battalion had completed "Leahy vetting as carried out by the US Department of State." Leahy vetting refers to the Leahy law, which prevents the US from funding "foreign security forces where there is credible information implicating that unit in the commission of gross violations of human rights."

The Azov Battalion has been credibly accused of multiple human rights violations, including torture, extrajudicial killing, forced disappearances, using civilian homes for military infrastructure and looting. Some of those crimes allegedly occurred after the Azov Battalion was officially integrated into the Ukrainian National Guard. Prior to the start of Russia's operation in

Ukraine, multiple Western media outlets reported on Azov's connections to extremist neo-Nazi groups.

Earlier this month, the Ukrainian ambassador to the US, Oksana Markarova, published a post on Facebook**, celebrating the group's removal from the list. She also thanked the embassy and an organization called the Association of Families of Azovstal Defenders for "constantly drawing attention and joint fights against Russian propaganda and disinformation" suggesting that she or her colleagues at the embassy may have pressured the MMP to remove the group. The State Department did not respond to Noir's request for comment, but Professor Martha Crenshaw, one of the academics working on the MMP, told the newsletter that it was updating the profile. However, she did not respond to questions asking if it is typical for pages to be taken down while being updated, how long the update will take, what the update will entail, if the page will be made visible again, or if the MMP was contacted by the Ukrainian ambassador.

The MMP's [now-removed profile](#) of the Azov Battalion included a section on its founder Andriy Biletsky. It says that in 2016, two years after the group's integration into the Ukrainian military, Biletsky created a political arm of the group called the National Corps. It notes that the group "was involved with attacks on Roma camps, LGBT activists, and protested the construction of a mosque in Lviv," and that the group was referred to as a "hate group" by the US State Department.

Last week, it was reported that the State Department had been funding the Azov Battalion for months, despite the ban officially still being in place.

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US MQ-9 Reaper Has Close Encounter With Russian Aircraft in Syria - Russian Military

MOSCOW (Sputnik) - A MQ-9 Reaper drone of the US-led international coalition flew dangerously close to a Russian Su-35 aircraft in Syria, Yuri Popov, the deputy head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in Syria, said on Saturday.

"On June 29, from 11:00-11:05 [08:00-08:05 GMT], coalition's MQ-9 Reaper drone once again flew dangerously close to a Su-35 aircraft of the Russian aerospace forces, which was making a scheduled flight in Syrian airspace, over the Al-Sukhnah town in the Homs province, at altitudes from 7,500-8,500 meters [24,606-27,887 feet]. The Russian pilot demonstrated high professionalism and took the necessary measures in a timely manner to prevent a collision," Popov told a briefing.

The US-led coalition fighters breached deconfliction protocols and violated the Syrian airspace 10 times over the past 24 hours in the Al-Tanf area by a pair of F-15 fighter jets, a pair of Rafale and Typhoon fighter jets, as well as two pairs of A-10 Thunderbolt attack aircraft, the Russian official added.

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“The problem then becomes you can’t hop over the first Black female vice president and put Gavin Newsom, let’s say, in the catbird seat,” explained Patillo, and whoever the nominee is will need support from black voters if they hope to defeat Donald Trump in November.

“The reason is you have, what? Four months that you have to get 100% name recognition around the country. You don’t have time to introduce the country to Gavin Newsom. You don’t have time to introduce the country to Kamala Harris, quite frankly,” he explained. “You need someone who is a known commodity that is already recognized by every single person, whether good, bad or ugly, and who has the ability to fundraise, you know, the half billion dollars they’re going to need to fundraise for the course of the next several months. And the only person who fits that bill will be Hillary Clinton or Michelle Obama, and Michelle ain’t doing it.”

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The International Criminal Court's decision on whether arrest warrants will be issued for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallany will be delayed for weeks after the UK requested a review.

The UK wants the court to look at whether it has jurisdiction over Israeli citizens. Israel has been arguing that the request by the Palestinian Authority to the ICC to investigate potential crimes against humanity by Israel violated the Oslo Accords, which stipulates that the Palestinian Authority has no criminal jurisdiction over Israeli citizens.

The UK was able to file the request for a review because it has "friend of the court" status. Israel could not issue the order itself because it is not a member of the court. Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth said, "it is believed that the UK's move was made at Israel's request." The paper speculates that other countries are being recruited.

The UK submitted the request on July 10, the court gave the country until July 12 to file any comments. Any potential warrants will not be issued until after that date, if at all.

The court could still issue arrest warrants for the three Hamas leaders also named in ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan's request for warrants because they are Palestinian.

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Azov's removal from the MPP was first reported by the Noir newsletter and later republished by independent media outlet The Gray Zone.

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Biden Cannot be Forced to Forgo Presidential Race – Trump Senior Advisor

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) – Former President Donald Trump's senior advisor Jason Miller told Fox News that it would not be possible to force President Biden to forgo the presidential race after his poor debate performance.

"Joe Biden is definitely going to be the Democratic nominee for a couple of reasons ... Number one, you can't force him off; some 3,700 of the 3,800 regular Dem delegates are bound on the first batch so they can't force him," Miller said in an interview on Sunday.

Miller also contended that Biden would not leave on his own, arguing that the president would not "want his reputation, his legacy to be tarnished as a quitter" and end what he claimed was the "Biden family business" of "selling [government] access."

Biden appeared confused and incoherent throughout his first debate of the race with Republican frontrunner Trump last Thursday, reinforcing rather than refuting ongoing concerns about his cognitive abilities at age 81. His poor performance has led many Democratic politicians, donor, and other supporters to call for him to step aside.

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Senior Ukrainian Officials to Visit US July 2 Ahead of NATO Summit – Reports

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) – Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, Energy Minister German Galushchenko, and Zelenskyy's chief of staff Andriy Yermak will be in Washington D.C. on Tuesday to meet with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Politico reported on Monday.

The meeting with Sullivan will focus on measures to protect Ukraine's energy infrastructure

ahead of the winter.

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US Justice Dept. to Charge Boeing With Criminal Fraud Amid Safety Mishaps - Source

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Justice has decided to indict US aerospace company Boeing with a criminal fraud charge over its alleged breach of a 2021 deferred prosecution agreement, a source familiar with the matter told Sputnik.

The source said on Sunday that Boeing will face one charge of defrauding the US government about the safety of the plane.

In May, the Justice Department notified Boeing it was subject to criminal prosecution after it determined that the company breached a 2021 agreement between them to avoid criminal charges for the two fatal 737 MAX crashes that occurred in 2018 and 2019. Under the agreement, Boeing paid \$2.5 billion in penalties and vowed to improve its safety and compliance protocols.

However, federal prosecutors recently recommended to senior Justice Department officials that Boeing be prosecuted for failing to improve the safety of its aircraft after a series of mishaps this year, including a door panel that blew off an Alaska Airlines flight shortly after takeoff.

A Justice Department spokesperson on Sunday declined to provide Sputnik with comment on this matter.

The legal team representing the families of the victims of the 737 MAX aircraft crashes was notified of the decision that the Justice Department reached to prosecute Boeing, but they do not think it does enough to hold the company accountable.

"The Justice Department is preparing to offer to Boeing another sweetheart plea deal. The deal will not acknowledge, in any way, that Boeing's crime killed 346 people. It also appears to rest on the idea that Boeing did not harm any victim. The families will strenuously object to this plea deal," the legal team said in a press release without disclosing details about the expected charge against Boeing.

The release added that the families oppose the plea deal because it does not include any company executives being prosecuted and there are also issues with the amount of the fine federal prosecutors intend to ask the court to impose on Boeing.

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Growing Russia, China Interest in Africa to Provide Economic Boost to Continent - Rogers

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The increasing global interest in Africa, particularly from China and Russia, will boost economic growth on the continent, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

"Many countries are starting to invest in Africa, to trade with Africa," Rogers said.

The investor emphasized the significance of Chinese investors' presence across Africa. Rogers

noted that China and Russia, as well as other nations, have intensified efforts to deepen their involvement in Africa.

"Africa is poised to thrive because of its valuable resources and its billion-strong population," Rogers said. "Everyone wants to sell to a billion people."

The countries of the collective West have expressed on multiple occasions concerns about Russia's expanding diplomatic, military and economic ties with Africa.

In response, Russian officials have said that the history of colonialism prevents the West from seeing Africa as an independent geopolitical player.

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Ukraine Conflict Slowing Down EU Economies, Some Will Not Be as Prosperous - Rogers

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is slowing down the European countries' economies and some will not be as prosperous as they used to be, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

"It [the Ukraine conflict] causes economies to slow down and some countries will not be as prosperous as they have been," Rogers said. "Whenever people have economic problems they blame somebody and that always leads to change."

Rogers said the issues facing the global economy will affect not only Europe but also other parts of the world in the next couple of years.

"There are many countries in Europe that will try to get around the European problems. So there may be more countries that will leave the European Union," Rogers said.

The investor noted that the United Kingdom left the European Union despite some people speculating such a move would destroy its economy, but added he believes other politicians will start "doing the same thing."

Rogers expressed doubt that the European Union would survive given that few blocs have lasted for very long.

"Most of them have broken up. I'm afraid the Euro will break up someday," Rogers said.

In early June, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said the Eurozone economy was gradually recovering from the coronavirus pandemic measures, the cut in gas supplies from Russia and the consequences of the Ukraine conflict, but the bloc's aging population and sluggish productivity present risks to growth in the medium term.

The IMF warned that intensifying geopolitical tensions, trade disputes and distortive industrial policy could further complicate economic prospects and the policy making environment for a region highly open to trade.

The collective West stepped up sanctions pressure on Russia after the start of the special military operation in Ukraine in 2022. Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the West's long-term strategy of containing Russia hurts the global economy.

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US Dollar Will Be Replaced But Not Clear by What Currency - Investor Jim Rogers

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The US dollar will eventually be replaced as the world's reserve currency, however, it is still not clear by which one, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

When asked whether he believes that the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) group of nations may eventually come up with a currency alternative to the dollar, Rogers said, "I know that somebody's going to come up with an alternative to the dollar."

Rogers explained that when a country gets into a situation of having a gigantic debt, like the United States today, "everybody looks for something else" and "they always find something else."

The investor noted that this has been the case throughout history and he was sure the next generation would use another currency in their lifetime.

"I don't know what it is, but I know the dollar is going to have problems. A hundred years ago, it was the pound sterling and Britain went bankrupt 50 years later. Americans are going to have problems too."

Earlier in June, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Pankin told Sputnik that the work on establishing a currency for use within BRICS is ongoing. Pankin added that the approach is also to increase at present the use of national currencies in settlements within the bloc.

Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri told Sputnik that the BRICS countries' finance ministers are at the final stage of de-dollarizing their trade and economies.

However, US Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller said that the dollar's dominance is likely to stay despite headlines about trade blocs like BRICS, cryptocurrencies and sanctions supposedly undermining the dollar's standing as the world's reserve currency.

Russian President Vladimir Putin characterized the United States' use of the dollar as a foreign policy tool to be one of the biggest strategic mistakes. Putin pointed out that even US allies have been downsizing their US dollar reserves.

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Investor Rogers Says 'Impossible' for US to Pay Its Debt

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The United States has gigantic debt, and it's simply impossible for Washington to ever repay it, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

"The US is the largest debtor nation in the history of the world. If you get out the numbers there, you know that it's impossible for America to ever pay the debts," Rogers said. "America is going to have more problems as we go forward."

Rogers added that it's a good time to be an older American, but not a good time to be an American teenager, as many problems will arise during their lifetime.

According to the International Monetary Fund, the US public debt will exceed 123% of GDP in 2024 and reach nearly 134% in 2029.

The US debt currently exceeds \$34.8 trillion.

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In May, the Justice Department notified Boeing it was subject to criminal prosecution after it determined that the company breached a 2021 agreement between them to avoid criminal charges for the two fatal 737 MAX crashes that occurred in 2018 and 2019. Under the agreement, Boeing paid \$2.5 billion in penalties and vowed to improve its safety and compliance protocols.

However, federal prosecutors recently recommended to senior Justice Department officials that Boeing be prosecuted for failing to improve the safety of its aircraft after a series of mishaps this year, including a door panel that blew off an Alaska Airlines flight shortly after takeoff.

A Justice Department spokesperson on Sunday declined to provide Sputnik with comment on this matter.

The legal team representing the families of the victims of the 737 MAX aircraft crashes was notified of the decision that the Justice Department reached to prosecute Boeing, but they do not think it does enough to hold the company accountable.

"The Justice Department is preparing to offer to Boeing another sweetheart plea deal. The deal will not acknowledge, in any way, that Boeing's crime killed 346 people. It also appears to rest on the idea that Boeing did not harm any victim. The families will strenuously object to this plea deal," the legal team said in a press release without disclosing details about the expected charge against Boeing.

