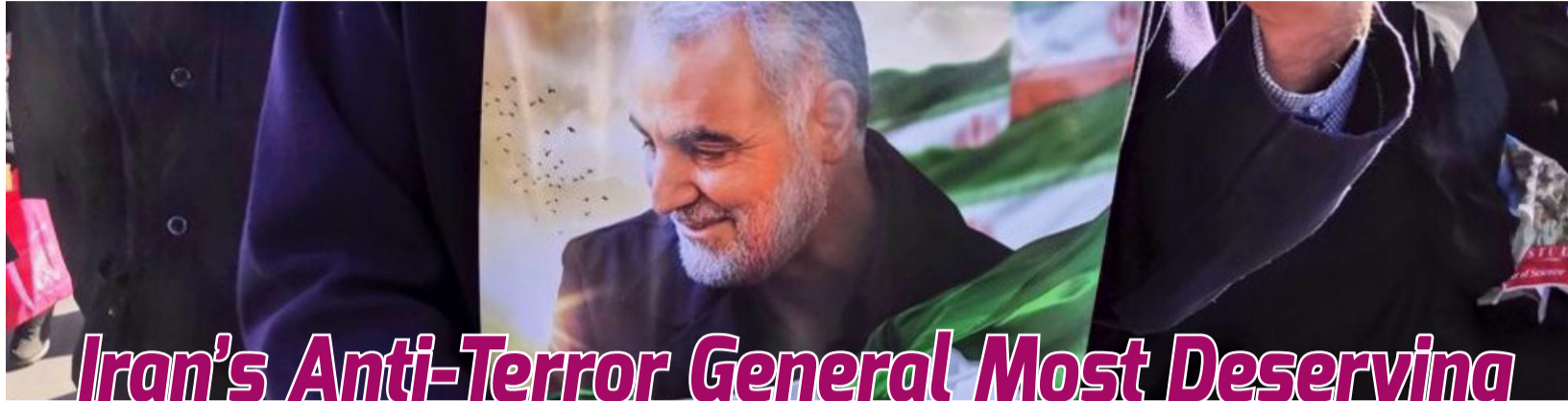


Baku, Tehran Agree to Build Railroad to Nakhchivan

TEHRAN (MNA) – Azerbaijan Republic and Iran agreed to build a railroad in Iran that will link Azerbaijan with its exclave of Nakhchivan. The countries signed a letter of intent in Baku following a meeting between Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev and Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash, the Azerbaijani government's news agency Azertac reported. The news agency gave no details of the agreement. Earlier on Friday, Mustafayev and Bazrpash took part in the ceremony of laying the foundation for a motorway bridge and border-crossing infrastructure between Azerbaijan and Iran near the Aghbend settlement. According to Azertac, the facilities will aim to increase freight transit through the countries and ease access to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Construction of the bridge is part of the memorandum of understanding between the governments of Azerbaijan and Iran on the creation of new links between the East Zangezur economic region of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through Iran.

IRGC Forces Bust Seven-Strong Terror Team

TEHRAN (PresTV) - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) forces have managed to smash a team of terrorists in the country's north-central province of Alborz close to the capital Tehran. The IRGC's Imam Hassan Mojtaba base announced in a statement that the seven-strong team was busted in a joint operation by Basij volunteer forces and security forces in Garmdarreh district of the province, situated 10 kilometers (six miles) west of Tehran, following intricate intelligence measures. The statement added that a Kalashnikov assault rifle, two magazines and 45 rounds of live ammunition in addition to a pistol with two magazines and 28 live bullets, a bulletproof vest and a pepper spray were recovered from the terrorists. Back in late May, IRGC forces smashed a team of terrorists in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, killing two. The IRGC Ground Force's Quds Base said in a statement at the time that the team had been busted before carrying out its plans for terrorist operations in the southern part of the province.



