

7/9/24 Tuesday

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Famine Has Hit All of Gaza, Ten UN Experts Say

In January, the International Court of Justice ruled in a preliminary hearing that it is “plausible” that Israel committed acts that violated the Genocide Convention. It ordered Israel to take action to prevent genocide in Gaza.

The whole of Gaza is suffering under famine, ten top UN experts [said in a statement](#) released on Tuesday.

“We declare that Israel’s intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza,” the group which included Michael Fakhri, special rapporteur on the right to food, Francesca Albanese, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Paula Gaviria Betancur, special rapporteur on human rights of internally displaced people and others.

The group does not represent the UN as a whole but declared that famine in Gaza can no longer be denied, noting three children who have died from malnutrition across Gaza recently.

“Fayez Ataya, who was barely six months old, died on 30 May 2024 and 13-year-old Abdulqader Al-Serhi died on 1 June 2024 at the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah. Nine-year-old Ahmad Abu Reida died on 3 June 2024 in the tent sheltering his displaced family in Al-Mawasi, Khan Younis. All three children died from malnutrition and lack of access to adequate healthcare,” the statement read.

“With the death of these children from starvation despite medical treatment in central Gaza, there is no doubt that famine has spread from northern Gaza into central and southern Gaza,” it continued.

The statement accused Israel of enacting an “intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people” which it called “a form of genocidal violence” that has spread the famine “across all of Gaza.”

Two days after the Hamas-led surprise attack on Israel which resulted in 1,189 deaths, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared a “complete siege” of Gaza. “There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed,” describing Palestinians as “human animals” and warning the Israeli military would act “accordingly.”

The experts also criticized the international community, saying that stronger action against Israel should have taken place earlier.

“When a 2-month-old baby and 10-year-old Yazan Al Kafarneh died of hunger on 24 February and 4 March respectively, this confirmed that famine had struck northern Gaza. The whole world should have intervened earlier to stop Israel’s genocidal starvation campaign and prevented these deaths,” the experts said. “Thirty-four Palestinians have died from malnutrition since 7 October, the majority being children. Inaction is complicity.”

In response to the statement, Israel accused the experts of working for Hamas, saying that the experts “are as much accustomed to spreading misinformation, as they are to supporting Hamas propaganda and shielding the terrorist organizations from scrutiny.”

Israel pointed to a UN-backed [study published last month](#) by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Famine Review Committee (FRC) as evidence that famine had not taken over Gaza yet. While that report noted that aid had increased in Northern Gaza it also noted that “the situation in Gaza remains catastrophic” and that the slightly improved situation “should not allow room for complacency about the risk of Famine in the coming weeks and months.”

The IPC/FRC report also stated that there remains a “high and sustained risk of Famine persists across the whole of the Gaza Strip as long as conflict continues, and humanitarian access is restricted,” adding that due to the increased vulnerability of the population, famine could “occur at any time during the projection period [June 16 - September 30].”

On Friday, the Lancet medical journal issued a “conservative estimate” [saying that](#) 186,000 Palestinians in Gaza have likely been killed by Israel since October through direct and indirect deaths.

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F-16 Jets Transfer En Route From Europe to Ukraine – Blinken

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that a transfer of F-16s fighter jets was currently underway from Europe to Ukraine.

"I'm also pleased to announce that as we speak, the transfer of F-16 jets is underway, coming from Denmark, coming from the Netherlands, and those jets will be flying in the skies of Ukraine this summer to make sure that Ukraine can continue to effectively defend itself against the Russian aggression," Blinken said at the NATO Public Forum.

New supplies of weapons by the West to Kiev, including F-16s, cannot fundamentally change the situation on the ground, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov previously said.

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NATO to Add More Than 650 Fifth-Generation F-35s in Five Years – Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) – US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan praised on Wednesday the increased defense spending of European NATO allies, with the addition of more than 650 fifth-generation F-35 aircraft expected, among other weapons, in the next five years.

"In the next five years, our NATO allies will add over 650 fifth-generation F-35 aircraft, over 1,000 air defense systems, nearly 50 warships and submarines, 1,200 battle tanks, 11,300 combat vehicles and nearly 2,000 artillery systems to modernize their arsenals, making us all more secure. So indeed, Europe is doing more," Sullivan wrote in a New York Times op-ed published on Wednesday.

Sullivan noted that 23 out of 32 NATO members are expected to meet or exceed the target of 2% of GDP in defense spending this year, compared with only nine members back in 2020. He also highlighted that the defense spending of EU members and Canada had increased by 8% last year and is expected to grow by 18% this year.

He also acknowledged commitments among US allies in the Indo-Pacific region to increase military spending, including Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

At the same time, Sullivan argued that "our allies need to spend more" – one of the goals that the US expects to "make significant progress" toward this week at the NATO summit in Washington.

Moscow will closely monitor the NATO summit in Washington given that the alliance considers Russia an adversary, openly declares the goal of inflicting strategic defeat on it and is directly involved in the Ukraine conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said.

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US to Increase Tariffs on Mexican Products Containing Aluminum From China, Russia - Biden

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The United States will increase tariffs on products from Mexico that contain aluminum originating in China, Russia, Belarus or Iran, President Joe Biden said on Wednesday in a proclamation released by the White House.

"The United States will implement a country of smelt and country of most recent cast requirement for imports of aluminum articles that are products of Mexico, and will increase the section 232 duty rate for imports of aluminum articles and derivative aluminum articles that are products of Mexico containing aluminum for which the reported primary country of smelt, secondary country of smelt, or country of most recent cast is China, Russia (subject to paragraph 10 of this proclamation), Belarus, or Iran," Biden said in the proclamation.

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US to Increase Tariffs on Mexican Products Containing Aluminum From China, Russia, Belarus, Iran - Biden

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NATO to Advance Modernized Command Structure Amid 'Threats of Today, Future' - White House

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) – NATO members during their summit in Washington will advance the alliance's modernized command structure to transform headquarters "once fit for peacetime and out-of-area operations into headquarters ready to deter any threat," the White House said on Wednesday.

Washington is hosting NATO's 75th summit from July 9-11.

"Leaders at the Washington Summit will take additional steps to advance NATO's modernized command structure and put NATO's new generation of defense plans into practice, strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and defense capabilities to meet the threats of today and the future," the White House said in a fact sheet.

These plans cover the whole NATO territory and span all domains, including air, land, sea, cyber, and space, it added. They represent the first set of comprehensive defense plans the alliance has developed since the end of the Cold War, according to the fact sheet.

"The Alliance has now completed the full blueprint for modernizing its system of collective defense. This includes an updated force structure to strengthen the Alliance's readiness and ability to respond to any scenario, and an objective, conditions-based driver for Allies' defense planning and procurement," the White House said.

The new structure will "transform headquarters once fit for peacetime and out-of-area operations into headquarters ready to deter any threat and defend Allied territory," the fact sheet said.

Moscow will closely monitor the NATO summit in Washington given that the alliance considers Russia an adversary, openly declares the goal of inflicting strategic defeat on it and is directly involved in the Ukraine conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday.

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Pelosi Says It's Up to Biden to Decide If He is Going to Run for President

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) – Former US Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Wednesday that US President Joe Biden should make a final decision about whether he will run for re-election, reigniting debate about whether the 81-year-old should seek a second term in office.

"It's up to the president to decide if he is going to run," Pelosi said in an interview with MSNBC when asked whether Biden has her support to be the head of the Democratic ticket. "We're all encouraging him to make that decision, because time is running short."

Pelosi said Democrats should respect Biden's decision on whether he will remain the party's presidential nominee.

"I want him to do whatever he decides to do. And the way it is, whatever he decides we go with," Pelosi said.

Pelosi added that Biden should be given a chance to demonstrate his ability to host the current NATO conference, calling for Democrats to "hold off" on making public remarks against his candidacy.

Biden's disastrous performance at the presidential debate with Republican frontrunner Donald Trump on June 27 has reinforced rather than refuted ongoing concerns about his mental fitness to preside over a second presidential term.