The release added that the families oppose the plea deal because it does not include any company executives being prosecuted and there are also issues with the amount of the fine federal prosecutors intend to ask the court to impose on Boeing.

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EUCOM Bolstering Security This Summer Due to Potential Threat to Personnel - US Official

WASHINGTON, June 30 (Sputnik) - US military bases in Europe are redoubling security efforts to protect personnel due to some factors that may potentially threaten their safety, a US military official said in a statement to Sputnik on Sunday.

"Due to a combination of factors potentially impacting the safety and security of US service members and their families stationed in the European theater, US European Command is redoubling its efforts to stress vigilance during the summer months," the official said.

Media reported earlier that US military bases in Germany, Italy, Romania and Bulgaria have

raised their threat level due to a possible imminent terrorist attack against US service members.

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USEUCOM redoubling its efforts 'to stress vigilance' during summer due to some factors potentially impacting safety, security - official to Sputnik

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Rogers Says Buying Silver Now Good Investment, Sees China, Uzbekistan as Promising Areas

MOSCOW, June 30 (Sputnik) - Buying silver now is a better investment than gold, while China and Uzbekistan remain attractive countries for investments at the moment, legendary American investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

"What I try to do is find things that are down and depressed. I don't like when everybody is at an all-time high. I don't like investing like that," Rogers said. "If you look around the world, most markets are making new highs. China's down. So I am looking at China. I have been buying shares in Uzbekistan because they're making very good changes. But other than Uzbekistan and China, nearly all markets are going up. I don't like to buy when everything is going up."

Rogers said that he was also investing in silver.

"I want to buy some more silver soon," he revealed. "I have some gold, I want to buy some more gold too. If I were buying one today, I would buy silver. Because you know silver is cheaper. I think silver is down 40% from its all-time high. Gold is near its all-time high. So I would prefer to buy silver now. I bought some silver yesterday. I hope I buy some more if they go down. Between silver and gold, silver is the best right now."

Agriculture is another attractive place to invest, Rogers noted. Whenever there is inflation, grain is a way to protect yourself, he said.

The famed investor, now the chairman of Rogers Holdings and Beeland Interests, is also the author of several books including "Investment Biker," "Adventure Capitalist," and "Street Smarts." In addition, Rogers has the Guinness World Record for most countries visited in a continuous journey by car - an adventure he undertook from 1999-2002. In 1973, Rogers and George Soros co-founded the world-renowned Quantum Fund, which by 1980 was up 4,200% at a time when the US was in a bear market. Time Magazine in 1994 dubbed Rogers the "Indiana Jones of finance" for realizing huge profits on foreign stocks that were neglected by Wall Street.

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US, Russia Will Inevitably Have Communication, Trade Again Someday - US Investor

WASHINGTON, June 30 (Sputnik) - The United States and Russia will undoubtedly have communication and trade again in the future, as both are huge countries with consequential economies, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

When asked whether he thinks that relations between Russia and the United States will improve one day, Rogers stated, "Of course, they will someday."

"I can remember when Americans wouldn't even talk to Russians. And the Russians wouldn't talk to Americans. That will change again," he said. "Russia is a huge country, America is too. Of course, there will be communication and trade again someday. There always has been and there always will be after the war."

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Russia Will Recover, 'Not Disappear' Due to Sanctions - US Investor Jim Rogers

WASHINGTON, June 30 (Sputnik) - Anti-Russia sanctions imposed by the West will not make Russia's economy disappear, the country will recover, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

"Russia is not going to disappear. There have been sanctions against Russia in history, there will be again. There have been sanctions against everybody in history. Russia will recover," Rogers said.

The investor noted that Russia is experiencing a record number of sanctions, which would hurt any country.

Rogers said that many people in such circumstances would turn to the black market and go around the sanctions, while many others would abide by them, and Russia will have to deal with the reality of sanctions.

"If any country has a lot of sanctions against it, they would hurt the country for a while. So, Russia is going to have to deal with the fact that there are many sanctions against it," Rogers said.

The investor emphasized that Russia has a lot of oil and agricultural products, which are needed around the world, and has so far done a good job of working around the sanctions.

"Russia is finding a way to get around the sanctions. But this always happens whenever somebody imposes sanctions. Many people try to find a way to get around the sanctions and they do," Rogers said.

Once the conflict in Ukraine is over, Russia will start opening up again and people will open up to Russia again, Rogers added.

The countries of the collective West stepped up sanctions pressure on Russia after the start of the special military operation in Ukraine in 2022. Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the collective West's long-term strategy of containing Russia was instead hurting the global economy.

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RPT - Renowned Russian Pediatric Surgeon Yuri Kozlov Speaks at International Conference in US

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - Prominent Russian pediatric surgeon and chief physician at the Irkutsk Regional Children's Clinical Hospital Yuri Kozlov told Sputnik that he participated in the annual conference organized by the International Pediatric Endosurgery Group (IPEG), where he made three presentations, as well as gave lectures to surgeons.

"The main purpose of this US visit is to participate in the IPEG conference. The Program Committee selected three of my scientific reports for presentation, one was presented at the plenary session, and the other two at the 'Coolest Tricks' and 'Robotical Surgery' sessions," Kozlov said. "Also, at the invitation of the Phoenix Children's Hospital, I gave lectures to surgeons."

Kozlov said he made three presentations during the three-day conference, which was held in Henderson, Nevada, from June 19 to 21.

The Russian surgeon said that his first speech, given at the plenary session, was about clinical trials of the new generation robot Versius used in pediatric surgery.

"The report aroused great interest and a significant number of questions. The first experience in the world of using a new generation robot in pediatric surgery," Kozlov said. "In recognition of the high quality of the research, the program committee selected the scientific work for publication in the Journal of Pediatric Surgery as an 'invitation article.'"

Kozlov said his second presentation "Fluoroscopic Marking and Laparoscopic Enucleation of a Colon Tumor" was made during the most dynamic session dubbed "Coolest Tricks," where endosurgeons from all over the world demonstrate new ways to operate..

"For the first time in children we marked a tumor that grows inside the intestinal lumen by submucosal injection of indocyanine green - a drug that begins to glow green when it is exposed to light in the spectrum close to infrared," he said. "A day after the injection, we performed laparoscopy and discovered a section of the intestine, inside of which there was a tumor invisible from the outside, thanks to a green glow. For the first time in children it was performed in Irkutsk."

Kozlov pointed out that his first presentation - "Robot-Assisted Distal Pancreatectomy With Spleen Preservation" - is one of the first examples of using a robot to treat pancreatic diseases in children.

"There is an elegant execution of the procedure thanks to the dexterity of robotic instruments. The repertoire of robot-assisted procedures is expanding," he said. "The point of growth and development of pediatric robotic surgery in children is Irkutsk, Russia."

Kozlov said that over the course of three days he was able to immerse himself in the mainstream of his profession, which allowed to "synchronize watches" and determine current trends in global pediatric surgery.

After the conference, Kozlov went to the Children's Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona, where he was welcomed as a visiting professor by the surgical team.

While in Phoenix, Kozlov said he gave two lectures to surgeons. The first, dubbed "Industry 4.0 of Pediatric Surgery," presented the latest achievements in pediatric surgery developed at the Children's hospital in Irkutsk, including robot-assisted surgery, fluoroscopically guided surgery, image-guided surgery, fetoscopic surgery as well as smart operating room.

"The lecture aroused genuine interest and heated discussion related to the rapid developments in pediatric surgery," Kozlov said.

The second lecture dubbed "Jazz - the Melody of Endosurgery" drew parallels between famous endosurgeons and popular jazz players, Kozlov also said.

The lecture was performed in the form of a musical film with live participation of jazz musicians from Russia and the United States, Kozlov added.

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Seizing Russian Assets 'Not Right,' But Nearly Always Happens in War - Rogers

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - The seizure of Russian assets by the collective West is a wrong move but it almost always occurs in a time of war, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

Earlier in June, the Group of Seven (G7) countries agreed during their summit in Italy to provide at least \$50 billion to Ukraine by utilizing revenues generated from the interest on Russia's \$325 billion in assets frozen in the countries of the collective West.

"Unfortunately, that happens in war. It's not just America, Ukraine and Russia right now," Rogers said. "Is it right? Of course, it's not right ... for a country just to steal someone else's assets. But it nearly always happens in war."

Rogers said he does not approve of the seizure and does not think it should happen, but reiterated that governments always take their enemies' assets in war.

The investor noted that the United States is an ally of Ukraine and that is a fact regardless of whether some may consider it good or bad.

"So, the United States is going to try to help Ukraine against Russia," Rogers said. "Whatever America can do to help Ukraine, they will."

Rogers said the United States will continue to assist Ukraine despite the uncertain outcome of what the aid may bring about.

"I know America is going to try to help Ukraine more and more in the future. Will that mean Ukraine will win? I don't know," Rogers said.

When asked whether the decision to seize Russian assets will undermine the other nations' trust in the United States, Rogers said, "Many people see what's happening with the US dollar, they see that the US is seizing assets, that other people are seizing assets, so many people are now trying to find something else to use besides the US dollar."

Rogers noted that it is widely known that the United States is the largest debtor nation in history and most people are trying to find another currency to use besides the US dollar.

"I want to repeat the United States is the largest debtor nation in the history of the world and that debt is going higher every day. Everybody knows that and everybody's trying to find something else," Rogers added.

After the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the European Union and the G7 nations froze almost half of Russia's foreign currency reserves, amounting to \$325 billion. Russia has said that any attempt to confiscate its assets amounts to theft and is a

violation of international law.

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RPT- Ongoing US-Russia Cooperation:7 US Pediatric Surgeons to Join Conference in Russia-Surgeon

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - The cooperation between Russian and American surgeons continues on an ongoing basis, and in August, seven US pediatric surgeons will participate in a Russian conference, Russian prominent Pediatric surgeon and Chief physician of the Irkutsk Regional Children's Clinical Hospital Yuri Kozlov told Sputnik

“Cooperation with US colleagues continues on an ongoing basis, particularly at various summits in different formats - in person, online and hybrid,” Kozlov said. “As an example, the upcoming ‘Stars of Pediatric Surgery on Lake Baikal’ congress, which will be held in Irkutsk on August 22-23, will be attended by 7 pediatric surgeons from North America, 1 from South America, 2 from Western Europe and 2 from Asia.”

Kozlov, who is also a correspondent member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, shared that just in the last year he has worked as a visiting professor in Barcelona, Spain, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and Beijing, China.

“For us, pediatric surgeons, there is one fundamental principle: One World - One Surgery,” he stated.

Kozlov is currently in the United States where he made three presentations at the annual conference, organized by the International Pediatric Endosurgery Group (IPEG), as well as gave lectures for the surgeons.

Kozlov noted that he is a member of many international surgical societies, including the American Association of Pediatric Surgeons.

Kozlov went on to say that on the Russian side, they are promoting the technologies of robot-assisted surgery, fetal surgery, as well as surgery using indocyanine green.

“American colleagues share their experience in performing minimally invasive surgeries on newborns and infants, as well as laparoscopic surgeries on cancer patients,” he said. “In addition, Western colleagues share their developments in the field of artificial intelligence in medicine.”

Kozlov noted that AI is now used in training programs for surgeons, and performing preoperative planning, to creating digital twins of organs in 3D images and overlaying them on a child's real organs during surgery to visualize the anatomy.

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US Investor Says Has Shares in Russian Companies, Hopes Trading to Resume After Conflict

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - Legendary American investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik that he still has shares in the Moscow Stock Exchange, Aeroflot and some other leading Russian

companies and hopes that trading will resume once the conflict in Ukraine is over.

"I still have the shares unfortunately. I hope that the war ends someday and that the shares will be trading again but at the moment I still have them and it's not good. I'm not making any money because there's a war," Rogers said, noting that his shares are in his brokerage account. "I have shares in the Moscow Stock Exchange. I have shares in Aeroflot. I have shares in some big popular companies in Russia."

The famed investor, now the chairman of Rogers Holdings and Beeland Interests, is the author of several books including "Investment Biker," "Adventure Capitalist," and "Street Smarts." In addition, Rogers has the Guinness World Record for most countries visited in a continuous journey by car - an adventure he undertook from 1999-2002.

In 1973, Rogers and George Soros co-founded the world-renowned Quantum Fund, which by 1980 was up 4,200% at a time when the US was in a bear market. Time Magazine in 1994 dubbed Rogers the "Indiana Jones of finance" for realizing huge profits on foreign stocks that were neglected by Wall Street.

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First US Presidential Debate for 2024 Election Draws 51.3Mln Viewers - Nielsen Ratings

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - The first US presidential debate between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump attracted about 51.3 million viewers across 17 networks on Thursday night, the Nielsen ratings agency said in a press release.