Iran's Anti-Terror General Most Deserving Symbol of Int'l Peace

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian reacts after the Norwegian Nobel Committee awards an Iranian woman, who has been convicted of committing several instances of criminal activity against the Iranian nation and the country's Islamic establishment. "The most deserving symbol of international peace was the self-sacrificing general, who fought terrorism and the most violent criminals for two decades, and guaranteed the region and the world's security," the top diplomat wrote in a message on X on Friday. He was referring to Iran's top anti-terror commander, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani. For several years starting in 2014, General Soleimani led the Islamic Republic's military advisory assistance to Iraq and Syria as the Arab countries were grappling with an unbridled terror campaign unleashed by the Takfiri Daesh outfit. The assistance helped the countries defeat Daesh in 2017, ending the group's ambitions for spreading its campaign of bloodshed and destruction to the entire region and far beyond. The general was, however, assassinated in a United States' drone strike near the Baghdad International Airport in early 2020. Amir-Abdollahian said monumental attendance at his funeral by tens of millions of people across Iran and Iraq, and the international sympathy that followed his martyrdom "amounted to the most splendid and lasting peace prize in history." Earlier on Friday, the Norwegian committee awarded the Iranian woman, Narges Mohammadi, with the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize. Mohammadi has been in and out of jail for much of her adult life and is currently

serving a prison term at Tehran's Evin prison. In 2016, an Iranian appeals court confirmed a 16-year sentence for Mohammadi on charges of colluding to act against national security, engaging in propaganda campaigns against the government as well as forming and directing an illegal group. The Norwegian committee, however, claimed that she had been fighting "against the oppression of women" in Iran and fighting to "promote human rights and freedom for all." Iran's top human rights official, meanwhile, said the prize had nothing to do with preserving and enhancing peace around the world, and promoting the sense of fraternity among nations. "This political reward has rather turned into a [means of] financial support for the illegal activities of some of its winners," said Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights. Iran decries a spiteful and politically-motivated move to award the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize to an Iranian criminal woman. He defined some of those, who were really deserving of receiving a peace prize as the victims of the West's unilateral sanctions -- namely the Iranian nation -- as well as the victims of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's Western-backed war of 1980-88 against the Islamic Republic. "A criminal and a lawbreaker," whose reception of the prize has been warmly welcomed by the MKO and the Israeli intelligence chief, therefore, did not deserve a peace prize, Gharibabadi concluded, referring to Mohammadi.

Awarding Nobel Peace Prize to a Criminal "Spiteful, Politically Motivated"

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK



TEHRAN - Iran condemned a "spiteful and politically motivated" move to award the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize to an Iranian woman who has been convicted of committing criminal acts. In a statement, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said the Nobel Committee's political move was in line with "interventionist and anti-Iranian policies of some European countries." He added that the committee's decision was "another link in the chain of West's pressure against Iran" which would have no outcome but reinforcing the Iranian nation's determination to pursue its independent policy. Kanaani emphasized that the decision to award Mohammadi the prize was a "disappointing deviation from its initial objectives." He also criticized the Nobel Committee for making "incorrect and false claims" about events in Iran, which indicated "some European governments' approach to fabricate information and produce confusing and deviant narratives about internal developments in Iran."

Foreign Backers of Terrorists Responsible for Criminal Drone Strike in Syria

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi says foreign backers of terrorist groups, including the occupiers, are responsible for a "criminal" drone attack on a military academy in Syria's western city of Homs that has killed scores of Syrians. "Undoubtedly, the responsibility for this tragic incident lies with the foreign supporters of terrorist groups, including the occupiers of the Syrian lands, who prevent... the effective fight against terrorism," Raisi said. "Responsible international bodies, especially the United Nations Security Council, are expected to fulfill their responsibilities in this regard," he added. Thursday's aerial assault came just after the end of a graduation ceremony for officers and wounded both military personnel and their families. The Syrian health ministry said on Friday that the death toll has risen to 89, including 31 women and five children, adding that 277 people were injured in the attack. In a message to his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad on Friday, Raisi offered his condolences to the president, government, army and the nation of the friendly country of Syria over the terrorist incident. "This criminal move showed that those who oppose security, stability and development in the region still continue with their terrorist and brutal approach," the Iranian president said. He added that such terrorist and savage behavior has suffered the oppressed Syrian nation over the past years. He added that the continuation of terrorist attacks in Syria in recent months was the outcome of "intelligence, security and logistical support" for terrorists with the aim of preventing the establishment of stability and full security

in the Arab country. Efforts to help Daesh and Takfiri terrorists survive and carry out their acts in Syria are complementary to the Israeli regime's aggression against the national sovereignty of Syria, he said. Raisi emphasized that international bodies, particularly the United Nations Security Council, are expected to fulfill their responsibility in dealing with such acts of terrorism. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack, but the Syrian army on Thursday blamed foreign-backed "terrorist groups" for the attack that was carried out by "explosive-laden drones", and vowed to "respond with full force."