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NATO Unveils Initiative to Coordinate Ukraine Aid, Training - White House

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO during its summit in Washington is announcing an initiative to take over the coordination of assistance and training being provided to Ukraine to ensure its full interoperability with the alliance, the White House said on Wednesday.

"NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) ... will coordinate equipment, training and force development work to support Ukraine on its path to full interoperability with NATO," the White House said in a fact sheet.

A three-star general based in Germany will lead the effort, it added.

The alliance will also appoint a senior civilian representative in Kiev to "act as a focal point for NATO's engagement with senior Ukrainian officials" and "further deepen Ukraine's institutional relationship with NATO"

During the summit, NATO members will also announce their intention to provide a minimum baseline funding of 40 billion euros (\$43.3 billion) within the next year and to provide sustainable levels of security assistance for Ukraine to "prevail" in its conflict with Russia, according to the fact sheet.

The US contributions to Ukraine for this pledge will come from the funds already appropriated by Congress in the national security supplemental, the White House added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that NATO's expansion to include Ukraine would create a direct national security threat to Russia and that Moscow considers the non-aligned status of Ukraine to be extremely important to put an end to the years-long conflict.

Kiev's plans to join the bloc were among the reasons why Russia launched its special military operation in February 2022.

Moscow will closely monitor the NATO summit in Washington given that the alliance considers Russia an adversary, openly declares the goal of inflicting strategic defeat on it and is directly involved in Ukraine conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday.

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Biden Says US, European Allies to Provide Ukraine With Dozens of New Air Defense Systems

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The United States and several European partners will provide Ukraine with dozens of additional air defense systems in the coming months, President Joe Biden said during remarks at the NATO leaders' summit in Washington.

"Today, I'm announcing the historic donation of air defense equipment for Ukraine," Biden said on Tuesday. "The United States, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania and Italy will provide Ukraine with the equipment for five additional strategic air defense systems. In the coming months, the United States and our partners intend to provide Ukraine with dozens of additional tactical air defense systems."

Moreover, Biden said that Ukraine will receive hundreds of additional missile interceptors over the next year.

The White House in a separate press release noted that the five additional strategic air defense systems include new Patriot batteries donated by the United States, Germany, and Romania;

Patriot components donated by the Netherlands and other partners to enable the operation of an additional Patriot battery; and an additional SAMP-T system donated by Italy.

The United States and its partners are coordinating closely with the Ukrainian government so that these new strategic air defense systems can be utilized rapidly, the release said, adding that another announcement can be expected later this year of additional strategic air defense systems for Ukraine.

The tactical air defense systems expected to arrive in Ukraine in the coming months include additional NASAMS, HAWKS, IRIS T-SLM, IRIS T-SLS, and Gepard systems, the release added.

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Zelenskyy Says US Presidential Election Overshadowing NATO Summit in Washington

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Washington, has said the upcoming presidential election in the United States is overshadowing the alliance's annual event.

"Even then, the anniversary NATO Summit, which should become a top event, does not indeed look strong in the media in contrast to what is expected from November," Zelenskyy said on Tuesday, adding that it seems that people "do not even notice" that NATO has expanded by two new countries at once.

"This is a historic event, but it is in the shadows of another story," he said.

Zelenskyy added that it was time for the US to immediately make stronger decisions related to Ukraine's security instead of waiting for the results of the US presidential election, scheduled to take place on November 5.

The entire world, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, is waiting to see who wins the US presidential election, he added.

In his remarks, Zelenskyy also called on the US to allow it to conduct deeper strikes inside Russia using US-supplied weapons.

Earlier in the day, US President Joe Biden announced that the US and several European partners would provide Ukraine with dozens of new air defense systems, including new Patriot batteries, over the coming months.

The NATO summit kicked off in Washington on Tuesday and will run through July 11.

The Kremlin has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev since the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, saying it would lead to further escalation of the conflict. In April 2022, Russia sent a diplomatic note to all NATO countries on the issue of arms supplies to Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has warned that any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine will become a legitimate target for Russian strikes.

Sweden and Finland simultaneously submitted applications to join NATO in May 2022. Finland became the 31st member of the alliance on April 4, 2023. Sweden officially became the 32nd NATO member state on March 7.

The US presidential election is slated for November 5. The main contenders expected on the ballot are Biden and ex-US President Donald Trump, who have both won enough delegates'

votes to be their respective Democratic and Republican parties' presumptive nominees. Trump and Biden are set to have another presidential debate on September 10.

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Zelenskyy Says Not Sure 31 US-Supplied Abrams Tanks Made Much Difference on Battlefield

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said during his remarks on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Washington that it is unlikely that the 31 US-supplied Abrams tanks made much of a difference on the battlefield in Ukraine.

"I'm not sure that such a number of tanks can change the situation in the battle," Zelenskyy said on Tuesday.

In May, CNN reported, citing Ukrainian crews maintaining the M1 Abrams tanks supplied by the United States, that there were numerous issues with using the armored vehicles on the battlefield.

The crews said that the \$10 million vehicles did not have sufficient armor against modern weapons such as drones, thus failing to adequately protect personnel against attacks. One member said the tanks had become Russian forces' "number one target."

They also reportedly said that the tanks appeared to have technical issues; for example, condensation affected electronic components. They noted that the tanks were not suitable for Ukraine's situation, given that air power and artillery, which Ukrainian forces lack, help clear the battlefield before tanks and troops advance.

The Russian Defense Ministry has repeatedly reported the destruction of Abrams tanks in the special operation zone.

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Zelenskyy Says Ukraine Needs at Least 128 F-16s Immediately, Anything Less Ineffective

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Ukraine will need at least 128 F-16 fighter jets provided by the West immediately, or else it will be unable to match up against Russia's air force, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Washington.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said last year that Russia would consider the delivery of nuclear-capable F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine as a deliberate signaling action by NATO in the nuclear sphere.

"So, till the moment, when we will have 128 jets, we will not compare with them [Russia] in the sky. Anyway, it will be difficult," Zelenskyy said on Tuesday.

As of May, Ukraine's allies in the West have committed to providing some 85 F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, but the timeline for some of those deliveries is unclear.

In June, Politico reported, citing US and NATO officials, that Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium planned to deliver more than 60 US-made F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine this summer, but Ukraine would not have a full squadron of trained pilots until the end of 2025. Only 20 Ukrainian F-16 pilots are reportedly expected to finish the training by the end of 2024, which is half of the staff needed to operate a squadron of 20 aircraft.

Ukraine wants the United States to train more Ukrainian pilots on the F-16 fighter jets, but there is currently no room to accept more pilots into the training program, according to US officials.

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Biden Says Informed Texas Officials of Providing Federal Aid for Hurricane Recovery

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said in a statement that he notified Texas officials that he is providing federal resources to help the state recover from damages caused by Hurricane Beryl.

Media reported on Monday that the category one hurricane, which was later downgraded to a tropical storm, left nearly three million Texas residents without power. Utility companies warned that the power outage could last through the weekend as they work to restore power to the Texas coast.

"I spoke today with Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell," Biden said in a press release on Tuesday. "On the call, I raised the need for an emergency declaration and immediately approved a Major Disaster Declaration for the damage sustained from the hurricane, which ripped through Texas' Gulf Coast and Houston yesterday."

Federal resources were prepositioned for deployment before the storm hit the Texas coast on Monday, according to Biden, who added that they have power generators ready for use.

Biden pointed out that the greatest concern in the coming days is being able to restore power to residents and businesses as extreme heat begins to hit the region, which could be fatal for residents who are unable to stay cool.

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Trumps Says Would Likely 'Be No NATO' Without His Intervention as US President

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said that there would likely be no NATO alliance today if he had not encouraged other member states to increase their

contributions while in office.

"If it weren't for me as President, there probably would be no NATO by now. When I became President, I noticed that there were only 7 of the 28 Countries, that were then Members, who were paid up. Most Members were delinquent, some having paid very little, if anything. I found this unacceptable, and insisted that they pay if they wanted the protection of the US," Trump said on Tuesday via Truth Social.