"An estimated 51.3 million people watched CNN's presentation of the first presidential debate of the 2024 election season on Thursday, June 27," the release said on Friday.

The viewership for the presidential debate on Thursday is a pretty significant drop compared to the first presidential debate in 2020, which drew 73.1 million viewers. On Thursday evening, Biden and Trump participated in a CNN-hosted debate in Atlanta. Biden's performance reportedly sparked concerns among Democrats and raised questions about the future of his candidacy.

The next presidential debate will take place on September 10.

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Investor Rogers on Moscow Stock Exchange: Sanctions Will Have Short Term Effect

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - Legendary American investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik after the United States imposed sanctions on the Moscow Exchange (MOEX) that sanctions normally do not have much impact except in the short term, and will be eventually lifted.

When asked whether the sanctions against MOEX will affect the investment climate in Russia, Rogers said: "Sanctions - I have learned over history - sanctions usually do not have much effect except short term."

"When a country has sanctions, of course, many people stay out of that country or do not invest

in that country. So this will happen in Russia, it has happened. Many people would not invest in Russia while there are sanctions," he said. "But I also know that sanctions have never lasted forever, anywhere. So I would suspect that after I don't know when but after the war sometime, the sanctions will be lifted, and things will go back to normal in Russia. Not now but after the war."

On June 12, the United States imposed sanctions on the Moscow Exchange, the largest exchange in Russia, as part of a new package of restrictive measures against the country.

On the same day, MOEX said it was halting trading in dollars and euros starting June 13.

Starting June 13, the Bank of Russia began setting the exchange rates for these currencies based on reporting data from credit institutions and the results of interbank conversion transactions in the over-the-counter FX market as of 15:30 Moscow time on business days.

The Russian central bank is able to ensure stability in all markets, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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US Marines Successfully Test Fire New Anti-Ship Missile in Philippine Sea -Statement

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - US forces have successfully test-fired a new anti-ship missile, sinking a target vessel during exercises held in the Philippine Sea, the Marine Corps announced in a press release.

"The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit sank a moving training target vessel during an expeditionary strike exercise in the Philippine Sea [on] Wednesday 26 June," the release stated on Friday.

In the exercise, an AH-1Z Viper, attached to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 262 Reinforced, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, fired a live AGM-179 Joint Air-to-Ground Missile (JAGM), striking a towed moving training vessel during a training mission at sea, the release said.

"A JAGM is a precision-guided munition for use against high-value stationary, moving, and relocatable land and maritime targets. The missile can be used to defend key maritime terrain against a wide range of targets from armored vehicles to maritime patrol craft during conflict," the release said.

The success of this expeditionary strike demonstrates the 31st MEU's capability to deliver precision strikes at sea and safeguard a free and open Indo-Pacific, the release said.

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US Military Pays Think Tank \$1.5Bln For More Research, Analysis Services - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - The Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) has received a more than \$1.4 billion contract to provide research, analyses, technical evaluation, and test and evaluation to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the US military's combatant

commands and defense agencies on national security issues, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Institute for Defense Analyses [in] Alexandria, Virginia is awarded a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract valued at \$1,424,039,026," the release announced on Friday.

Under the terms of the contract, the IDA will provide research, analyses, technical evaluation, and test and evaluation support to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the combatant commands, and defense agencies, the release explained.

"This requirement will maintain the comprehensive evaluation of national security issues, including systems and technologies at all stages of development, deployment, and use," the Defense Department added.

Work on the contract will be performed in Alexandria, Virginia over the next five years with an estimated contract completion date of June 30, 2029, the Defense Department said.

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New York Times Editorial Board Calls on Biden to Drop Out of Presidential Race

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - The New York Times Editorial in an op-ed wrote that President Joe Biden should suspend his presidential campaign after a poor showing at the first presidential debate and let a fresh new Democratic candidate take his place.

"Mr. Biden has been an admirable president. Under his leadership, the nation has prospered and begun to address a range of long-term challenges, and the wounds ripped open by Mr. Trump have begun to heal. But the greatest public service Mr. Biden can now perform is to announce that he will not continue to run for re-election," the editorial board stated on Friday.

The editorial board said that at the debate, Biden failed to convince the American public that he was fit to serve a second term in office.

Biden struggled to explain what he would accomplish in a second term, struggled to respond to former President Donald Trump's provocations, and struggled to speak on several occasions, the editorial board pointed out.

"The clearest path for Democrats to defeat a candidate defined by his lies is to deal truthfully with the American public: acknowledge that Mr. Biden can't continue his race, and create a process to select someone more capable to stand in his place to defeat Mr. Trump in November," the editorial board said.

On Thursday evening, Biden and Trump participated in a CNN-hosted debate in Atlanta. Biden's performance reportedly sparked concerns among Democrats and raised questions about the future of his candidacy.

Biden and his campaign admitted earlier in the day that the US president had a rough showing at the debate in Atlanta but they assured the public that they would not end the reelection bid.

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US Military Spends Another \$1.5Bln on Cybersecurity Services - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - Five high-tech corporations are awarded a \$1.5 billion Washington Headquarters Services contract to perform cybersecurity; IT, and information enterprise services.

"[The five companies] are awarded a ...contract valued at \$1.5 billion to perform cybersecurity; IT; information enterprise; and administrative and program subject matter expertise and support services," the release said on Friday.

The Defense Department identified the five companies as Analytic Services of Falls Church, Virginia; Booz Allen Hamilton of McLean, Virginia; CACI of Federal, Chantilly, Virginia; Leidos of Reston, Virginia and Science Applications International Corporation of Reston, Virginia.

"Services include activities such as strategic planning, capital planning, technology performance, assessments, research and analysis, architectures, modeling, hardware and/or software development," the release explained.

Work on the contract is scheduled to last five years with an estimated contract completion date of June 27, 2029, the Defense Department said.

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Southwest Airlines Works With FAA to Probe Portland Departure Incident - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - Southwest Airlines is working with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to investigate the early morning departure incident of Flight 4805 from Portland International Jetport, Southwest Airlines Senior Advisor Lynn Lunsford told Sputnik.

"Southwest Airlines is engaged with the NTSB and FAA to understand the circumstances of an early morning Southwest departure on Tuesday, June 25, of Flight 4805 from Portland International Jetport," Lunsford said on Friday.

On Tuesday, Southwest Flight 4805 departed from runway 29 at 5:43 a.m., minutes before its scheduled opening while the runway was still being inspected for safety.

The report said the ground vehicle's driver contacted the control tower to question the plane's takeoff on an unopened runway and the air traffic controller replied that there had been no communication with the pilots.

Audio recordings of air traffic control revealed controllers repeatedly warning Flight 4805 about a vehicle on the closed runway, followed by a controller saying that an attempt was made to warn the pilot, the report added.

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US Army Orders \$58.5Mln More Small Caliber Guns Ammunition - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - The US Army has ordered an additional more than \$58.5 million of 5.56 mm, 7.62 mm, and .50 caliber ammunition from the Olin Winchester Company, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Olin Winchester [of] Oxford, Mississippi was awarded a \$58,529,810 modification ...contract for 5.56 mm, 7.62 mm, and .50 caliber ammunition," the release stated on Friday.

Work on the contract will be performed in Oxford, Mississippi over the coming 15 months with an estimated completion date of September 30, 2025, the Defense Department said.

The Army Contracting Command in Rock Island Arsenal in the state of Illinois will oversee the work as its contracting activity, the Defense Department said.

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US Has Provided Israel With 10,000 Bombs, Missiles Since Start of Gaza Conflict - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - The United States has sent Israel more than 10,000 bombs and missiles since the start of Israel's military operation in Gaza last October, Reuters reported, citing two US officials.

The report said the weapons shipments included at least 14,000 of the MK-84 2,000-pound bombs, 6,500 500-pound bombs, 3,000 Hellfire precision-guided air-to-ground missiles, 1,000 bunker-buster bombs, and 2,600 air-dropped small-diameter bombs.

The United States has not made any significant changes that would limit the level of US military support provided to Israel, the report added.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to Sputnik's request for comment on this matter.

On Wednesday, a US official told reporters that the United States has sent Israel \$6.5 billion worth of weapons.

The Biden administration at present only has one shipment on temporary hold of the 2,000-pound bombs Israel has been asking for. The United States is currently reviewing this request amid concerns that Israel would use it in densely populated areas in Rafah.

However, the United States is expected to release a hold soon on 500-pound bombs that have also been placed on hold, according to reports. Israel will reportedly need them in case it gets into a deeper conflict with Hezbollah on its northern border with Lebanon.

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Biden, Family, Friends Determined to Hold Power as Long as Possible - Former US Diplomat

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is unlikely to retire before the Democratic National Convention in August and the national election in November because he, his family, and his close inner circle of advisers are determined to hold on to power and privileges as long as they can, former US diplomat and political commentator James Carden told Sputnik.

"I am doubtful Biden will step aside," Carden said on Friday. "That would require advisors,

friends, and family who have a measure (even a tiny measure) of integrity."

Carden was commenting after Biden's appearance in his first nationally televised debate with his predecessor Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican candidate this year. Biden's performance was universally judged, including by almost all Democratic-tending commentators, to have been an embarrassing disaster.

However, Biden's inner circle lacked anyone with the moral courage and stature to tell the president that his position had become untenable, Carden advised.

"On the basis of the public record, there is no evidence any such people exist," he said.

Instead, the nexus of personal cronies, family members, and hangers-on who comprised the president's personal court would lay emphasis on staying blindly in power for as long as possible and they would continue to view all criticism and defections from their ranks as treachery, Carden warned.

"The 'Blob' [Biden's inner circle] will circle the wagons, protect their fiefdoms come hell or high water. I would be pleased to be proven wrong," he concluded.

Biden's bumbling public performance in front of almost 48 million viewers on Thursday night on CNN had left Democratic Party leaders in a state of panic, the New York Times reported on Friday morning.

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ANALYSIS -Democrats Should Panic After Biden's Dismal Debate Performance, Experts Warn

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - If ever there was a time for Democrats in US politics to panic, it is now after President Joe Biden's dismal performance in front of 48 million viewers on Thursday night, eminent American political analysts and historians told Sputnik.

The 81-year-old president repeatedly stumbled into literal incoherence, made fantastic and absurd statements, and even got caught up in a childish argument about whether he had a better golf handicap than his rival, former president Donald Trump.

Minutes after Biden went on stage, Democrats were panic stricken, with some left questioning his viability as the party's nominee, according to the CNN, which hosted the debate. The White House staff was also deflated following the fiasco, with several members already joking about updating their job resumes, expecting Biden won't be reelected.

In public however, Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler said there were no discussions to have Biden suspend his presidential campaign following the backlash while the president himself though admitting he did not perform well, reaffirmed his intention to seek reelection.

DISMAL PERFORMANCE

It was so bad that the only sensible response to it by Democrats across the United States would indeed be to panic, constitutional historian Dan Lazare said.

"How many times have you heard people say this is no time to panic?" Lazare asked. "Well, if ever there was a time for Democrats to panic, this is it."

Lazare insisted that efforts were immediately launched following the embarrassing debacle to persuade or even force Biden to step down from office as quickly as possible.

"I predict that Biden will be out in 24 hours," he said.

In addition, Lazare said that the outcome of Thursday night's debate, watched by around 20% of all adults in the United States, had effectively handed victory in November's presidential election to Trump.

COVER-UP EXPOSED

Democrats were now facing the consequences of concealing Biden's health and cognitive decline over the past three and a half years in the White House, Lazare explained.

"They only have themselves to blame. They have covered up Biden's health problems for months. If there is one thing voters don't like, it's being lied to, yet that is just what the administration has done. They're going to pay an enormous price in November," he said.

Lazare stressed that neither of the Democrats' two most prominent state governors had yet demonstrated the political stature to face Trump on the national stage.

He expressed doubt that nominating Gavin Newsom or Gretchen Whitmer would be effective.

INEVITABLE DEPARTURE

US historian Anton Chaitkin agreed that Biden's resignation or removal as president was now inevitable.

He emphasized that Biden's departure would offer his successor the chance to reverse the disastrous policies of global conflict and confrontation that Biden had imposed on the country and the world.

Roots Action co-founder Jeff Cohen issued a statement from his organization's Step Aside Joe campaign stressing the urgent need for the president to finally withdraw from the national political scene.

"Joe Biden's dreadful performance in the debate underscores his severe liabilities as a candidate. Biden is manifestly not up to the task of combating Trump's lies, vitriol, and neofascism - nor is he capable of articulating a coherent progressive vision capable of galvanizing voters this fall," the statement said.

There was still time before the Democratic Party Convention in Chicago in August to decide on a different presidential nominee, Cohen advised.