Minister Discusses Iran Road Project With Azerbaijan President

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's transport minister has discussed with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev the idea of a new road project that passes through Iran and connects Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhchivan. Mehrdad Bazrpash met Aliyev in Baku where the two sides discussed the Iran Road initiative, a project that will accommodate up to 15 million metric tons of cargo transit, according to a Saturday report by the IRNA. Bazrpash said in the meeting that the road, which will also be known as the Aras corridor, will connect Aghbend to Jolfa. He said the road's construction would contribute to more peace in the Caucasus region, especially after Azerbaijan liberated areas that were occupied for decades by ethnic Armenians. During the meeting, Bazrpash also discussed increased oil and gas cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan while stressing the need for a jointly-built dam on the Aras River to start taking water. Aliyev, on his part, stated that his country is persistently working on establishing both bilateral and multilateral transport corridors. He also emphasized that the friendship between Iran and Azerbaijan is of great significance for the region.

Iran Considering to Restore Tourism Ties With Egypt

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Ezzatollah Zarghami has said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is considering to restore tourism ties with Egypt. Zarghami said that expanding tourism ties with Egypt is a useful way to enhance ties between the two nations. The study on the restoration of tourism ties with Egypt has begun, he said, adding that the outcomes await the diplomatic decision of the foreign ministry. He said that expanding tourism relations with foreign countries and facilitating travel to Iran is the priority of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, and added that his Ministry has suggested a visa waiver plan with 68 countries to the government. Visa-free travels of the first group of Russia to Iran began recently and paved the way for the rest, he added. Referring to the recent ceremony held in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia to celebrate World Tourism Day, he said that his deputy Maryam Jalali attended the ceremony and proposed the formation of a working group to cancel visas between the two nations. Conveying his message to his Saudi counterpart Sultan Al Musallam through Jalali, he underlined that in the message, the high official of the Saudi Ministry was invited to visit Iran, and it was decided to make the necessary planning and coordination.



UAE to Quash Conviction of 10 Iranian Prisoners



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf announced that the United Arab Emirates has decided to overturn the conviction of 10 Iranian prisoners. Speaking in a meeting with the President of the Federal National Council of the UAE Saqr Ghobash, Qalibaf emphasized that Iran prioritizes developing relations with its neighboring countries as part of its foreign policy agenda. He expressed a strategic view that neighboring countries can foster bilateral relations across various fields and establish enduring security and peace. This approach, he believes, will facilitate cooperation, unity, and progress among Islamic countries and the Muslim Ummah in Southwest Asia. Furthermore, Qalibaf highlighted the membership of Iran and the UAE in the BRICS group as a significant opportunity to broaden bilateral relations with an aim to influence political, economic, and social ties within the group. On his part, Ghobash expressed optimism that the Iranian delegation's visit to the UAE will mark a turning point in their bilateral relations and serve as a strong motivation for enhancing ties. He also commended Iran's policy to uphold security and peace in the region.

Iran, Belarus Discuss Mutual Cooperation Within BRICS, SCO

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri and Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Aleinik engaged in discussions on Thursday regarding their countries' mutual support within international organizations, including BRICS and the SCO, according to the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. "[Aleinik and Bagheri] exchanged views on urgent issues on the regional and international agenda. They paid special attention to cooperation and mutual support within the framework of international organizations, including the SCO and BRICS," Sputnik reported, citing a statement by the Belarusian foreign ministry. The two sides also explored the potential for the development of Belarusian-Iranian relations and outlined plans for bilateral events. During BRICS' annual top-level summit held in Johannesburg in July, Argentina, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, and Egypt were invited to join the group. Belarus officially applied for membership in the group in May. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization currently consisting of nine member states: China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. It also has three observer states: Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia. Additionally, 14 dialogue partners, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey, are associated with the organization. In July, the members signed a memorandum outlining Minsk's obligations for accession to the bloc, with official membership expected in 2024.



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Sirens Heard as Dozens of Rockets Fired From Gaza Towards Israel