Trump said that his actions made NATO "viable" again.

The US now faces a similar problem by paying most of the money to help Ukraine fight Russia, Trump said. Europe should at least equalize their contributions, Trump said.

NATO is holding a summit in Washington this week, during which the alliance announced the provision of additional air defense capabilities to Ukraine.

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Biden Says US, European Allies to Provide Ukraine With Dozens of New Air Defense Systems

(Updates with details in paras 4-6)

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The United States and several European partners will provide Ukraine with dozens of additional air defense systems in the coming months, President Joe Biden said during remarks at the NATO leaders' summit in Washington.

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Moreover, Biden said that Ukraine will receive hundreds of additional missile interceptors over the next year.

The White House in a separate press release noted that the five additional strategic air defense systems include new Patriot batteries donated by the United States, Germany, and Romania; Patriot components donated by the Netherlands and other partners to enable the operation of an additional Patriot battery; and an additional SAMP-T system donated by Italy.

The United States and its partners are coordinating closely with the Ukrainian government so that these new strategic air defense systems can be utilized rapidly, the release said, adding that another announcement can be expected later this year of additional strategic air defense systems for Ukraine.

The tactical air defense systems expected to arrive in Ukraine in the coming months include additional NASAMS, HAWKS, IRIS T-SLM, IRIS T-SLS, and Gepard systems, the release added.

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Biden Awards US Presidential Medal of Freedom to NATO Chief Stoltenberg

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden awarded outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg the Presidential Medal of Freedom in recognition of his leadership of the alliance.

"Today, NATO is stronger, smarter and more energized than when you began, and a billion people across Europe and North America – indeed the whole world – will reap the rewards of your labor for years to come, in the form of security, opportunity and greater freedom. For these reasons, I'm pleased to award you the highest civilian honor the United States can bestow: the Presidential Medal of Freedom," Biden said on Tuesday.

Biden awarded Stoltenberg the medal during an event held as part of the NATO summit in Washington.

Biden also said that he personally asked Stoltenberg to extend his service as secretary-general.

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Haley Releases Her 97 Delegates, Urges Support for Trump - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Former Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley is releasing her 97 delegates and urging them to support former US President Donald Trump as the party's nominee at the Republican National Convention next week in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Hill reported on Tuesday.

According to the report, Haley said the Republican National Convention is for unity, though she wasn't invited, and claimed Joe Biden is not "competent" for a second term and Kamala Harris would be a "disaster" for America.

On May 23, Nikki Haley announced that she will vote for Donald Trump in November as he meets her priorities better than Biden. Trump has not been perfect but Biden has been a "catastrophe," she said.

In March, Haley said that she was suspending her 2024 presidential campaign after failing to make up ground on former President Donald Trump in the so-called Super Tuesday primary and caucus elections.

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West Needs to Match Adversaries to Adapt to Electronic Warfare Challenges - Defense Firm

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Western nations need to catch up to adversaries' capabilities to adapt quickly to constant changes in electronic warfare, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems CEO Linden Blue said during a panel discussion.

According to US media reports, Russia has deployed advanced radar jammers in Ukraine that have disrupted communications on the battlefield. The jammers have also reportedly impacted

SpaceX's Starlink services used by Ukraine.

"Electronic warfare, I think we in the [United] States and in the West in general are pretty good at solving problems that are thrown at us. What is new here is that these problems are changing weekly, maybe sometimes even daily," Blue said on Tuesday.

Blue pointed out that now the adversary has changed their approach and Western nations have to adapt to it on a scale that they are not used to.

The conflict in Ukraine is showing that the collective West needs to work on getting an edge over its adversaries in electronic warfare, Blue said.

General Atomics Aeronautical Systems is a military contractor that designs and manufactures drones and radar systems for the US military and for other commercial uses worldwide.

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Biden Announces Presidential Medal of Freedom for Stoltenberg, Says he Personally Requested him to Extend His Service as NATO Chief

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US to Triple Ammunition Production in Couple of Years - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The United States will triple its ammunition in just a couple of years, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Bonnie Jenkins said.

"In just a couple of years, we will triple ammunition production in the United States," Jenkins said on Tuesday. "These shells will replenish US stockpiles, enhance the alliances' deterrence posture and help Ukraine win its war against Russia."

In May, US Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth said at the opening of a General Dynamics plant for manufacturing parts for artillery shells that the facility would enable a significant bolstering of national shell production.

This new plant is part of the US government's effort to boost the number of artillery shells made in the United States every month, which will also be important for Ukraine, according to White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby.

Western countries have ramped up their military, financial and other aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, numbering in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

Russia has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying it would lead to further escalation of the conflict. Russian officials have also warned that any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine are legitimate targets.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) -

RUSSIA-INDIA RELATIONS

* Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a joint statement on Tuesday that they agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in education, science, culture, tourism and sport.

* Putin and Modi reaffirmed the importance of security dialogue and agreed to strengthen regional security architecture, according to the joint statement.

* Putin and Modi condemned the terrorist attacks at the Crocus City Hall near Moscow and in Russia's Dagestan, as well as in India's Jammu and Kashmir.

* Russia and India have agreed to expand military delegation exchanges and maintain the momentum of joint military cooperation activities, the joint statement said.

* Russia and India seek to eliminate non-tariff trade barriers in bilateral trade, the joint statement said.

* The total amount of the Russian oil supplied to India last year has doubled and reached around 90 million tonnes, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Russia has already called out UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in the past about his double standard regarding Russia targeting Ukrainian territory, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

* Russia also regrets that the UN Security Council is being drawn into a "dirty propaganda campaign" by Kiev, Nebenzia said.

* Tragedies such as at the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kiev could have been avoided if Ukraine did not deploy air defenses in residential neighborhoods in violation of international humanitarian law, Nebenzia said.

ORBAN LETTER TO EU LEADERS

* Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has informed European Council President Charles Michel and other EU leaders that chances for launching peace talks on Ukraine and achieving a ceasefire have increased after his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Germany's DPA news agency reported on Tuesday.

* The Russian government is not familiar with the contents of the letter sent by Orban to EU leaders following his trip to Moscow last week, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

NATO SUMMIT

* Every NATO ally during the Washington summit this week will pledge for the first time to develop plans to strengthen their defense industrial capacity at home, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

* NATO and its Indo-Pacific partners will soon announce four new joint projects on areas including Ukraine and artificial intelligence, Sullivan said.

* NATO will outline a plan to strengthen critical Ukrainian air defense capabilities and build its air power through the provision of F-16 fighter jets, Sullivan said.

* NATO's procurement agency has signed contracts for acquiring stinger missiles worth almost \$700 million, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said.

SWITZERLAND NEW SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

* Switzerland has added 69 individuals and 47 entities to the sanctions list against Russia, the Swiss government said on Tuesday.

* Switzerland imposed an advertising ban on four Russian media outlets, including RIA Novosti, the Swiss government said.

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Democratic US Congresswoman Calls on Biden to End Reelection Campaign - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - Democratic US Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill said on Tuesday that President Joe Biden should end his reelection bid and help Democrats select a new nominee.

"I know that President Biden and his team have been true public servants and have put the country and the best interests of democracy first and foremost in their considerations. And because I know President Biden cares deeply about the future of our country, I am asking that he declare that he won't run for reelection and will help lead us through a process toward a new nominee," Sherrill said in a statement.

Several other Democratic lawmakers have also called on Biden to drop out of the race, following a lackluster debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump.

Biden's health has also been under scrutiny in the wake of the debate. Biden, 81, is the oldest US president in history and would be 86 at the end of a second term.

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Norway-Supplied Air Defense System Fired Missile That Hit Hospital in Kiev - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, July 9 (Sputnik) - An air defense missile that hit a children's hospital in Kiev was likely fired from a Norway-supplied NASAMS system, and Russia is waiting for a reaction from Oslo in this regard, Russian Permanent Representative to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that it has been confirmed, including by numerous witnesses, that a NASAMS missile landed in a building on the territory of the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kiev.