OLD AND INFIRM

University of Illinois Professor of International Law Francis Boyle agreed that Biden had demonstrated he was too old and infirm to carry out the duties of the presidency or to run for a second term.

"It has seemed to me from the get-go that for the Democratic Party to run Biden for re-election is a classic case of Elder Abuse," he said.

If Trump won in November, the Democrats would only have themselves to blame, Boyle charged.

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Pentagon Awards Lockheed Martin \$5.3B In Contract for Procurement of Patriot Missile System

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department announced that it has awarded Lockheed Martin a \$5.2 billion contract for the procurement of the Patriot air defense

system.

"Lockheed Martin Corp., Grand Prairie, Texas, was awarded a \$5,278,302,998 firm-fixed-price contract for Phased Array Tracking Radar to Intercept on Target Advanced Capability-3," the Defense Department said in a press release on Friday.

Work on this contract is expected to be complete by June 30, 2027, the release said.

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Trump Says Will Build 'State-of-the-Art' Missile Defense System Over US if Reelected

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said that he will build an advanced missile-defense system like Israel's Iron Dome over the United States if reelected president in 2024.

"In my next term, we will build a great Iron Dome over our country, a dome the likes of which no one has ever seen before, a state-of-the-art missile-defense shield that will be entirely built and made in the USA," Trump said during a campaign event in Virginia on Friday.

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Trump's Odds of Winning US Presidency Rise, Biden's Fall After Debate - Betting Site

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump's chances of winning the 2024 US presidential election increased and current officeholder Joe Biden's decreased following the first debate between the candidates, according to electionbettingodds.com data on Friday.

Trump's odds of winning the presidency are 58.0%, up 2.7% in the last day, the site said as of this writing.

Biden's chances of reelection are 23.6%, down 12.7% in the last day, the site said.

The odds of California Governor Gavin Newsom, who some commentators have speculated could potentially replace Biden as the Democratic Party's nominee, winning the presidency rose to 8.9%, up 6.3% in the last day, the site said.

The site projects that Trump will win the electoral college vote 312-226. A candidate must receive 270 electoral college votes to secure the presidency.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 29 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The Ukrainian military lost up to 4,410 soldiers in clashes with Russia's army group South in the past week, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Friday.

* The Russian military destroyed a Ukrainian S-300 air defense system in the Odesa Region, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* The Russian Investigative Committee has put 28 Ukrainian commanders on the international wanted list, committee head Alexander Bastrykin said.

* Belarus border guards have stopped with the use of military weapons the violation of airspace by a quadcopter from Ukraine, which was conducting reconnaissance of Belarusian industrial facilities and border infrastructure, the State Border Committee of Belarus said.

* The Defense Department has not yet made any decisions regarding the deployment of US military contractors to Ukraine, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said.

US PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

* US President Joe Biden during a campaign event on Friday reaffirmed his intention to seek reelection despite his poor performance in the first presidential debate with Donald Trump.

* Biden said that although he does not speak, walk or debate like he used to when he was younger, he knows how to tell the truth.

* The US presidential debate does not belong in the category of main issues on the agenda of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

GAZA

* The US Central Command (CENTCOM) has removed the temporary pier anchored off the coast of Gaza to prevent structural damage amid unfavorable weather conditions, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

* The EU has imposed sanctions against organizations and individuals from third countries for supporting and financing Palestinian movement Hamas, according to the official journal of the bloc.

* The Israel Defense Forces overnight to Friday entered the district of Shejaiya in northern Gaza in order to eliminate Hamas members in the humanitarian area, the IDF said.

RUSSIA - NORTH KOREA COOPERATION

* The newly renewed cooperation between North Korea and Russia does not pose a threat to anyone, unlike the military activity of the US, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

* The United States' policy of extended deterrence on the Korean Peninsula poses a "real threat" to North Korea as well as to Russia, Nebenzia said.

AFGHANISTAN

* Afghanistan appreciated that the United Nations is ready to discuss the pertinent issues of the country at the meeting in Doha, the head of the Taliban's (under UN sanctions for terrorism) political office in Qatar, Suhail Shaheen, told Sputnik on Friday.

* Kabul hopes that the results of the Doha meeting will contribute to the lifting of sanctions, which the Afghan population suffers from, Shaheen told Sputnik.

* Afghanistan strives for a positive interaction with the international community, Shaheen told

Sputnik.

IMF ON UKRAINE PROGRAM

* The International Monetary Fund Board completed its fourth review of a four-year loan program for Ukraine and approved the disbursement of \$2.2 billion to Kiev.

* The IMF in a report that Ukraine's GDP growth was revised to 2.5-3.5% for the remainder of this year and downgraded to 5.5% for 2025.

* Ukraine's economic outlook through 2025 has worsened due to Russian strikes on the country's energy infrastructure and the uncertainty of how long the conflict will continue, the IMF said.

* The IMF has no plans to restructure Ukraine's debt, IMF mission chief for the country Gavin Gray told Sputnik.

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China Did Not Invite NASA to Participate in Moon Probe, Study Moon Rocks - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - China did not invite NASA to participate in its Moon probe mission or to study moon rocks they obtained, Politico reported on Friday.

China worked with France, Italy, Pakistan and the European Space Agency on a mission to collect samples from the far-side of the moon, but did not seek NASA's participation, Politico reported, citing NASA spokesperson Faith McKie.

China also did not directly invite NASA to study its moon rocks, although it welcomed scientists from around the world to do so, McKie reportedly said.

The United States may not have been invited to work with China on space-related matters due to a law restricting such ties with Beijing, the report said. The law, known as the Wolf Amendment, requires NASA to ask the FBI for permission to work with China.

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Trump Says Biden Won't Quit Race After Debate Due to Strong Poll Numbers Among Democrats

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US Former President Donald Trump said on Friday that President Joe Biden won't leave the race after the presidential debate because he does better in polls than any other Democrat.

"Many people are saying that after last night's performance, Joe Biden is leaving the race, but I don't really believe that, because he does better in polls than any of the other Democrats," Trump said during his remarks in Chesapeake, Virginia.

Earlier today, Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler said there are no discussions to have President Joe Biden suspend his presidential campaign following the backlash he's received from performing poorly in the first presidential campaign.

Tyler added that Biden will participate in the next presidential debate on September 10. On Thursday evening, Biden and former President Donald Trump participated in a CNN-hosted debate in Atlanta. Biden's performance reportedly sparked concerns among Democrats and raised questions about the future of his candidacy.

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Trump Says China, Russia, North Korea 'Not Really Enemies' if US President Smart

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - China, Russia and North Korea do not have to be enemies of the United States if the US elects a smart president, former US President Donald Trump said on Friday.

"China, Russia, North Korea... they're not really enemies if you have a smart president," Trump said during a campaign event in Virginia. "If you have a smart president, they're not enemies, you'll make them do great."

During a debate with US President Joe Biden on Thursday evening, Trump said that Russia never would have launched a special military operation in Ukraine if the US had a "real" president.

Trump said that, if reelected in November, he will broker a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine before he takes office in January. However, Trump said that the terms of Russian President Vladimir Putin's peace proposal are unacceptable.

Ukraine is running out of soldiers and losing historic cities because of Biden's "stupid decisions," Trump said.

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US Stocks Up 15% So Far For 2024, Fueled By Rate Cut Hopes

NEW YORK, June 28 (Sputnik) - US stocks hit record highs on Friday and were up 15% on the year as trading for June closed amid expectations that the Federal Reserve might still cut interest rates before the year ends, despite some policy-makers saying inflation was too high for the central bank to consider easing.

The S&P 500 Index, which tracks stocks of the top 500 US companies, hit a record high of 5,524 before closing at 5,460. That was 242 points, or 3.7%, higher for June. Compared with the end of 2023, the index was up 690 points, or nearly 15%, on the year.

The technology-heavy Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises stocks such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, hit an all-time high of 18,035 before settling at 17,724. That was a gain of 989 points, or 5.9%, for the month and 2,713 points, or 18%, for 2024.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the broadest indicator for US equity markets, peaked at 39,444 before ending the day at 39,119. That put it up 433 points, or 1.1%, for June and 1,429 points, or nearly 4%, higher for the year.

The latest run-up in stocks came after a US inflation gauge closely followed by the Fed cooled

slightly in May by growing 2.6% year-on-year versus 2.7% in April.

The Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, often simply known as the PCE, is being closely watched by the Fed for signs on whether inflation has cooled sufficiently to bring interest rates down from two-decade highs.

Another key US price gauge — the Consumer Price Index (CPI) — also moderated to grow at 3.3% year-on-year in May, from April's annual expansion of 3.4%.

To many on Wall Street, the most recent performance of the PCE and CPI suggested that the Fed may be ready to cut rates before the year ends.

"From the market's perspective, today's PCE report was near perfect," David Donabedian, chief investment officer of CIBC Private Wealth US, said in comments carried by CNBC. "This was unambiguously a positive report."

But San Francisco Fed President Mary Daly, who sits on the Fed's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) that decides on rates, said she did not think it was time for an easing.

The Fed's target for inflation is a mere 2% per annum.

"We have an economy that still has too high inflation," Daly said during an appearance on the CNBC network. "I think that we'll continue to see inflation print above 2% potentially through 2025."

The Fed has kept interest rates in a range of between 5.25% and 5.5% since July 2023. That is the highest for rates since 2002. The FOMC's next review of rates will be at its July 31 meeting. If it passes on that opportunity, it will have three more chances to make a change before the year ends: September 18, November 7 and December 18.

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Boeing Starliner's Return to Earth From ISS Delayed for 'Couple of Weeks' - NASA

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - NASA and Boeing have again delayed the return of the Starliner spacecraft from the International Space Station by "a couple of weeks" while they conduct further tests on the ground, officials said in a press conference on Friday.

Starliner docked at the ISS on June 6 and was supposed to return to Earth after nine days. But NASA and Boeing have repeatedly delayed its return as they conduct tests on the ground to try to troubleshoot helium leaks and thruster issues on the spacecraft.

"We think the testing could take a couple of weeks. We're trying to replicate the inflight conditions as best we can on the ground," NASA's Commercial Crew manager Steve Stich said during a press conference.

Stich said NASA and Boeing have not yet set a target date for Starliner's return, as the testing could "go another week or so" beyond two weeks.

He emphasized, however, that the Starliner crew "are not stranded in space" and are "in not in any hurry" to return home.

NASA and Boeing previously delayed two scheduled return dates for the Starliner spacecraft on June 18 and June 26.

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Trump After Debate Says Biden's Problem His Competence, Not His Age

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden's problem is his competence, not his age, former US President Donald Trump said on Friday.

On Thursday evening, Biden and Trump participated in a CNN-hosted debate. Biden's performance reportedly sparked concern among Democrats and raised questions about his viability as a candidate.

"Joe Biden's problem is not his age, it's not his anything really. He's got no problem other than his competence," Trump said during a campaign event in Virginia. "He's grossly incompetent."

Democrats discussed replacing Biden as the party's 2024 presidential nominee if he performed poorly in the debate with Trump, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh reported earlier this month, citing a longtime friend of Biden.

However, Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler said on Friday that there have been no discussions about replacing Biden, although he admitted that Biden "didn't have the best time" on the debate stage.

Biden would turn 86 by the end of a potential second term as president, whereas Trump would be 82 at the end of a second term in the White House.

When asked about their age during the debate, Trump said that he "aced" two cognitive tests and would like to see Biden take one as well.

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IMF Says Has Two More Scheduled Reviews of Ukraine Loan Program in 2024

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects to conduct two more reviews of its loan program for Ukraine this year, IMF mission chief for the country Gavin Gray said on Friday.

"We have two more reviews in the second half of this year. We have a quarterly schedule," Gray told reporters.

When asked to assess Ukraine's financial needs, particularly on reconstruction, in 2024 and 2025, IMF deputy mission chief for Ukraine Trevor Lessard said that the World Bank completed its assessment earlier this year based on the end-2023 data.

"They estimated reconstruction over the next decade at about \$486 billion," he said.

However, Lessard pointed out that this figure was accurate as of the end of 2023 and is going to rise as the conflict continues.

The IMF Board completed its fourth review of a four-year loan program for Ukraine earlier on Friday, enabling a disbursement of \$2.2 billion to Kiev.

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Biden Campaign Says 'No Conversations' About Biden Stepping Out of Presidential Race

(Adds details in para 4)

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - There are no discussions to have President Joe Biden suspend his presidential campaign following the backlash he's received from performing poorly in the first presidential campaign, Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler said on Friday.

"No conversations about that whatsoever," Tyler said when asked if Biden will consider stepping down after receiving backlash from the Democratic Party. "The Democratic voters nominated Joe Biden. Joe Biden's the nominee."