GAZA (Dispatches) - Dozens of rockets were fired from the blockaded Gaza Strip towards Israel on Saturday, an AFP journalist in the Palestinian territory said, as sirens warning of incoming fire blared in Israel. The rocket fire was launched from multiple locations in Gaza starting at 06:30 am (0330 GMT), the AFP journalist reported. The Israeli army warned of sirens across the country's south and central areas for more than an hour, urging the public to stay near bomb shelters. The military also said "a number of terrorists have infiltrated into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip," without providing further information. A 70-year-old woman was in critical condition and another person was trapped after a rocket hit a building in central Israel, the Magen David Adom emergency services said. In a separate incident, medics said a 20-year-old man was hurt moderately from shrapnel. The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the premier will shortly convene security chiefs over the violence. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the rocket fire. Israel has imposed a crippling blockade on Gaza since 2007 after the Hamas militant group took power. Palestinian militants and Israel have fought several devastating wars since. The latest fire follows a period of heightened tensions in September, when Israel closed the border to Gazan workers for two weeks. The shutdown of the crossing came as Palestinian protest rocked the heavily-militarised border. Protesters had resorted to burning tyres and throwing rocks and petrol bombs at Israeli troops, who have responded with tear gas and live bullets. Critics had slammed the border closure as collective punishment against thousands of Palestinian workers, who have far greater earning potential in Israel than Gaza, where unemployment is rife. Resuming their passage on September 28 had raised hopes of calming the situation in Gaza, home to 2.3 million people. In May, an exchange of Israeli air strikes and Gaza rocket fire resulted in the deaths of 34 Palestinians and one Israeli. So far this year at least 247 Palestinians, 32 Israelis and two foreigners have been killed in the conflict, including combatants and civilians on both sides, according to Israeli and Palestinian officials. The vast majority of



fatalities have occurred in the West Bank, which has been occupied by Israel since the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict. There has been a rise in army raids, Palestinian attacks targeting Israelis and Israeli settler violence against Palestinians and their property. Several far-right Israeli ministers live in settlements in the West Bank, which are deemed illegal under international law.

Russia Signals Intent to Quickly Revoke Ratification of Nuclear Test Ban Treaty



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia indicated on Friday that it was moving swiftly towards revoking its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) after President Vladimir Putin held out the possibility of resuming nuclear testing. Putin said on Thursday Russia's nuclear doctrine - which sets out the conditions under which he would press the nuclear button - did not need updating but that he was not yet ready to say whether or not Moscow needed to resume nuclear tests. The Kremlin chief said that Russia could look at revoking ratification of the CTBT as the United States had signed but not ratified it. Russia's top lawmaker, Vyacheslav Volodin, then said the State Duma lower house of parliament would swiftly consider if there was a need to revoke Russia's ratification of the treaty. The comments by Putin and Volodin suggest that Russia is seriously considering revoking ratification of the treaty, which bans nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the point would be to achieve a "common denominator" between Russia and the United States. "This does not constitute a statement of intention to conduct nuclear tests," he told reporters. However, Putin had signalled that possibility in his comments on Thursday. "As a rule, experts say, with a new weapon - you need to make sure that the special warhead will work without failures," Putin said. A resumption of nuclear tests by Russia, the United States or China could indicate the start of a new nuclear arms race between the big powers who stopped nuclear testing in the years following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. For some scientists and campaigners, the splurge of nuclear bomb testing during the Cold War indicated the folly of nuclear brinkmanship which could ultimately destroy humanity and contaminate the planet for hundreds of thousands of years. But the Ukraine war has raised tensions between Moscow and Washington to the highest level since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis just as China seeks to bolster its nuclear arsenal to accord with its status as an emerging superpower. Russia currently has around 5,889 nuclear warheads, compared with 5,244 for the United States, according to the Federation of American Scientists. China has 410 warheads, France 290 and Britain 225. Between 1945 and the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, the United Nations has said, more than 2,000 nuclear tests were carried out - 1,032 by the United States and 715 by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union last tested in 1990 and the United States in 1992. But signs have emerged that testing could resume. In 2020, the Washington Post reported that the then-Trump administration had discussed whether to conduct a nuclear test.



U.S. Restricts Trade With 42 Chinese Entities

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The U.S. Commerce Department on Friday added 42 Chinese companies to a government export control list over their support for Moscow's military and defense industrial base - support that includes the supply of U.S.-origin integrated circuits. Another seven entities from Finland, Germany, India, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom were also added to the trade export control list. The circuits include microelectronics that Russia uses for precision guidance systems in missiles and drones launched against civilian targets in Ukraine, the Commerce Department said in a statement. "Today's additions to the Entity List provide a clear message: if you supply the Russian defense sector with U.S.-origin technology, we will find out, and we will take action," Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement Matthew Axelrod said in the statement.