"We are also waiting for a reaction from the Norwegian authorities who apparently supplied the Zelenskyy clique with this NASAMS system. Did they authorize it to be used to strike a children's hospital, and also to be placed in residential areas?" Nebenzia told a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that claims about a deliberate Russian strike on civilian targets in Kiev are not true. The destruction was caused by the fall of a Ukrainian air defense missile, and this is not the first time that Kiev has engaged in such provocations, it said.

The ministry said that numerous photos and video footage from Kiev clearly confirm that the destruction was caused by a Ukrainian missile launched from an air defense system deployed within the city. Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said that the hysteria being spread in the United States regarding the Okhmatdyt hospital in Kiev is an example of rabid anti-Russian propaganda.

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US Expands Visa Restrictions to Combat Irregular Migration - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The US government has expanded visa restrictions under the Immigration and Nationality Act to include executives of travel agencies and tour operators who facilitate and profit from irregular migration, the State Department said on Tuesday.

"Our expanded policy will now also apply to executives of travel agencies and tour operators who provide travel services designed primarily for irregular migrants to the United States," the State Department said in a statement.

The US government has made the move as part of a broader effort to eliminate exploitative practices with the help of government and private sector partners, the statement said.

Nobody should profit from irregular migration, including private companies and entrepreneurs, the statement added.

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US State Dept. Denies Claims That Biden Skipped Meeting With Germany to Sleep - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The US State Department denied claims that President Joe Biden skipped a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to sleep, Fox News reported on Tuesday.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived at the June 2022 meeting without Biden and told Scholz that Biden had to go to bed instead of participating, The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday, citing two sources who attended the meeting.

"That is absolutely not accurate. Secretary Blinken never said that or anything like it," US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement, as quoted by Fox News.

The report comes amid scrutiny of Biden's health, following a lackluster debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump.

Biden reportedly told Democratic governors that he intends to limit events after 8 p.m. in order to get more sleep.

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Oil Down 3rd Day In Row, US Crude Pushed Nearer To \$80 Support

NEW YORK, July 9 (Sputnik) - Oil prices fell for a third day in a row Tuesday as the minimal impact to US refineries from Hurricane Beryl forced traders to reprice a market some say had rallied too much, too fast on expectations of storm damage.

US West Texas Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled at \$81.41 per barrel, down 92 cents, or 1.1%, on the day. WTI has lost a combined 3.4% over the past three sessions, though it remains up 14% for the year.

Tuesday's session low of \$81.25 also brought the US crude benchmark closer to the \$80-per-barrel support — a level it had not slipped below since June 18.

UK-origin Brent crude, meanwhile, settled at \$84.66 per barrel, down \$1.09, or 1.3% on the day. Brent has lost 3.2% over the past three sessions to shave its year-to-date gain to just around 10%.

Oil's 2024 rally began with threats to supply caused by geopolitical developments and output cuts by producers in the 23-nation OPEC+ alliance led by Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Lately though, the run-up in crude prices has been powered by bets that the summer season, the busiest for travel in the United States, will result in huge drawdowns in crude stockpiles as refiners race to make enough fuels to feed everything from cars to trucks, airplanes and ships.

Worries about Hurricane Beryl had added to the aggressiveness of the rally over the past week, pushing oil prices to two-month highs as WTI reached \$84.52 and Brent \$87.95.

While Beryl initially forced the closure of major oil-shipping ports in Texas, a state which serves as the heartland of US energy, post-storm assessments showed little damage to those installations.

"Early indications suggest that most energy infrastructure has come through unscathed," ING analysts Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey said in a note to clients of the Netherlands-based investment bank.

Downgraded to a tropical storm upon making landfall in Texas, Beryl killed six people, knocked out power to more than 2 million homes and businesses and flooded streets.

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Senior Polish Official Says EU Needs to Invest More in Region's Defense Industry

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - A great need exists for European Union member states to finance efforts to bolster the region's defense industry, Polish First Deputy Prime Minister of National Defense Wladyslaw Kosiniak said on Tuesday.

"We see the need for a greater European Union contribution to financing and building common defense capabilities," Kosiniak said during remarks at an event hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce in Washington.

Kosniak pointed out that Poland strongly advocates for a coherent approach in which NATO's defense capabilities are harmonized with those of the European Union.

European partners want to be able to compete with the high arms production capabilities of Russia and its partners, Kosniak said.

A high global demand for military equipment is becoming increasingly difficult to provide in a timely manner, making it necessary to enhance collaboration within the defense industry, Kosniak also said.

However, collaboration among defense firms in different countries may face temporary roadblocks emerging from differing national regulations, varying defense budgets, technological gaps and insufficient production capacity, Kosniak added.

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Federal Reserve Chairman Insists on Clearer US Inflation Data for Interest Rates Review

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve needs clearer data on US inflation before tinkering with the interest rates, Chairman Jerome Powell said in a congressional testimony on Tuesday amid suggestions the US central bank might be holding back growth by overthinking policy.

"We continue to make decisions meeting-by-meeting," Powell said in the first of his two-day testimony before the US Senate Banking Committee. "We know that reducing policy restraint too soon or too much could stall or even reverse the progress we have seen on inflation."

At the last meeting of its policy-making Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) that concluded on June 12, the Fed left rates in a range of 5.25% to 5.5%. That's the highest level for rates since 2002.

Powell's Senate testimony came two days before the release of the June reading for the Consumer Price Index (CPI), a key gauge of US inflation.

The CPI moderated in May, growing at 3.3% year-on-year, after reaching 3.4% in April.

Another inflation marker closely watched by the central bank - the US Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) Index - grew 2.6% year-on-year in May, from 2.7% in April.

Both, however, remained above the Fed's 2%-per-year inflation target.

Some Senate members were of the opinion that the FOMC may be overthinking the impact of inflation and urged for a quicker interest rate cut to avoid jeopardizing economic growth.

The US economy expanded at a yearly rate of 1.4% in the first quarter of 2024, slowing from the previous quarter's 3.4% growth.

Senator Sherrod Brown, who led the hearing, told Powell he was concerned the Fed could undo the progress made on creating good paying jobs if it waits too long to lower interest rates.

"If unemployment trends upward, you must act immediately to protect Americans' jobs. Workers have too much to lose if the Fed overshoots [its] inflation target and causes a completely unnecessary recession," Brown said.

Powell, however, insisted that the US central bank was on the right track.

"In light of the progress made both in lowering inflation and in cooling the labor market over the past two years, elevated inflation is not the only risk we face," Powell said.

Powell also said that reducing policy restraint too late or too little could unduly weaken economic activity and employment.

"In considering adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate," Powell said.

The FOMC will continue with its path of "carefully assessing incoming data and their implications for the evolving outlook, the balance of risks, and the appropriate path of monetary policy," Powell added.

In his last comment on inflation, Powell said the Fed might get to its 2%-per-year target by the end of 2025 or the following year.

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White House Says Biden Committed to Serving Full Second Term If Elected

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Tuesday that President Joe Biden is committed to serving a full second term as US president if reelected in November.

"Yes," Jean-Pierre said when asked if Biden is committed to serving a full second term if reelected.

Biden will turn 86 at the end of his second term.

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Yellen Denies in Congress Price Cap Imposed on Russian Oil 'Has Failed'

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Tuesday denied that the price cap imposed on Russian oil has failed after a media report suggested that Russia was making about 50% more money on energy exports than a year ago.

"I'm sorry, I don't think it's failed," Yellen said in a testimony before the US House Financial Services Committee.

Yellen made the comment after Republican US Congressman Andy Barr characterized the price cap initiative to be a failure.

On July 3, Bloomberg reported that Russia's revenue from oil was almost 50% higher in June compared with a year earlier, despite the Group of Seven's (G7) aim to deprive Moscow of money to fund its special military operation in Ukraine.