Tyler said that Biden will participate in the next presidential debate on September 10.

There would be "absolutely" no staffing changes, Tyler added, when asked if there would be any adjustments after last night's debate.

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Biden Campaign Says President Didn't Have Best Time on Debate Stage

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler said on Friday that President Joe Biden's performance during the first presidential debate was not the best, but they prefer "one bad night" over presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump's "bad vision" for the country.

"The President said it himself, today, you know, he didn't have the best time on the debate stage, but we'd rather have one bad night than a candidate, with a bad vision for where he wants to take the country," Tyler said during a White House gaggle.

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US Air Force Says F-16, KC-46 Aircraft Involved in Refueling Incident Off Dutch Coast

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - A US F-16 fighter jet and KC-46 tanker were involved in a refueling incident off the coast of the Netherlands this week, a US Air Forces in Europe spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik on Friday.

"We can confirm the incident involving a 52nd Fighter Wing F-16 and a 931st Air Refueling Wing KC-46 occurred 27 June 2024," the spokesperson said when asked to confirm the refueling incident off the coast of the Netherlands.

Both aircraft and aircrew returned to base safely, and the incident is currently under investigation, the spokesperson added.

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Russia Advises Canada Not to Interfere After Govt Issued Kara-Murza Statement - Embassy

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Moscow advises the Canadian government not to interfere in Russia's internal affairs after it issued a statement deploring the alleged ill-treatment of politician and publicist Vladimir Kara-Murza (recognized as a foreign agent in Russia), the Russian Embassy in Ottawa said on Friday.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau issued a statement to mark the first year of Kara-Murza's sentencing and deplored the alleged ill-treatment by the Russian government.

"Trudeau's cabinet is strongly advised to stick to Canada's own issues and not to interfere in Russia's domestic affairs," the Russian Embassy said via the social media platform X.

Kara-Murza, who holds Russian and UK citizenship as well as a US permanent residence card, was arrested by the Russian authorities in April 2022 for spreading false information about Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

In July 2022, a second criminal case was opened against Kara-Murza for engaging with a foreign or international non-governmental organization that is recognized as undesirable in Russia.

In October 2022, Kara-Murza faced a third lawsuit on charges of state treason for his speeches at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and in the United States. All three cases were later merged into one.

Kara-Murza was handed a 25-year prison sentence by a Moscow court in April 2023. The sentence was heavily criticized by Western countries.

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Oil Prices Up As Much 6% In June, Recovering From May's Stumble

NEW YORK, June 28 (Sputnik) - Oil prices rose as much as 6% in June, recovering most, if not all, of May's losses as a mid-to-late month rally helped a comeback in a market still hampered by doubts over summer demand.

US West Texas Texas Intermediate crude settled June trading at \$81.54 per barrel. That was 5.9% higher from where the US crude benchmark's stood in May, when it finished at \$76.99, down 6%.

Compared with its December 2023 close, US crude finished the half-year mark up 14%.

UK-origin Brent crude settled at \$86.41 per barrel, up 5.9% for June after May's loss of 5.5%. Brent was also up 12% over the past six months.

The strength in crude prices, however, wasn't reflected in recent oil demand data released by the US Energy Information Administration.

The northern hemisphere summer, which began June 20, marks the busiest time for travel in the United States, the world's biggest oil consumer.

Despite this, the Weekly Petroleum Status Report for the week ended June 21 showed US

crude stockpiles rising by 3.591 million barrels, versus the decline of 2.6 million barrels forecast by energy analysts on Wall Street.

In gasoline, there was an increase of 2.654 million barrels versus the forecast for a 1.1-million-barrel drop. Gasoline is the primary motor fuel in the United States and makes up the largest component of the country's energy mix.

Only distillates bucked the trend in crude and gasoline with a weekly slide of 377,000 barrels, although the forecast deficit was 1.5 million. Distillates are primarily processed into the diesel required by trucks, buses and ships, and also goes into making airline fuel.

Analysts said one reason for the comeback in crude prices in June was continued caution over the Israel-Hamas war and other tensions in the Middle East, including in Lebanon, that could impact supplies from the world's most prolific oil-producing region.

"Summer demand itself is a question for oil; it's geopolitical tensions that's keeping the market afloat," said John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital.

He also said US crude's ability to hold above the key bullish mark of \$80 per barrel might be tested in the coming weeks if Middle East tensions dissipated somewhat and oil demand data remained insipid.

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IMF Urges States Using Russian Assets to Ensure Actions Do Not Undermine Monetary System

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) urged countries using Russian assets to ensure that any action has sufficient legal underpinnings and does not undermine the international monetary system, IMF Mission Chief to Ukraine Gavin Gray said on Friday.

"We urge the countries involved, concerned to ensure that any action has sufficient legal underpinnings and does not undermine the functioning of the international monetary system," Gray said.

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IMF Says No Plans to Restructure Ukrainian Debt

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has no plans to restructure Ukraine's debt, IMF mission chief for the country Gavin Gray told Sputnik on Friday.

"That is correct," Gray said when asked to confirm that there are no plans to restructure Ukrainian debt.

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Biden Campaign Says 'No Conversations' About Biden Stepping Out of Presidential Race

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - There are no discussions to have President Joe Biden suspend his presidential campaign following backlash he's received from performing poorly in the first presidential campaign, Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler said on Friday.

"No conversations about that whatsoever," Tyler said when asked if Biden will consider stepping down after receiving backlash from the Democratic Party. "The Democratic voters nominated Joe Biden. Joe Biden's the nominee."

Tyler added that Biden will participate in the next presidential debate on September 10.

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IMF Revises Ukraine Growth Forecast to 2.5-3.5% for 2024, Downgrades to 5.5% for 2025

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in a report released on Friday revealed that Ukraine's GDP growth was revised to 2.5-3.5% for the remainder of this year and downgraded to 5.5% for 2025.

In its World Economic Outlook in April, the IMF said it had expected Ukraine's GDP growth to reach 3.2% this year and 6.5% in 2025.

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IMF Board Completes Review of Ukraine Loan Program, Approves \$2.2 Bln Disbursement

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund Board completed its fourth review of a four-year loan program for Ukraine and approved the disbursement of \$2.2 billion to Kiev, the IMF said in a statement on Friday.

"The IMF Board today completed the Fourth Review of the extended arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for Ukraine, enabling a disbursement of about US\$2.2 billion (SDR 1.66 billion) to Ukraine, which will be channeled for budget support," the statement said.

This will bring the total disbursements under the \$15.6 billion IMF-supported program to about \$7.6 billion, it added.

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Ukraine Economic Outlook Worsens Due to Prolonged Conflict, Damaged Energy Grid - IMF

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's economic outlook through 2025 has worsened due to Russian strikes on the country's energy infrastructure and the uncertainty of how long the

conflict will continue, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Friday.

"However, the outlook for the remainder of the year and into 2025 has worsened since the Third Review, largely due to devastating attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure and uncertainty about the length of Russia's war against Ukraine; overall, the outlook remains subject to exceptionally high uncertainty," the IMF said in a press release.

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Biden Again Insults Putin During Campaign Speech in North Carolina on Friday

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Friday spoke in a campaign event in Raleigh, North Carolina, and again called Russian President Vladimir Putin a "dictator" while emphasizing that the United States will not bow to anyone.

"We're going to stand up to dictators like Putin because America bows to no one," Biden said.

On June 6, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the insults hurled at Putin only harm Biden's reputation and the Russian president will not respond in kind.

White House staff have often complained about Biden's rude remarks toward foreign leaders, journalists and others while attempting to mitigate public relations damage, according to reports.

In May, Biden spoke to the graduates of the West Point Military Academy in New York State and insulted Putin by calling him a "cruel tyrant."

However, Putin has said that Biden is preferable to Russia than Donald Trump because he is more predictable.

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Ongoing US-Russia Cooperation: 7 US Pediatric Surgeons to Join Conference in Russia-Surgeon

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The cooperation between Russian and American surgeons continues on an ongoing basis, and in August, seven US pediatric surgeons will participate in a Russian conference, Russian prominent Pediatric surgeon and Chief physician of the Irkutsk Regional Children's Clinical Hospital Yuri Kozlov told Sputnik

"Cooperation with US colleagues continues on an ongoing basis, particularly at various summits in different formats - in person, online and hybrid," Kozlov said. "As an example, the upcoming 'Stars of Pediatric Surgery on Lake Baikal' congress, which will be held in Irkutsk on August 22-23, will be attended by 7 pediatric surgeons from North America, 1 from South America, 2 from Western Europe and 2 from Asia."

Kozlov, who is also a correspondent member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, shared that just in the last year he has worked as a visiting professor in Barcelona, Spain, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and Beijing, China.

"For us, pediatric surgeons, there is one fundamental principle: One World - One Surgery," he stated.

Kozlov is currently in the United States where he made three presentations at the annual conference, organized by the International Pediatric Endosurgery Group (IPEG), as well as gave lectures for the surgeons.

Kozlov noted that he is a member of many international surgical societies, including the American Association of Pediatric Surgeons.

Kozlov went on to say that on the Russian side, they are promoting the technologies of robot-assisted surgery, fetal surgery, as well as surgery using indocyanine green.

“American colleagues share their experience in performing minimally invasive surgeries on newborns and infants, as well as laparoscopic surgeries on cancer patients,” he said. “In addition, Western colleagues share their developments in the field of artificial intelligence in medicine.”

Kozlov noted that AI is now used in training programs for surgeons, and performing preoperative planning, to creating digital twins of organs in 3D images and overlaying them on a child’s real organs during surgery to visualize the anatomy.

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House Speaker Johnson Says Cabinet Should Consider Removing Biden Through 25th Amendment

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Friday that President Joe Biden's cabinet members should weigh using the 25th Amendment to remove him from office amid the fallout from last night's debate performance.

"There's a lot of people asking about the 25th Amendment, invoking the 25th Amendment right now because this is an alarming situation," Johnson said during a press conference.

"Unfortunately, it's not the House that gets to determine that, it's the Cabinet under the Constitution, of course, it's the Cabinet that makes that decision."

Under the US Constitution, the 25th Amendment allows the vice president and a Cabinet majority vote to declare a president unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office and turn over his duties to the vice president.

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Renowned Russian Pediatric Surgeon Yuri Kozlov Speaks at International Conference in US

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Prominent Russian pediatric surgeon and chief physician at the Irkutsk Regional Children's Clinical Hospital Yuri Kozlov told Sputnik that he participated in the annual conference organized by the International Pediatric Endosurgery Group (IPEG), where he made three presentations, as well as gave lectures to surgeons.

“The main purpose of this US visit is to participate in the IPEG conference. The Program Committee selected three of my scientific reports for presentation, one was presented at the plenary session, and the other two at the 'Coolest Tricks' and 'Robotical Surgery' sessions,”

Kozlov said. "Also, at the invitation of the Phoenix Children's Hospital, I gave lectures to surgeons."

Kozlov said he made three presentations during the three-day conference, which was held in Henderson, Nevada, from June 19 to 21.

The Russian surgeon said that his first speech, given at the plenary session, was about clinical trials of the new generation robot Versius used in pediatric surgery.

"The report aroused great interest and a significant number of questions. The first experience in the world of using a new generation robot in pediatric surgery," Kozlov said. "In recognition of the high quality of the research, the program committee selected the scientific work for publication in the Journal of Pediatric Surgery as an 'invitation article.'"

Kozlov said his second presentation "Fluoroscopic Marking and Laparoscopic Enucleation of a Colon Tumor" was made during the most dynamic session dubbed "Coolest Tricks," where endosurgeons from all over the world demonstrate new ways to operate..

"For the first time in children we marked a tumor that grows inside the intestinal lumen by submucosal injection of indocyanine green - a drug that begins to glow green when it is exposed to light in the spectrum close to infrared," he said. "A day after the injection, we performed laparoscopy and discovered a section of the intestine, inside of which there was a tumor invisible from the outside, thanks to a green glow. For the first time in children it was performed in Irkutsk."

Kozlov pointed out that his first presentation - "Robot-Assisted Distal Pancreatectomy With Spleen Preservation" - is one of the first examples of using a robot to treat pancreatic diseases in children.

"There is an elegant execution of the procedure thanks to the dexterity of robotic instruments. The repertoire of robot-assisted procedures is expanding," he said. "The point of growth and development of pediatric robotic surgery in children is Irkutsk, Russia."

Kozlov said that over the course of three days he was able to immerse himself in the mainstream of his profession, which allowed to "synchronize watches" and determine current trends in global pediatric surgery.

After the conference, Kozlov went to the Children's Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona, where he was welcomed as a visiting professor by the surgical team.