In a separate report on Monday, Bloomberg said Russian oil was now well above the G7's price cap of \$60 at the price of export and by the time it reached customers in China and India. Bloomberg's price estimate was \$75 per barrel in the Baltic and Black Sea with an additional \$10 upon arrival in China and India. The price would be comparable to the \$85 per barrel currently fetched by Brent, the global crude oil benchmark of UK origin.

Russian oil was last below \$60 per barrel in early January at the point of export and no Western entities were reportedly providing services, including shipping and insurance, for trade. By April, a group of Western insurers said the price cap had become unenforceable and only pushed more vessel operators and insurers into joining a shadow fleet of service providers to the Kremlin.

Yellen said during her testimony that the price cap "worked very well in the first year."

However, Yellen had no response to Barr's comeback that underscored the Biden administration's determination to restrict US oil drilling while watching helplessly as Russia maximized earnings from oil.

"This administration wants to punish American energy production," Barr said. "That's the whole strategy, [executed] through ESG [environmental, social and governance issues], climate disclosure, no permitting and no licenses. But when it comes to Putin's oil machine, we license it ... [and] allow exports of Russian energy ... What on earth are you all doing?"

Yellen said the Biden administration had made clear that it had a dual goal regarding Russian oil, which accounts for 12% of world supply.

"I've said very explicitly from the very outset that we've had two goals with the price cap program," Yellen said. "Number one is to deprive Russia of revenue. Number two is to make sure the global oil market is well supplied."

Some White House strategists have privately said Biden could not risk an escalation in oil prices in an election year should a deficit in Russian supply bump up the cost of a barrel. Biden is already trailing his Republican challenger Donald Trump in the polls, without the risk of higher fuel prices further alienating public support for him.

Barr told Yellen that the Biden administration is waging a war against US energy and is also greenlighting Russian energy by being weak on Russia.

"I want this administration to revisit the failed oil price cap scheme and sanction the crap out of Vladimir Putin's energy, which is financing the war effort [against Ukraine]," Barr added.

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Austin Never Felt That Biden's Decisions Were Impaired by His Health – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has never felt that President Joe Biden’s decisions were impaired by his state of his health, Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

“No,” Ryder said when asked if Austin has ever felt that Biden’s decisions may have been impacted by his mental health conditions.

Biden’s cognitive abilities and general fitness to serve as president have come under scrutiny in recent days, following his lackluster debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump

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pentagon says austin never felt that biden's decisions were impaired by his health

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White House Says Biden Committed to Serving Full Second Term If Elected

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"Yes," Jean-Pierre said when asked if Biden is committed to serving a full second term if reelected.

Biden will turn 86 at the end of his second term.

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Pentagon Says Views India as Strategic Partner Despite Modi's Visit to Russia

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to regard India as a strategic partner and will continue to have a robust dialogue with New Delhi, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday, on the heels of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia.

"India and Russia have had a relationship for a very long time. From a US perspective, India is a strategic partner with whom we continue to engage in with full and frank dialogue, to include their relationship with Russia," Ryder said during briefing.

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white house says biden committed to serving full second term if re-elected

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Norway-Supplied Air Defense System Fired Missile That Hit Hospital in Kiev - Nebenzia

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The ministry said that numerous photos and video footage from Kiev clearly confirm that the destruction was caused by a Ukrainian missile launched from an air defense system deployed within the city. Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said that the hysteria being spread in the United States regarding the Okhmatdyt hospital in Kiev is an example of rabid anti-Russian propaganda.

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Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Jessica Lewis to Resign - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Jessica Lewis will step down this month after almost three years of service, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Jessica Lewis will be stepping down from her position this month after nearly three years of serving the Department with distinction," the statement said.

Blinken said that under Lewis's leadership, the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs provided \$51.4 billion in US security assistance to Ukraine, increased aid to Israel after the October 7 attacks, supplied Taiwan with significant military equipment, and launched the first Taiwan Foreign Military Financing program.

Lewis also enhanced defense trade with AUKUS partners and led numerous security cooperation agreements, aiding the modernization of NATO's Eastern Flank and other militaries worldwide, Blinken said.

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pentagon on modi's visit to russia: we will continue to view india as strategic partner, will continue to have robust dialogue with them

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No Concerns Raised About Biden's Leadership at NATO Summit - State Department

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken did not mention hearing any concerns about President Joe Biden's capabilities as a leader during the NATO Summit, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

"I'm not aware of him [Blinken] having heard any concerns... And he [Blinken] did not mention having heard concerns from anyone," Miller said when asked if Blinken during the NATO Summit heard any concerns about Biden.

Biden's performance has raised concerns among US allies, particularly within NATO. Bloomberg reported last week that European officials are saying privately that Biden should quit the presidential race and make way for a different candidate from the Democratic Party.

There are concerns about how Biden will host the NATO summit in Washington next week, where his every move will be under close scrutiny, according to the report.

The White House has said that it sees no indications that its NATO allies have doubts about Biden's leadership and capability. NATO is holding a summit in Washington on July 9-11.

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State Dept. Says US, India Held Talks Amid Modi's Visit to Russia, Will Keep Them Private

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) – US and Indian officials have held talks in the past 24 hours in the wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow but will keep their content private, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"We have been quite clear about our concerns about India's relationship with Russia. We have expressed those privately, directly to the Indian government, continue to do and that hasn't changed," Miller said during a press conference.

Further pressed on whether such conversations have happened in the last 24 hours, Miller responded positively.

"We have had conversations with them in the past 24 hours and I think I will keep the content of those private," Miller said.

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NATO Mention of Kiev's 'Irreversible' Path Into Alliance Largely Symbolic - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The joint communique expected out of the NATO leaders' summit this week will mention Ukraine is on a so-called irreversible path into the alliance but it will mostly be symbolic as the United States opposes guaranteeing Kiev entry into the alliance before it's sorted out corruption issues, The Washington Post reported on Tuesday, citing US officials.

On Monday, media reported that a draft text of the NATO joint communique will mention that Ukraine is on an "irreversible" path into the alliance.

According to The Washington Post, several NATO members want to demonstrate that Ukraine is getting closer to a path of membership, but some officials acknowledged that this gesture of using the word "irreversible" in the forthcoming joint statement is more symbolic than substantive.

President Joe Biden has stood in the way of NATO making any grander gesture of Ukraine's prospects of getting into the alliance, mostly because he wants to see Ukraine take meaningful steps to weed out corruption before it's promised any admittance, the report said. The US president initially rejected the idea of including language of Ukraine's path into NATO being irreversible, the report added.

Biden believes that if corruption is allowed to continue in Ukraine as it ascends into NATO, it could cause trouble for the entire alliance that may be hard to tackle, according to the report.

In April, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg during a visit to Kiev said Ukraine has a rightful place in NATO and that the alliance is working on placing it on an irreversible path toward membership in NATO when the time may be right.

Russia has repeatedly said it stands against Ukraine's membership in NATO due to national security concerns, but never opposed Kiev's aspirations to join the European Union.

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us officials have had talks with indian counterparts in last 24 hours amid modi's visit to russia but will keep these talks private - state dept

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Haines Says Iran Exploiting Gaza War Protests by Supporting Demonstrators Financially

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - Iran is leveraging ongoing Gaza war protests by using government actors to pose as online activists and by supporting demonstrators financially, US National Intelligence Director Avril Haines said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Iranian government actors have sought to opportunistically take advantage of ongoing protests regarding the war in Gaza, using a playbook we've seen other actors use over the years. We have observed actors tied to Iran's government posing as activists online, seeking to encourage protests, and even providing financial support to protesters," the statement said.

Iran is becoming more aggressive in its foreign influence efforts, aiming to create discord and erode confidence in democratic institutions by adapting its cyber and influence activities, utilizing social media, issuing threats and relying on intelligence services and Iran-based online influencers, the statement said.

Americans targeted by the Iranian campaign might not realize they are interacting with or receiving support from a foreign government and must remain vigilant when engaging online with unknown accounts and actors, the statement said.

Numerous demonstrations have been organized across the United States demanding an end to US military, financial and diplomatic support for Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip, which have resulted in the deaths of more than 38,000 Palestinians. Students in the United States have also demonstrated on campuses, calling on their schools to condemn Israel's deadly military campaign in Gaza, divest from companies linked to Israel and discontinue programs of study abroad at Israeli universities.

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NATO to Unveil Plan to Strengthen Ukraine's Air Power Through Provision of F-16 - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - NATO will outline a plan to strengthen critical Ukrainian air defense capabilities and build its air power through the provision of F-16 fighter jets, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"[In the coming days] we'll also make announcements outlining how we plan to strengthen critical Ukrainian air defense capabilities and build Ukraine's air power through the provision of F-16s," Sullivan said during an event hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce.

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NATO to Announce 4 Joint Projects With Indo-Pacific Countries, 1 on Ukraine - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - NATO and its Indo-Pacific partners will soon announce four new joint projects on areas including Ukraine and artificial intelligence, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"In the coming day, the allies and our Indo-Pacific partners will launch four new joint projects on Ukraine, on artificial intelligence, on disinformation and on cybersecurity," Sullivan said in remarks to the US Chamber of Commerce.

NATO is holding a summit in Washington on July 9-11, to which several Indo-Pacific countries were invited to participate.

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Yellen Says Biden 'Extremely Effective' in Meetings

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is completely capable of fielding meetings with international leaders, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Tuesday, as his age and fitness to run for another term in the November election remained under the spotlight.

"The president is extremely effective in the meetings I've been with him, and that includes many international meetings that are multi-hour, like his meetings with [Chinese] President Xi," Yellen told a hearing held in Congress.

The Treasury secretary said she had joined Biden in meeting "with other leaders" and did not notice anything amiss about his condition.

Yellen's remarks came after amid a dispute on Biden's state of readiness in leading America for another four years.

"As a cabinet secretary, have you noticed any mental or cognitive decline in any of these meetings?" with the president, Mike Lawler, a New York Congressman from Biden's Democratic Party, asked Yellen at Tuesday's hearing.

The treasury secretary initially refused to answer the question, saying she did not wish to discuss her meetings with Biden out of privacy concerns, although she later relented. The committee presiding over the hearing, however, stopped further questions on the subject, ruling that Yellen wasn't a physician to comment on the president's health or mental state.

Biden himself doubled down on Monday on his bid for reelection, daring critics of his age and mental acuity to challenge him directly for the Democratic Party's candidacy if they believed he could not beat his opponent and former Republican president Donald Trump.

The Democratic convention will be between August 19 and 22 while the election itself will be on November 5. For now, the main contenders on the ballot are Biden and Trump, who have both won enough delegates' votes from their respective parties to be their presumptive nominees.

Despite being the Democratic forerunner, Biden's campaign has suffered since a presidential debate with Trump on June 27, where he appeared confused and incoherent throughout. That reinforced rather than refuted concerns about his cognitive abilities at age 81. His poor performance has led some Democratic politicians and donors to call for his removal as a candidate.

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NATO Allies Will Commit to Strengthening Defense Industrial Capacity at Home – Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) – Every NATO ally during the Washington summit this week will for the first time ever pledge to develop plans to strengthen their defense industrial capacity at home, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"In the coming days, for the first time ever, every ally will pledge to develop plans to strengthen their defense industrial capacity at home," Sullivan said in his remarks during an event hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce.

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US Congressman Says NATO Allies No Better Than 'Deadbeat Tenants'

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The United States' NATO allies are no better than tenants who will not pay their rent, Republican US Congressman Matt Rosendale said on Tuesday.

"The countries of NATO are no better than deadbeat tenants who won't pay their rent. We should be sending a collection agency to the Summit this week instead of President Biden," Rosendale said via the social media platform X.

NATO is holding a summit in Washington on July 9-11.

Some US lawmakers have called on NATO allies to increase their defense spending commitments, in order to even out burden sharing across the alliance.

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nato to announce four new joint projects between alliance indo-pacific countries, including one on ukraine - sullivan

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US Navy Sailor Tried To Obtain Biden's Medical Records - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) – A US Navy sailor made several attempts to access the system with President Joe Biden's medical records, CBS News reported on Tuesday, citing the Navy.

The sailor, whose name the authorities did not disclose, tried to access the Genesis Medical Health System — the database for the military medical system — three times on Feb. 23. However, the White House official, as quoted by the report, assured that "he did not pull up the right Joe Biden."

The Navy launched an investigation three days later, and on April 24, it was determined that the sailor could not reach Biden's records. The White House officials underscored that the President was notified about the incident within hours after it became known.

The sailor works for the Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command based at Fort Belvoir. He received an administrative penalty, according to the report.

Biden's campaign has suffered since his first presidential debate of this year with Trump on June 27, when he appeared confused and incoherent throughout. That reinforced rather than refuted concerns about his cognitive abilities at age 81. His poor performance has led some Democratic politicians and donors to call for his removal as a candidate.

Biden, 81, is the oldest US president in the history of the United States and would be 86 at the

end of a second potential term in the White House.

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white houses's sullivan says nato allies will pledge to develop plans to strengthen defense capacity at home

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UPDATE - Yeltsin Considered NATO-Russia Founding Act 'Forced Step' - Declassified Documents

(Updates with more details in paras 5, 6)

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - Former Russian President Boris Yeltsin considered the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 a forced step, according to a new set of declassified documents published by the George Washington University National Security Archive on Tuesday.

"Hailed at the time as an historic change 'burying' a Cold War rivalry, the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 was privately characterized as a 'forced step' by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who told US President Bill Clinton that he opposed NATO expansion but saw no alternative to signing the accord," the archive said.

The act established regular consultations and coordination between Russia and NATO. The act did not contain any provisions on NATO enlargement.

Yeltsin personally told Clinton in March 1997 that NATO's eastward expansion was a "mistake" for the alliance. However, Yeltsin said that he was prepared to enter into an agreement with NATO to alleviate negative consequences for Russia, as there was no alternative solution.

Yeltsin asked for a secret "gentlemen's agreement" to not expand NATO into the former Soviet republics; Clinton argued that no such deal could be kept secret and that it would ultimately harm Russia.

"If we were to agree that no members of the former Soviet Union could enter NATO, it would be a bad thing for our attempt to build a new NATO, but it would also be a bad thing for your attempt to build a new Russia," Clinton told Yeltsin.

The newly published records come from the Clinton Presidential Library and were released following a Mandatory Declassification Review and a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, the archive said.

NATO is holding a summit in Washington on July 9-11, during which alliance members will discuss continued support for Ukraine, including the potential for future membership in NATO.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that NATO's expansion into Ukraine would create security risks for Russia and that a non-aligned status for Ukraine is a prerequisite for a ceasefire between the two countries.

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"Hailed at the time as an historic change 'burying' a Cold War rivalry, the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 was privately characterized as a 'forced step' by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who told US President Bill Clinton that he opposed NATO expansion but saw no alternative to signing the accord," the archive said.

The act established regular consultations and coordination between Russia and NATO but did not contain any provisions on NATO enlargement.

Yeltsin personally told Clinton in March 1997 that NATO's eastward expansion was a "mistake" for the alliance. However, Yeltsin also said he was prepared to enter into an agreement with NATO to alleviate negative consequences for Russia, as there was no alternative solution.

The newly published records come from the Clinton Presidential Library and were released following a Mandatory Declassification Review and a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, the archive said.

NATO is holding a summit in Washington on July 9-11, during which alliance members will discuss continued support for Ukraine, including the potential for future membership in NATO.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that NATO's expansion into Ukraine would create security risks for Russia and that a non-aligned status for Ukraine is a prerequisite for a ceasefire between the two countries.

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UN Chief Accusing Russia of Striking Ukraine Exposes 'Double Standard' - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, July 9 (Sputnik) - Russia has already called out UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in the past about his double standard regarding Russia targeting Ukrainian territory, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

"[I was] telling him that this clearly is a double standard but Russian territory is hit and civilian objects are hit," Nebenzia said. "But when something happens in Ukraine, the Secretary-General and his spokesman are rushing to accuse and condemn Russia right away."