While in Phoenix, Kozlov said he gave two lectures to surgeons. The first, dubbed "Industry 4.0 of Pediatric Surgery," presented the latest achievements in pediatric surgery developed at the Children's hospital in Irkutsk, including robot-assisted surgery, fluoroscopically guided surgery, image-guided surgery, fetoscopic surgery as well as smart operating room.

"The lecture aroused genuine interest and heated discussion related to the rapid developments in pediatric surgery," Kozlov said.

The second lecture dubbed "Jazz - the Melody of Endosurgery" drew parallels between famous endosurgeons and popular jazz players, Kozlov also said.

The lecture was performed in the form of a musical film with live participation of jazz musicians from Russia and the United States, Kozlov added.

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Biden Says Does Not Speak, Walk or Debate Like He Used to But Can Tell Truth

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that although he does not speak, walk or debate like he used to when he was younger, he knows how to tell the truth.

"I know I'm not a young man, to state the obvious," Biden said during a campaign event in North Carolina. "I don't walk as easy as I used to. I don't speak as smoothly as I used to. I don't debate as well as I used to. But I know what I do know: I know how to tell the truth."

Biden's statement comes following a debate with presidential challenger Donald Trump on Thursday evening in Atlanta. Biden's performance reportedly sparked concerns among Democrats and raised questions about his viability as a candidate.

However, Biden said that he did well during the debate, despite criticisms of his performance. Biden also said that he knows how to "get back up" when knocked down.

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Pentagon on Russia's Countermeasures: US to Continue Flights Over Black Sea Int'l Waters

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue flights over international waters in the Black Sea, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday, after Russia warned it will respond to US drone flights in the region.

Earlier in the day, Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov instructed the General Staff to propose response measures to provocations associated with the increased activity of US strategic drones over the Black Sea.

"I don't really have a comment to offer for you on that. You know, we continue to fly, sail and operate in international waters and international spaces where the laws allow," Singh said during a press briefing.

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Federal Reserve Investigators Admit Powell Fell for Russian Prank, Spoke About US Rates

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Investigators at the Federal Reserve have admitted that Chairman Jerome Powell was duped by a pair of Russian pranksters into talking about US interest rates after believing he was on a video chat initiated by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the US central bank did not unearth the scam until weeks after it happened.

The revelation was made by the Office of the Inspector General of the Fed after an inquiry was made by Bloomberg in response to videos posted on April 26, 2023, on the Russian video platform Rutube of the call between Powell and the Zelenskyy impersonator.

The call was pulled off on January 24, 2023, by a pair of pranksters who are known by their nicknames Vovan and Lexus and who have gained global notoriety for pulling stunts designed

to make fun of and humiliate Western leaders.

"We have reviewed the full video and the small video segments and cannot determine whether the video has been altered," the Fed's investigators said in their report, shared by Bloomberg. "In the video, Chair Powell stated the following: "The market is already pricing in two more quarter percentage point rate hikes. We'll look around after we make those two and we'll say should we do any more, and then the question will be, how long do we keep rates at this level, and I think we'll keep them there for quite some time."

The prank began on January 10, 2023, when an assistant of Powell received an email from a person claiming to be Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, who had apparently been referred to by someone at the European Central Bank (ECB).

Four days prior to sending the email, the pranksters, posing as Zelenskiy, had also tricked ECB President Christine Lagarde into getting on a video call, the Fed's investigators later learned.

The Tymoshenko impersonator told Powell's assistant by email that he wanted to talk to the Fed chair to "personally congratulate him with recent holidays and discuss common issues and plans," such as the "impact of the war in Ukraine on the world economy" and "forecasts on the economic situation in the world."

The reference to Lagarde had been enough to convince Powell's office and neither his assistant nor anyone else immediately suspected anything amiss about the emails, despite the accounts sitting on ".net" and ".team" domains.

The call with Powell was originally set for January 19, 2023, but had to be postponed. It went ahead on January 24, with Powell telling the impersonator that "the Fed cannot assist Ukraine directly" and that any "assistance would instead need to come from Treasury and the White House."

After exchanging pleasantries and discussing Russian Central Bank head Elvira Nabiullina, whom Powell described as "well thought of and well respected," the conversation veered into the issue of interest rates.

A day after the call, the impersonator reached out again to thank Powell's assistant and make a "small request" - to connect next with US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. The aide shared Yellen's contact information too.

By February 10, Powell's office began to suspect that they were duped and emailed Lagarde's office to seek legitimacy about Tymoshenko. The scam was unearthed when someone from the ECB President's Office revealed that "Mr. Tymoshenko [has] now left the office of President Zelensky" and "I would be extra cautious when handling his request."

Notwithstanding the embarrassment caused by the prank, the Fed's investigators concluded that no real damage had been done to the US central bank, the US government or the welfare of Americans.

"The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether any criminal statutes, regulations, or agency policies within our jurisdiction were violated," the investigators said. "We have found no violations of law, regulation, or policy associated with this matter."

If anything, the incident has helped the Fed to vet and tighten the process of handling and approving requests for communications with officials at the central bank, the investigators added.

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Pentagon Says Has not Made Decisions About US Contractors in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The Pentagon has not yet made any decisions regarding the deployment of US military contractors to Ukraine, Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

"So we have not made any decisions when it comes to US contractors [in Ukraine]. I've seen some of the reporting out there. The President, of course, has been absolutely firm that there will be no US troops on the ground in Ukraine, but he's not going to comment any further on internal discussions or reports over something that may or may not even be under consideration," said Singh.

On Tuesday, CNN reported that the Biden administration was leaning toward lifting the current ban on sending US troops to Ukraine.

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Pentagon Says US Still Assessing Cause of Russian Satellite That Broke Apart This Week

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The United States is still assessing what caused a Russian satellite to break apart in space this week, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

On Thursday, US Space Command said the Russian satellite, Resurs P1, suffered a mishap while in low-earth orbit on Wednesday that created more than 100 pieces of debris, but it posed no immediate threat to US assets in space.

"As of right now, we're still evaluating why this satellite came apart," Singh said during a press briefing. "Satellite breakups can result from a variety of different cases, but right now, we just don't have an assessment of what broke this one apart, which I believe happened on June 26."

Russia's Roscosmos said the satellite was decommissioned a long time ago.

Resurs P1 was launched into low-earth orbit in 2013 but decommissioned in late 2021. Since its decommissioning, the satellite's orbit has been declining and it was likely to reenter the Earth's atmosphere before the end of this year, according to media reports.

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CENTCOM Relocates Gaza Pier Again Amid Unfavorable Weather Conditions - Pentagon

(Updates with additional comment, more details in paras 3, 4

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The US Central Command (CENTCOM) has removed the temporary pier anchored off the coast of Gaza to prevent structural damage amid unfavorable

weather conditions, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

"Now, due to high sea states expected this weekend, Central Command has removed the temporary pier from its anchored position in Gaza and will tow it back to Ashdod, Israel," Singh said during a press briefing.

Temporarily relocating the pier will help prevent any potential structural damage that could result from high seas, Singh said.

"As of right now, the intention is to continue to get aid into Gaza by any means necessary--that includes the pier airdrops. And of course, the period is meant to be temporary," Singh said.

The Defense Department will give notice when leadership decides its safe enough to re-install the pier, Singh added.

The US military put the pier into operation on May 17, but it has since undergone a string of technical failures and repairs.

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Biden After Debate Fiasco Says Intends to Win Reelection

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden during a campaign event on Friday reaffirmed his intention to seek reelection, despite his poor performance in the first presidential debate with Donald Trump.

"When I'm reelected again, with your help, I want you to know that I'm not to take Roy Cooper [Governor] away from North Carolina," Biden said in Raleigh, North Carolina.

On Thursday evening, Biden and former President Donald Trump participated in a CNN-hosted debate in Atlanta. Biden's performance reportedly sparked concerns among Democrats and raised questions about the future of his candidacy.

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White House Staff 'Deflated' by Biden's Poor Debate Performance - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Many White House staff members are deflated following President Joe Biden's poor performance in the first presidential debate, CNN reported on Friday, citing a White House official.

The official said group text chats shared among White House staff are "abysmal" and everyone is "deflated."

Several staff members are already joking about updating their job resumes, expecting Biden won't be reelected, according to the report.

Many White House staff decided to work from home or didn't go into the office today, the report said.

On Thursday evening, Biden and former President Donald Trump participated in a CNN-hosted debate in Atlanta. Biden's performance reportedly sparked concerns among Democrats and

raised questions about the future of his candidacy.

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Western Hemisphere Surpasses Middle East in Oil Production– S&P Global Vice President

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – Countries in the Western Hemisphere now produce more energy than the Middle East, S&P Global Vice President Daniel Yergin said on Friday.

"It is quite striking to see, I think, now the Western Hemisphere produces more oil than the Middle East," Yergin said during a conversation at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Yergin said that this situation was not expected and pointed out that the energy transition has become more complicated due to prices.

Prominent author and consultant in the energy sector, Daniel Yergin served on the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board under presidents Bill Clinton, George Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump.

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US House Speaker Johnson Says Democrats 'Panicking' Over Biden Debate Performance

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Democrats in the United States are panicking over US President Joe Biden's performance during the first debate against challenger Donald Trump, House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Friday.

"Democrats are panicking, and for good reason. They are now forced to openly admit what we already know is true: Joe Biden can't be president next term," Johnson said in a statement via

social media platform X.

On Thursday evening, Biden and Trump participated in a CNN-hosted debate in Atlanta. Biden's performance reportedly sparked concerns among Democrats and raised questions about the future of his candidacy.

Democrats discussed replacing Biden with a different nominee if he performed poorly at the debate, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported earlier this month, citing one of Biden's longtime friends.

Despite criticisms of his performance, Biden said that he "did well" in the debate.

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Nebenzia Says Cooperation Between Russia, North Korea Does Not Threaten Anyone

UNITED NATIONS, June 28 (Sputnik) - The newly renewed cooperation between North Korea and Russia does not pose a threat to anyone, unlike the military activity of the US, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

"Our cooperation with Pyongyang is exclusively constructive and legitimate in nature... It does not threaten anybody, unlike the military activity of the United States..." Nebenzia said in the UN Security Council meeting on non-proliferation and North Korea.

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US Extended Deterrence Poses 'Real Threat' to North Korea, Russia - Russian Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, June 28 (Sputnik) - The United States' policy of extended deterrence on the Korean Peninsula poses a "real threat" to North Korea as well as to Russia, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

"[T]he policy of extended deterrence, which the US has been implementing in the region poses a real threat not just for the DPRK [North Korea] but also for our country," Nebenzia said during a UN Security Council meeting.

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Biden Asks Congress for \$3.1Bln for Baltimore Bridge Rebuilding, Disaster Recovery Efforts

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is asking Congress to approve an additional \$3.1 billion in supplemental funding to help bolster disaster recovery efforts including the rebuilding of the Baltimore bridge that collapsed earlier this year, the White House Office of Management and Budget said in a letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson on Friday.

"First, the Administration is asking the Congress to provide an additional \$3.1 billion in funding for the Department of Transportation's Emergency Relief Program (DOT-ER) on top of the

amount included in the October request," the letter stated.

The White House explained that the additional funding the administration is requesting would cover increased needs for repairing and rebuilding highways and roads that have been damaged in disasters and other emergencies across the United States, including the cost of rebuilding the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore.

The funding would also help fund recovering efforts for the Maui community that dealt with devastating wildfires last summer, the letter added.

Moreover, the White House urged House Speaker Johnson to support a bipartisan border security bill that was blocked by congressional Republicans earlier this year.

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US Supreme Court Rejects Chevron Rule, Complicates Govt Bid to Dictate Policy for Business

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court threw out on Friday the 40-year-old "Chevron Rule" that allowed the government to dictate policy to businesses, including on the environment, when the law itself was ambiguous.

The Chevron vs Natural Resources Defense Council rule, in place since 1984, became defunct through a 6-3 decision by the Supreme Court. The ruling had been particularly useful to the government when Congress enacted open-ended laws that gave latitude to agencies to work out - and adjust - details according to new or evolving circumstances.

"The Administrative Procedure Act requires courts to exercise their independent judgment in deciding whether an agency has acted within its statutory authority, and courts may not defer to an agency interpretation of the law simply because a statute is ambiguous," the Supreme Court said in its decision. "Chevron is overruled."

The dismissal of the Chevron Rule was a victory to conservatives who support the Republican Party and dealt a blow to liberals, the Democratic Party and the administration of President Joe Biden.

Conservatives have long tried to limit the amount of power Washington has to interpret ambiguous law which they contend gives the administration too much control over American industry and individuals.

The six Supreme Court justices, including three appointed by the current presumptive nominee of the Republican party for November's presidential election - Donald Trump - have been incrementally diminishing federal power over the years.

Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote that the Chevron Rule was "a grave anomaly when viewed against the sweep of historic judicial practice."

Justice Elana Kagan, who had wanted to keep the Chevron Rule in place, said its overturning meant "a rule of judicial humility gives way to a rule of judicial hubris."

Friday's decision came after lawsuits filed by two groups of herring fishermen challenging a Commerce Department regulation requiring them to pay the salaries of government observers who board their vessels to monitor the catch.

While the lawsuits were literally centered around small fish and money, the dismissal of the Chevron Rule could have far reaching implications in other environmental matters and business

practices.

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UPDATE - US Supreme Court Tightens Scope of Law Used to Charge January 6 Rioters, Trump - Ruling

(Updates with more details in paras 7-9)

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court on Friday tightened the scope of a federal law used to charge participants in the January 6 US Capitol riot and former president Donald Trump, clarifying that prosecutors must prove that defendants impaired the availability or integrity of materials used in an official proceeding.

Trump and other defendants were charged with obstructing an official proceeding for their actions on January 6, 2021. One defendant moved to dismiss the charge, arguing that the provision only criminalizes attempts to impair the availability or integrity of evidence.

“Held: To prove a violation of [the law], the Government must establish that the defendant impaired the availability or integrity for use in an official proceeding of records, documents, objects, or other things used in an official proceeding, or attempted to do so,” the Supreme Court said in its ruling.

The government’s theory on the law would criminalize a broad swath of prosaic conduct, exposing lobbyists and activists to decades in prison, the ruling said.

Such an interpretation of the law would give prosecutors broad discretion to seek a 20-year maximum sentence for acts Congress saw fit to punish with far shorter sentences, the ruling said.

The Supreme Court vacated and remanded a lower court ruling on the case.

The US Justice Department will take appropriate steps to comply with the court’s ruling, US Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement, adding that he is disappointed in the court’s decision.

However, there are no cases in which the Justice Department charged a January 6 defendant solely with the offense at issue in the case, the statement said.

The Justice Department will continue to use all available tools to hold accountable those criminally responsible for the January 6 riot, the statement added.

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Blair Inaugurates Construction of Canada’s Largest Shipbuilding Initiative Since WWII

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – Canada’s Minister of National Defense Bill Blair launched on Friday the construction of fifteen warships for the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), marking the largest shipbuilding initiative since the Second World War.

“Today, we are officially launching the construction for the Canadian service combatant project, and this project is going to deliver a new fleet of 15 warships for the Royal Canadian Navy,” Blair

said at the inauguration ceremony held at Irving Shipyard in Halifax.

Blair said that this marked the largest investment in the RCN ever since the end of World War Two. "It's a historic investment," he added.

The fleet of warships will be composed of the newly unveiled River-Class destroyers, based on BAE Systems' Type 26 warship design being built by the United Kingdom and Australia, National Defense said in a separate statement. The first three ships will be named His Majesty's Canadian Ships (HMCS) Fraser, St-Laurent, and Mackenzie in honor of the country's largest waterways reaching the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans, it added.

"The River class will be Canada's major component of maritime combat power, enabling us to continue to monitor and defend our own coastal waters, and contribute significantly to international naval operations alongside our Allies," the ministry said.

Irving Shipbuilding intends to begin the full rate production in 2025 and hand in the first unit – the HMCS Fraser – in the early 2030s, National Defense said. The last warship should be delivered by 2050.

The Defense Ministry expects that the build phase will generate approximately 10,800 jobs annually throughout the 25-year construction period across the country. The design phase of the project will create another 5,000 Canadian jobs annually across the economy. The project will generate at least C\$40 billion (\$29.3 billion) in cumulative GDP.

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US Supreme Court Tightens Scope of Law Used to Charge January 6 Rioters, Trump - Ruling

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US House Passes Defense, State, Homeland Security Department Funding Bills

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Friday passed several appropriations bills to provide funding for the Defense Department, State Department and Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2025.

House lawmakers passed the Defense Department appropriations bill in a vote of 217 in favor and 198 opposed.

The House of Representatives also passed the Homeland Security Department appropriations bill in a vote of 212 in favor and 203 opposed.

Lastly, House lawmakers passed the appropriations bill for State and foreign operations in a vote of 212 in favor and 200 opposed.

Earlier this week, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said that US President Joe Biden would veto all three of the appropriations bills.

House Republicans are wasting time with appropriations bills that include funding cuts and partisan policy provisions, OMB said. However, the Biden administration is prepared to work with lawmakers as the fiscal year 2025 appropriations process proceeds, OMB added.

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US Supreme Court Set to Issue Ruling in Trump Immunity Case on Monday - Schedule

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court is set to issue a ruling in a case involving former US President Donald Trump's immunity claims on Monday, according to the court's official schedule.

The case will determine whether a former president is protected from criminal liability for official acts taken while in the White House.

Trump has claimed such an immunity in the election subversion case led by Special Counsel Jack Smith.

Monday is the last scheduled opinion day for the US Supreme Court, which has not yet issued a ruling in the case.

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US Offers Protected Status to Additional 309,000 Haitians - DHS

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – The United States has expanded deportation relief and work permits to an estimated 309,000 Haitian nationals, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said on Friday.

"Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas today announced the extension and

redesignation of Haiti for Temporary Protected Status for 18 months, from Aug. 4, 2024, to Feb. 3, 2026, due to extraordinary and temporary conditions in Haiti," the statement said.

The redesignation of Haiti for TPS will allow an estimated 309,000 additional Haitian nationals or those who have no nationality and had Haiti as a place of residence to file initial applications for TPS. Those people are considered eligible for TPS if they established residence in the United States on or before June 3, 2024, and have continued to reside there since then, according to the statement.

"We are providing this humanitarian relief to Haitians already present in the United States given the conditions that existed in their home country as of June 3, 2024," Mayorkas said.

The DHS pointed out that the situation in Haiti remains dangerous, and several regions in the country continue to face violence or insecurity, and residents have limited access to safety, health care, food, and water.

"The extension of TPS for Haiti allows current beneficiaries to retain TPS through Feb. 3, 2026, if they continue to meet TPS eligibility requirements," the statement said.

Haiti has long been mired in a socio-economic and political crisis that escalated after the assassination of then-President Jovenel Moise on July 7, 2021. The country has faced an unprecedented increase in the activities of criminal groups that engage in extortion, kidnapping for ransom and control entire areas of the country, including fuel terminals.

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UPDATE - Fed Favorite Inflation Indicator PCE Grows 2.6% In Year To May, Retreating From April

(Updates with more details, background in paras 5-9)

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - A US inflation tracker closely followed by the Federal Reserve grew 2.6% year-on-year in May, according to data Friday that showed a slight retreat from April's inflation that may not be enough to warrant a cut in interest rates.

The Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) Index is being closely watched by the Fed for signs on whether inflation has cooled sufficiently to bring rates down from two-decade highs.

The PCE grew 2.7% year-on-year in April. While May's growth was exactly as forecast by economists, it remained above the Fed's inflation target of 2% per year.

Another key US price gauge - the Consumer Price Index (CPI) - moderated to grow at 3.3% year-on-year in May, from April's annual expansion of 3.4%.

The performance of the two price gauges suggest that the Fed may not be ready to cut rates.

"We have an economy that still has too high inflation," Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco President Mary Daly said. "I think that we'll continue to see inflation print above 2% potentially through 2025."

While the Fed's 2%-per-year target for inflation was not set in stone, Daly said "if we move the goalpost and say 'Oh, I'm sorry we changed our mind' ... well, that's [not only] bad for credibility but also bad for the people we serve."

The US central bank has kept interest rates in a range of between 5.25% and 5.5% since July 2023. That is the highest for rates since 2002.

The Fed's next review of rates will be at the July 31 meeting of its policy-making Federal Open Market Committee. If it passes on that opportunity, it will have three more chances to make a change before the year ends on September 18, November 7 and December 18.

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South Korea Violates Principle of Objectivity in UN Security Council - Russian Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, June 28 (Sputnik) - Russia regrets South Korea, which presides with the UN Security Council during the month of June, has violated the principle of objectivity by advancing the interests of the collective West, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzia said on Friday.

"We regret that the South Korean presidency yet again, during its term for the advancement of the parochial interests of the collective West, has been violating the principle of objectivity, which a president of the Security Council has a duty to comply with," Nebenzia said.

The Russian ambassador made the comment during a UN Security Council meeting on non-proliferation and North Korea. The meeting was requested by the United States, South Korea, France, Japan and the United Kingdom in order to discuss the issue of alleged unlawful arms transfers from North Korea. The countries also wanted to include Ukraine in the debate due to their allegations that Russia was procuring weapons from North Korea.

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US Supreme Court Allows Camping Bans to Control Homeless Encampments - Ruling

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Laws regulating camping on public property are not in violation of the US Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment, the US Supreme Court said on Friday.

"Held: The enforcement of generally applicable laws regulating camping on public property does not constitute 'cruel and unusual punishment' prohibited by the Eighth Amendment," the Supreme Court said in its ruling.

The court's ruling came in response to a challenge to a city ordinance in Grants Pass, Oregon aimed at curbing homeless encampments. Amid a growing number of homeless people on the streets, the city council decided to impose a nearly \$300 fine for violations of ordinances that bar the use of blankets, pillows, and even cardboard boxes while sleeping on the city grounds.

A lower court held that the Eighth Amendment restricts cities from enforcing public camping ordinances on homeless people if the number of homeless exceeds the number of practically available shelter beds.

The Supreme Court reversed and remanded the lower court's decision in a 6-3 decision.

The Eighth Amendment's Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause focuses on what method or kind of punishment a government may impose after a criminal conviction, not whether a

government may criminalize particular behavior in the first place, the ruling said.

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Biden Still Plans to Participate in Second Presidential Debate - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden still plans to participate in a second presidential debate in September despite his "lackluster" performance in the first face-off with former President Donald Trump as part of the 2024 election cycle, CNN reported on Friday, citing a Biden adviser.

The adviser acknowledged that Biden's performance in Atlanta was "lackluster" but said the campaign is committed to highlighting the moments it believes worked for their candidate and then moving on, the report said.

The adviser recalled that former President Barack Obama was also dissatisfied with his own performance during the first debate, but he still won reelection.

Following Thursday's debate, 67% of registered voters who watched it said that Trump performed better, while only 33% of those polled said Biden won the debate, according to a CNN poll.

Prior to the debate, 55% of voters favored Trump, and 45% expected Biden to put up a better performance, the broadcaster reported.

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US Businesses Already Uncertain Of Future Before Biden-Trump Debate - Fed's Daly

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US businesses were already uncertain about the future of inflation and the economy before Thursday's presidential debate and are unlikely to be confident about either in the near-term, San Francisco Federal Reserve President Mary Daly said on Friday.

"What I'm hearing from CEOs of small, medium and large firms is they already feel uncertain; they've been uncertain for the last year," Daly said during an appearance on the CNBC network. "They're uncertain about when inflation is coming down. They're uncertain about the strength of demand. They're uncertain about the global economy. What they're doing though is they're continuing to do their core work."

But Daly was quick to add that her perception about the uncertainty faced by US chief executives had more to do with overall inflation and the economy, rather than a political comment on the outcome of the presidential debate. "The job of the Fed is not to speculate or hypothesize," she added.

In Thursday's debate, President Joe Biden said the economy under his predecessor Donald Trump was in chaos, while his challenger blamed him for the post-pandemic runaway inflation that the Fed is still fighting.

Aside from their bickering over the economy, the two men appeared to leave many Americans

unsure of whom to pick for the White House in November's election, with Biden seeming feeble and too old for the job and Trump refusing to admit to missteps during his 2016-2020 term of office.

Daly said investors and businesses in the country had reasons to be concerned. "We have an economy that still has too high inflation."

The Fed's target for inflation is a mere 2% per annum. While that was not set in stone, Daly said "if we move the goalpost and say 'Oh, I'm sorry we changed our mind' ... well, that's [not only] bad for credibility but also bad for the people we serve."

The Fed's favorite inflation tracker — the Personal Consumption Expenditures Index (PCE) — grew 2.6% year-on-year in May, retreating from April's annual expansion of 2.7%, data on Friday showed.

Another key price gauge — the Consumer Price Index — moderated to grow at 3.3% year-on-year in May, from April's annual expansion of 3.4%.

"I think that we'll continue to see inflation print above 2% potentially through 2025," Daly said. Her outlook on inflation suggested that the Fed may not be ready as yet to cut interest rates standing at two-decade highs.

The Fed has kept rates in a range of between 5.25% and 5.5% since July 2023. That is the highest for rates since 2002.