Nebenzia made the comment after the UN Security Council held a meeting on Ukraine that was requested by Western countries.

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Democratic US Congressman Expresses Confidence in 'Underdog' Biden Campaign After Debate

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - Democratic US Congressman Ro Khanna said on Tuesday that he is confident in President Joe Biden's 2024 reelection bid, despite setbacks stemming from Biden's lackluster debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump.

"My view is that there is a path to victory. I think we have to be clear-eyed that the president is an underdog," Khanna said in an interview with The Washington Post.

However, the Biden campaign must change its approach and the campaign must stop declaring "war" on the media, Khanna said.

Democrats could still win a majority in the US House of Representatives with Biden at the top of the presidential ticket, Khanna said.

On Tuesday, House Democrats held a closed meeting to discuss views on Biden's candidacy. There were differences of opinion among Democratic lawmakers, although there is an assumption that Biden will be the party's nominee, Khanna said.

Khanna's representation of the meeting contrasts to reports on other lawmakers' takeaways.

One House Democrat said that the meeting "felt like a funeral" for Biden, Punchbowl News reported. There was no consensus on Biden's future, the report said.

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Justice Dept. Says Seized 2 Domain Names, Searched 968 Social Accounts Linked to Russia

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) – The United States has seized two domain names and searched nearly 1000 social media accounts as part of an operation to dismantle an AI-based bot farm allegedly utilized by the Russian government to spread disinformation in the United States and other countries, the US Justice Department said on Tuesday.

"The Justice Department today announced the seizure of two domain names and the search of 968 social media accounts used by Russian actors to create an AI-enhanced social media bot farm that spread disinformation in the United States and abroad," the department said in a press release.

The US prosecution believes that by using artificial intelligence, Russia allegedly used the bot farm to create fake profiles of US citizens on social networks, which in turn were later used to spread false information to benefit Moscow, the release said.

The United States believes that the development of the farm was organized by an individual from Russia who has worked as the deputy editor-in-chief at Russia Today since early 2022 and executed by other individuals, the release added.

In April, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said that Russia supports creating UN-based mechanisms to fight disinformation.

Russia has repeatedly rejected accusations put forth by Washington about its alleged disinformation campaign aimed at the United States and other countries.

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Tragedies Could Be Avoided if Ukraine Did Not Place Air Defense in Cities - Nebenzia

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) – Tragedies such as with the Okhmatdyt Children’s Hospital in Kiev could have been avoided if Ukraine did not deploy air defenses in residential neighborhoods in violation of international humanitarian law, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

"Such tragedies could be avoided if the Kiev regime, in contravention of international humanitarian law, did not locate air defense and heavy weaponry in residential neighborhoods. However, its Western sponsors prefer to look away regarding that important fact," Nebenzia told the UN Security Council.

The Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that Ukrainian claims about a deliberate Russian strike on civilian targets in Ukraine do not correspond to reality. Footage from Kiev shows that the damage to the children's hospital was caused by a Ukrainian air-defense missile launched from a system in the city, the ministry said.

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Russia Grants US Request for Ukraine Participation in UNSC Meeting After Kiev Defies Rules

UNITED NATIONS, July 9 (Sputnik) – Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday that it was regrettable that the United States had to sponsor Ukraine’s request to participate in a UN Security Council meeting after Kiev refused to use basic protocol language amid Russia's UNSC presidency.

"We regret that Ukraine cannot act independently even on such a procedural matter as a meeting of the Security Council ... even in that it has to be led by its sponsor," Nebenzia said at the meeting’s opening.

Ukraine refused to send a proper request to the Russian presidency of the UN Security Council, Nebenzia said. Kiev is demonstrating that it stands above the council’s rules, the diplomat stressed.

Russia, as the president of the UNSC for the month of July, cannot accept the disrespect for standard protocols and believes that the rules apply to everyone, Nebenzia said.

The diplomat, however, noted that in the absence of objections, the Russian presidency will allow Ukraine to participate in Tuesday’s meeting on the condition that it was requested by the US. Russia will grant the request in accordance with the rules, he added.

The Security Council convened for an emergency meeting after Ukraine accused Russia of striking a children's hospital.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that Ukrainian claims regarding the strikes on Kiev do not correspond with reality. Footage from Kiev shows that the destruction was caused by a Ukrainian air-defense missile launched from a system in the city, the ministry said.

Ukraine is using the tragedy to create a certain atmosphere for Volodymyr Zelenskyy's

participation in the NATO summit in Washington, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday, calling it an unscrupulous tactic.

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Nebenzia Says Regretful That UNSC Drawn Into 'Dirty Propaganda Campaign' by Kiev

UNITED NATIONS, July 9 (Sputnik) - Russia regrets that the UN Security Council is being drawn into a "dirty propaganda campaign" by Kiev, the Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

"We really regret that the council has been drawn into this dirty propaganda campaign of Kiev..." Nebenzia said in the UN Security Council during a meeting on Ukraine, which was requested by the Western states.

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Ex-Top Republican on Senate Armed Services Panel Jim Inhofe Dies at Age 89 - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The former top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee Jim Inhofe died on Tuesday at the age of 89, NBC News reported citing a former aide.

The report said that Inhofe died from a sudden and unexpected illness he got over the Fourth of July holiday.

Inhofe served as a US senator from 1994 to 2023, making him the longest-serving senator in the history of the state of Oklahoma, which he represented.

The late senator was also chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee from 2018 to 2021.

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UPDATE - China Urges Parties to Ukraine Conflict to Start Peace Talks at Early Date – Envoy to UN

(Adds details in para 4-7)

UNITED NATIONS, July 9 (Sputnik) – China urges all parties to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine to show political will and begin peace negotiations at an early date, Chinese Deputy Ambassador to the UN Geng Shuang said on Tuesday.

“We call on the parties to the conflict to show political will, meet each other halfway and start peace talks at an early date,” Geng told the UN Security Council.

The diplomat further called on the international community, through an objective and impartial position, to create the conditions required for putting an end to the conflict as swiftly as possible.

“We call upon all parties concerned to work together, uphold a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable concept of security, and promote the establishment of a balanced, effective, and sustainable European security architecture,” Geng added.

China will continue to actively promote peace talks in its own way and play a constructive role in reaching a political settlement to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, he added.

The Chinese envoy made the remarks at a UN Security Council meeting convened to address Russia’s alleged missile strike on a children’s hospital in Kiev. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that the use of the tragedy by the authorities of Ukraine for propaganda purposes is inhumane.

On Monday, the Russian Defense Ministry said that the statements about a deliberate Russian strike on civilian targets in Ukraine do not correspond to reality, as the destruction was caused by the fall of a Ukrainian air defense missile.

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Hunter Biden Withdraws Motion for New Trial in Gun Case - Court Filing

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - Hunter Biden withdrew a motion for a new trial in his federal gun case on Tuesday, according to a court filing.

"Referencing the procedure used by the Clerk of the Third Circuit explained in the Special Counsel's opposition, Mr. Biden withdraws his Rule 33 motion for a new trial based on the absence of a mandate," the filing said.

Last month, a federal jury convicted Biden on the three federal felony gun charges he faced. A week later, he requested and withdrew his request for a new trial without explanation.

In that request, his lawyers had argued that although they lost their pretrial appeals, the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals did not issue its final mandate that would have returned jurisdiction to the district judge, who had presided over the jury trial that ended with the guilty verdicts.

The latest filing stated that the "Clerk of the Court's signature block, not the order itself, contains 'Certified Order Issued in Lieu of Mandate' language. As it appears that the Third Circuit views issuing a certified order 'in lieu' of a mandate as compliant with Rule 41's procedure for shortening the time for issuance of a mandate, Mr. Biden withdraws his motion."

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Chances of Ukraine Getting Back All Lost Territory Close to Zero - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The likelihood that Ukraine will be able to recapture all lost territory from Russia is close to zero, while more and more US officials are declaring that it would be permissible for Kiev to end the conflict with the loss of territories, the New York Times reported on Tuesday.

US officials rate equally low Russia's chances of taking new Ukrainian territory and Ukraine's chances of regaining the territory it has lost since the start of the conflict, the report said.

Despite Ukraine's lack of prospects of regaining all lost territories, Kiev can still count on a higher level of European integration depending on its success on the battlefield against Russia.

At the same time, US officials believe it is possible that Russia would be able to make significant gains if there is a big strategic shift, including military draft expansion and training improvement.

In June, President Vladimir Putin said that Russia would immediately cease fire and begin negotiations with Ukraine after Kiev withdraws troops from the territory of Russia's new regions and officially abandons plans to join NATO.

The US State Department called Putin's terms for peace in Ukraine "maximalist."

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China Urges Parties to Ukraine Conflict to Start Peace Talks at Early Date – Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, July 9 (Sputnik) – China urges all parties to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine to show political will and begin peace negotiations at an early date, Chinese Deputy Ambassador to the UN Geng Shuang said on Tuesday.

“We call on the parties to the conflict to show political will meet each other halfway and start peace talks at an early date,” Geng told the UN Security Council.

The diplomat further called on the international community, through an objective and impartial position, to create the conditions required for putting an end to the conflict as swiftly as possible.

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NATO's Top Priority Waging War, Not Maintaining Peace - Kennedy

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - NATO's top priority as an alliance is waging war instead of maintaining peace, independent US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Tuesday.

NATO is holding a summit in Washington from July 9-11.

“This week the world beholds the sorry spectacle of a western imperium careening towards catastrophe as NATO descends on Washington,” Kennedy said via social media platform X.

“The DC press corps is rightfully concerned about the direction of travel ... And well they should be, because NATO's top priority right now is waging war, not maintaining peace.”

The pattern of NATO escalation is akin to the emergence of US involvement in the Vietnam War, Kennedy said. Like in Vietnam, the United States is starting its involvement in Ukraine with CIA operations and military advisers, Kennedy said.

Kennedy said that a NATO summit in Washington would be an “utterly different affair” under his presidency.

“Stop the carnage. End the warfare state. No more dollars for death,” Kennedy said.

In May, Kennedy said that the conflict in Ukraine is headed towards a calamitous escalation through the provision of long-range missiles and NATO military advisers. The US and its allies are playing a game of “chicken” with their foreign policy, Kennedy said.

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china calls on all parties to ukraine conflict to show political will to meet each other halfway, start peace talks at early date - envoy to UN

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NATO to Fund 10,000 Bulletproof Vests, Winter Uniforms for Ukrainian Women - Official

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - NATO will provide funding for the initial production of 10,000 bulletproof vests, winter uniforms and combat boots for women in the Ukrainian armed forces as part of the comprehensive assistance package for the country, NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative Irene Fellin said on Tuesday.

"I am very pleased to announce that throughout the NATO comprehensive assistance package for Ukraine, we will fund an initial production of 10,000 bulletproof vests, 10,000 winter uniforms and 10,000 combat boots for service women in the armed forces of Ukraine," Fellin said during a roundtable discussion at the US State Department.

The news about the funding came amid increasingly frequent talks in Ukraine regarding the need to mobilize women since the mobilization of men has failed to address the lack of soldiers on the battlefield.

In April, gender adviser to the commander of the Ukrainian armed forces Oksana Grigorieva said Ukrainian women should be readying for combat and suggested introducing a policy of preparing women for military service based on Israel's model.

About 65,000 women serve in the Ukrainian armed forces at present, according to media reports.

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Canada Provides Caribbean Region \$880,000 in Humanitarian Aid Due to Hurricane Beryl

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government is providing C\$1.2 million (\$880,000) in humanitarian relief to the Caribbean region to address the devastation from hurricane Beryl, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Tuesday.

"At the start of what is predicted to be a devastating hurricane season, Canada is providing support to the Caribbean region in the wake of hurricane Beryl," GAC said in a statement.

"Canada is providing over \$1 million in humanitarian assistance funding in response to the devastation caused by the hurricane."

Canada's regional humanitarian partners will use the funding to provide emergency nutrition as well as protection and logistics services to ensure that humanitarian workers can respond to the crisis, the statement said.

Half of the funding is allocated for the World Food Program for emergency food assistance and logistics services, the statement said.

The rest of the funding is allocated for the Canadian red Cross to provide them to the Jamaican Red Cross, and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency.

On Monday, Beryl made landfall on the island of Carriacou in Grenada as a Category 4 storm with maximum sustained winds of 150 miles per hour (241 kilometers per hour).

Beryl was downgraded to the level of tropical storm after reaching the shores of Texas and

Louisiana, where at least seven people died as a result of the hurricane and more than 2.3 million were left without power.

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Canada, Romania to Sign Declaration on Consolidated Partnership at NATO Summit - Ministry

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) – Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly and her Romanian counterpart will sign a joint declaration on a Canada-Romania Consolidated Partnership on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Washington, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

"At the summit, Minister Joly will also meet with her Romanian counterpart [Luminita Odobescu] to sign a joint declaration on a Canada-Romania Consolidated Partnership," Global Affairs Canada said in a statement.

In March 2022, Canada and Romania agreed to initiate work on a Declaration of Consolidated Partnership. Ottawa and Bucharest further vowed to create a roadmap for the bilateral relationship as proof of their commitment to enhance and expand ties. The decision was made weeks after Russia began its special military operation in Ukraine.

NATO leaders are in the US capital of Washington from July 9-11 for the 75th anniversary summit, to discuss a range of issues, including additional support for Ukraine amid the ongoing conflict with Russia.

Moscow will closely monitor the NATO summit in Washington given that the alliance considers Russia an adversary, openly declares the goal of inflicting strategic defeat on it and is directly involved in Ukraine conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday.

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Canada Buys Hangar Near NORAD Base to Avert Chinese, Russian Purchase - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government has purchased a privately owned hangar in close proximity to a North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) air base in the Northwest Territories to prevent a Chinese or Russian acquisition, the Globe and Mail reported on Tuesday.

The aircraft hangar located in the Arctic community of Inuvik was bought by the government for C\$8.6 million (\$6.3 million) after Chinese and Russians alike allegedly showed interest in acquiring the facility, the report said, citing records released under the Access to Information Act.

Inuvik has been subject of heightened national security scrutiny in recent years due to Ottawa's concern that foreign actors might want to engage in espionage in the area, the report said.

Outgoing Chief of Defense Staff General Wayne Eyre has said that Canada's hold on its Arctic territories will be increasingly challenged by China and Russia in the decades to come.

The report said that in the fall of 2022, a team of investigators with the Canadian Armed Forces

national counterintelligence unit traveled to the community as part of the so called "Project Sandcastle" to inquire from locals about visits by Chinese and Russian individuals allegedly interested in the Forward Operating Location Inuvik and numerous satellite ground stations.

The hangar is located next to the military facility and a few kilometers away from two satellite download sites, the report said. The NORAD base can host up to six fighter jets and is the only one in Canada with a paved runway north of the Arctic Circle, it added.

The report also alleged, citing a source with direct knowledge, that two Chinese diplomats who were later determined to be members of the People's Liberation Army, visited Inuvik in 2018 to look at the hangar and satellite facilities.

Canada is "deeply concerned" by Beijing's and Moscow's activities in the Arctic, National Defense Spokesperson Alex Tetreault said in the report. China seeks to become an Arctic power by 2030 whereas Russia is developing modern facilities and infrastructure in the High North, capable of hosting sophisticated weaponry, the report said.

Russia has consistently expressed concerns about NATO's military buildup in the Arctic, warning that it is increasing the risk of unintended conflict in the region.

The accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO will increase the alliance's ambitions in the Arctic and enable it to establish command and staff infrastructure there, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said in April. Russia will respond accordingly, Grushko added.