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Biden Unlikely to Drop Out of Presidential Race - Campaign Co-Chair

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden is unlikely to drop out of the presidential race amid calls for him to be replaced as Democrat nominee following his performance at the first presidential debate, National Biden Campaign Co-Chair Mitch Landrieu said on Friday.

"This is a conversation that's been going on for the past two and a half years. It's not likely to happen," Landrieu told CNN, when asked whether Democrats would consider replacing him with another candidate.

Landrieu said the campaign still had several months to go, and that he believes Biden will be the Democratic nominee just like Trump will be the Republican one.

US voters will choose between someone who "fights for people," and another one who seeks to rip the country apart, and uproot it, Landrieu stated.

Biden and his challenger, Trump, faced off in the first presidential debate hosted by CNN on Thursday night in Atlanta, Georgia. Sixty-seven percent of registered voters who watched the debate said that Trump performed better during the debate, while only 33% of those polled said Biden won the debate, according to a CNN poll.

Several prominent columnists, even left-leaning ones, penned op-eds calling on Biden to drop out of the race

Trump and Biden are set to debate again on September 10 in an ABC-moderated event.

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US Defense Policy Board Meets to Assess Capability to Mobilize for Conflicts - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) – The US Defense Policy Board (DFB), the body that provides independent recommendations on military policies, met this week to assess the Pentagon's combat readiness and ability to respond to future conflicts, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Friday.

"The Defense Policy Board (DPB) gathered for two days of closed sessions at the Pentagon on June 26th and 27th to assess the Department of Defense's preparedness, posture, and ability to mobilize for future conflicts," Ryder said in a statement.

During the sessions, the DPB met with senior Pentagon officials, including Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Honorable William LaPlante, and others, he added.

The DPB consists of 18 experts. They provide independent advice and recommendations on issues related to the Pentagon's strategic planning, policy implications of US force structure and modernization, US regional defense policies, and other defense policy and national security issues of special interest to the Pentagon.

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Fed Favorite Inflation Indicator PCE Grows 2.6% in Year to May, Retreating From April

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - A US inflation tracker closely followed by the Federal Reserve grew 2.6% year-on-year in May, according to data Friday that showed a slight retreat from April's inflation that may not yet be enough to warrant a cut in interest rates.

The Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, often simply known as the PCE, is closely watched by the Fed for signs on whether inflation had cooled sufficiently to bring rates down from two-decade highs. The PCE grew 2.7% year-on-year in April. While May's growth was exactly as forecast by economists, it remained well above the Fed's target of 2% per annum for inflation.

Another key US price gauge — the Consumer Price Index — moderated to grow at 3.3% year-on-year in May, from April's annual expansion of 3.4%.

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US Air Force Pays Lockheed \$520Mln for F-16 Electronic Upgrades for Allies - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force has approved a more than half a billion dollar contract boost for Lockheed Martin Aeronautics to provide Viper electronic warfare systems for US F-16 combat fighters operated by Bahrain, Bulgaria, Morocco, Slovakia and

Taiwan, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Lockheed Martin Aeronautics [of] Fort Worth, Texas has been awarded a ...\$520,400,000 ...modification ...contract for Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Block 70/72 F-16 Viper Shield electronic warfare suite production," the release stated on Thursday.

The contract extension involves Foreign Military Sales to Bahrain, Bulgaria, Morocco, Slovakia and Taiwan, the Defense Department explained.

Work on the extended contract is scheduled to take four years and is expected to be completed by June 30, 2028, the Defense Department said.

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Safety of Americans at Risk While Biden Serves as US President - Congressional Candidate

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The safety of Americans is at risk as long as Joe Biden serves as the president of the United States, US Republican congressional candidate Kathleen Winn told Sputnik.

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

"A president has to be able, in this day and age, react, be responsive, make clear decisions. Clearly, Biden's not in charge. Clearly, he's not. The safety of America is at risk while this man is president," Winn said.

During the first presidential debate in Atlanta on Thursday night, Biden appeared stressed, angry, and ill-prepared, Winn added.

"I don't think it was a good performance for him at all, and I think that what we believed about Joe Biden going into this debate was proven out tonight: that he's ill equipped to be the President of the United States," she said.

Numerous Democrats have reportedly expressed concerns about Biden's poor performance and its implications for the future of his candidacy and are even talking about potential candidates who can replace him in the presidential race.

Trump and Biden are set to debate again on September 10 in an ABC-moderated event.

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Trump Let Biden Know He Is Worst US President Ever During Debate - Congressional Candidate

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump, during the first US presidential debate in Atlanta, successfully let President Joe Biden know he was the worst US president ever, US Republican congressional candidate Kathleen Winn told Sputnik.

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

"I think it's obvious President Trump won," Winn said. "He came prepared. He has the energy.

He was present, he was there the whole time. He chose not to answer certain questions, and he just kept hitting his points. I think he let Joe Biden know he was the worst president ever. I think that point was made."

Trump also successfully discussed that his economy was in good shape, and one of the best ever, before the COVID-19 pandemic, Winn said.

"He made his points clearly, concisely," Winn added. "His demeanor was good. He didn't get hysterical, his answers were concise and short. I think this is one of his best performances ever, and I think I'll be surprised if the Democrats leave Joe Biden in the race."

Numerous Democrats have reportedly expressed concerns about Biden's poor performance and its implications for the future of his candidacy and are even talking about potential candidates who can replace him in the presidential race.

Trump and Biden are set to debate again on September 10 in an ABC-moderated event.

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US Money Printing Decelerates But Will Rebound Once Economic Problems Occur - Investor

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The United States has decelerated its money printing compared to a year ago but will revive it once the economy experiences issues again, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

"The US is not printing as much now as they were a year or so ago. But they have printed a huge amount of money. The interest rates went very low. So maybe they've slowed down," Rogers said. "But still, when we start having problems again in the economy, they will start printing more money. That's all they know. They want to keep their jobs. They don't care about you. And me. They care about keeping their jobs. So, they will start printing again if we start having problems."

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects that the US economy will slow down this year due to the decline in business activity during the first quarter, IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack said in early June.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva warned in April that US economic growth is "unlikely to last."

Rogers is a high-profile investor and international financial commentator. In the 1970s he founded the Quantum Fund with billionaire George Soros. Currently based in Singapore, he is the chairman of Rogers Holdings and Beeland Interests, Inc. Time Magazine in 1994 dubbed Rogers the "Indiana Jones of finance" given the high profits he made investing in emerging foreign stocks that Wall Street neglected during the 1970s.

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Musk After Biden's Poor Debate Performance: 'Good Question' Who Running US

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said, following the first US presidential debate between incumbent President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, that it is reasonable to ask who is running the United States after Biden's performance was poorly received by critics and fellow Democrats alike.

"Good question," Musk said on Thursday via social media platform X in response to a post questioning who is leading the US.

Democrats reportedly began questioning Biden's viability as a candidate during the debate due to his performance failing to ease fears about his age heading into a potential second term as president.

Musk also speculated that the debate was a setup to swap Biden for an alternative Democratic candidate.

"They're just talking puppets. It was a setup for a switch," Musk said via X, replying to a post about US media commentators criticizing Biden.

Democrats have discussed replacing Biden with a different nominee if he performs poorly at the debate, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported earlier this month, citing one of Biden's longtime friends.

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Biden in Debate Came Across as 'Angry Old Man' With a Lot of Vulgarity - Ex-RNC Chair

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden came across as an "angry old man" with a lot of vulgarity during his performance in the first presidential debate against former President Donald Trump, former Republican National Committee (RNC) chairman James Gilmore told Sputnik.

"I thought that President Biden came across a sort of angry old man and a lot of vulgarity, which kind of took me aback," Gilmore said.

Gilmore pointed out that Trump successfully discussed African American voters and the inflation problem in the United States and addressed the Biden administration's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan successfully.

"I think that President Trump got everything across, and naturally, he demonstrated complete mental acuity," Gilmore added.

Numerous Democrats have reportedly expressed concerns about Biden's poor performance and its implications for the future of his candidacy and are even talking about potential candidates who can replace him in the presidential race.

Trump and Biden are set to debate again on September 10 in an ABC-moderated event.

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Ex-RNC Chair After First US Presidential Debate Says Biden Not Electable, Can't Win

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden, after the first presidential debate against former President Donald Trump, demonstrated that he is not electable and cannot win the presidential election in November, former Republican National Committee (RNC) chairman James Gilmore told Sputnik.

"I believe he's not electable," Gilmore said Thursday night. "I think the Democrats in the United States have a problem. And I think they've got a candidate who probably can't win."

Gilmore added that he was shocked Democrats believe Biden should step aside, but he expects the incumbent president will continue his run in the presidential race.

Numerous Democrats have reportedly expressed concerns about Biden's poor performance and its implications for the future of his candidacy and are even talking about potential candidates who can replace him in the presidential race.

Trump and Biden are set to debate again on September 10 in an ABC-moderated event.

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US Military Is Finest in World's History - Biden During Presidential Debate

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - The United States has the finest armed forces in the history of the world, and no one wants to "screw" with it, US President Joe Biden said during the CNN-hosted first presidential debate with Republican challenger and former President Donald Trump.

"We have the finest military in the history of the world," Biden said during the debate on Thursday night. "Nobody wants to screw with America. Nobody."

However, Trump previously brought up the issue of the chaotic mass evacuation of the US troops from Afghanistan that occurred during the first year of Biden's presidency. Biden also falsely said that no US troops on active duty around the world had died during his term in office so far.

"Truth is, I'm the only president this century, this decade that doesn't have any troops dying anywhere in the world like he [Trump] did," he said.

However, 13 US service members were killed during a suicide bombing at Kabul International Airport in 2021, and three US troops were killed at a US position in Jordan in a drone attack earlier this year. Moreover, two US Navy SEALs died while intercepting weapons being sent from Iran to Yemen off the coast of Somalia in January this year, and at least 13 other US military personnel were killed in air crashes overseas in 2023.

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Recession to Hit US by End of This Year Or Next Year -Investor Rogers

WASHINGTON, June 28(Sputnik) - A recession will likely hit the United States at the end of this year or in 2025, renowned US investor Jim Rogers told Sputnik.

Rogers confidently asserted that a recession is inevitable in the United States, noting the

country's historical pattern of experiencing recessions regularly over centuries.

"It's coming soon. It is not coming in June, don't worry, probably later this year or next year," he said.

He added that it could begin before or around the upcoming elections, foreseeing its arrival within the next one to two years.

Rogers pointed out that the current stretch without a recession is the longest in US history.

In March, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell indicated that the US economy is not currently at high risk of a recession and appears to be on track for a gradual slowdown.

Since March 2022, the Fed has raised interest rates 11 times, maintaining them at a range of 5.25% to 5.5% since July 2023, the highest since 2002.

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US Congressman Gosar Says Biden Debate Performance Shows He Unfit to Be President

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Paul Gosar in a statement to Sputnik said US President Joe Biden's debate performance demonstrated he was mentally unfit to be US president.

"With tonight's debate, Joe Biden stammered the quiet part out loud: he is mentally unfit to be President of the United States," Gosar said.

Numerous Democrats have expressed concerns about Biden's poor performance and its implications for the future of his candidacy, according to CNN, which hosted the debate.

Trump and Biden are set to debate again on September 10 in an ABC-moderated event.

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Trump Campaign Declares Victory in 1st Debate Against Biden - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump's campaign declared victory in the first debate against current officeholder Joe Biden, contrasting the two candidates' performances on the debate stage.

"Tonight, President Trump delivered the greatest debate performance and victory in history to the largest voter audience in history, making clear exactly how he will improve the lives of every American," the Trump campaign said in a statement on Thursday night.

Trump highlighted plans to reduce inflation and secure the US border from illegal immigration, the statement said.

In contrast, Biden lied and could not articulate a single plan to lower prices or make Americans safer, the statement said.

Trump is correct to claim that if Biden is "too incompetent" to stand trial, then he is too incompetent to serve as president, the statement added.

Numerous Democrats have reportedly expressed concerns about Biden's poor performance

and its implications for the future of his candidacy.

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Trump Says Will Accept Results of 2024 Presidential Election 'If It's Free and Fair'

WASHINGTON, June 28 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said he will accept the results of the upcoming US presidential election even if he loses provided the election is free, fair and legal.

"If it's a free, fair, legal and good election, absolutely! I will - absolutely," Trump said during the first debate with incumbent President Joe Biden on Thursday night. "There is nothing I would rather do."

Trump also said he regarded any violence in the US political process as totally unacceptable and would condemn it.

"Of course I believe that," Trump said in response to a question by CNN co-anchor Dana Bash. "It is totally unacceptable."

Trump has consistently refused to concede that he lost the 2020 presidential election to Biden. Trump has continued to repeatedly claim that the results of the election were stolen from him by the Democrats to put Biden into office.