EU Leaders Back Bigger Union But Avoid Date



GRANADA (Dispatches) - European Union leaders declared support on Friday for adding new members to the bloc but set no target date and warned candidates such as Ukraine that there would be no short cuts. At a summit in the Spanish city of Granada, leaders of the 27-nation union proclaimed that EU enlargement is an "investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity." But they also said that both the EU and would-be members - which include Ukraine, Moldova and Western Balkan states - would need to make big changes to be ready for an enlarged union. "Aspiring members need to step up their reform efforts, notably in the area of rule of law," they said in a statement. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has propelled enlargement up the agenda of the EU. Its leaders say the conflict has shown the danger of countries being in contested "grey zones" rather than being firmly part of the EU political camp. Even as it fights Russia's invasion, Ukraine has made EU membership talks one of its top priorities. It aims to get the green light from EU leaders at a summit in December. Countries have to meet legal, economic and democratic standards to join the EU - a process that takes years. Officials say the EU will also have to overhaul its decision-making procedures and budget rules to take in new members. Charles Michel, the president of the European Council of EU leaders, has proposed the bloc should be ready to expand by 2030, arguing setting such a target would encourage both the EU and candidate countries to step up their reform

efforts. "What's important is to stop procrastinating," Michel told a news conference at the end of the summit. But other leaders have been cool on the idea, saying the focus should be on candidate countries meeting EU standards. "The process is merit-based," said Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, the EU's executive. "There are clear rules, there are milestones that have to be achieved." An internal EU report said that if current rules on farm subsidies, regional development and other spending applied to a union of 35 members, its budget would rise 21 percent, meaning an extra 256.8 billion euros (\$271.9 billion) over seven years. "Given that a bigger EU would need more resources, and that newly acceding Member States would become net beneficiaries of the EU budget, enlargement will have a far-reaching impact on the EU budget," said the report, prepared in July. It said the accession of Ukraine alone could lead to an increase in spending of 186.3 billion euros (\$197.23 billion) over seven years. However, EU officials and diplomats say the budget setup would have to be overhauled before enlargement, so the report serves more as an illustration that change is needed rather than an accurate estimate of the cost of admitting new members. EU aspirants include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo. Some are at various stages in membership talks while others aim to get the go-ahead in the coming months or years.

Suspects in Ecuador Candidate Assassination Killed in Prison

GUAYAQUIL (Dispatches) - Six suspects in the August assassination of Ecuador presidential candidate and anti-corruption crusader Fernando Villavicencio were killed in prison on Friday, officials said. The SNAI prisons authority initially announced that "an event occurred" in the Guayas 1 prison in Guayaquil "resulting in six dead people." It later clarified the deceased were "of Colombian nationality and accused of the murder of former presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio." Villavicencio, a 59-year-old journalist, was gunned down as he left a campaign rally in the capital Quito days ahead of the first round vote. After news broke of the prison deaths, Ecuadoran President Guillermo Lasso announced he would immediately return from an international trip to handle the incident. Lasso had traveled to New York on Thursday for personal matters, and was due in Seoul on Saturday for official trade talks. "In the next few hours I will return to Ecuador to attend to this emergency. Neither complicity nor cover-up, here the truth will be known," Lasso said on X, formerly Twitter. The public prosecutor's office said that its agents, along with police and the military, were "executing security protocols... in light of the disturbance that occurred Friday afternoon." It added in a statement on X that "in the coming hours, specialized military personnel will carry out the first raids and reconnaissance of Cellblock 7, where the incidents originated, to take control of the situation." Guayas 1 is one of five facilities that make up a large prison complex in Guayaquil, a key port city that has become one of the country's increasingly bloody centers of a turf war between rival drug-trafficking gangs. In late July, a riot in the Guayas 1 prison left more than 30 people dead. The assassination of Villavicencio, who had been polling in second place, rocked Ecuador days ahead of national elections in which corruption and the country's declining security situation were major themes. Six Colombians with long criminal records were arrested shortly after, while a seventh was killed at the scene of the



crime. Villavicencio had carried out scores of investigations, including exposing a vast graft network which led to former president Rafael Correa being sentenced to eight years in prison. Correa fled the country to avoid jail time and has been exiled in Belgium for six years. Villavicencio had drawn the ire of gangs and drug traffickers with his reputation for speaking out against the cartels, many of which operate out of prisons across Ecuador. More than 430 inmates have died violently since 2021, dozens of them dismembered and incinerated amid disputes between rival gangs.

U.S. Job Growth Sizzles in September

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. employment increased by the most in eight months in September as hiring rose broadly, pointing to persistent labor market strength that could give the Federal Reserve ammunition to raise interest rates again, though wage growth is slowing. The larger-than-expected surge in nonfarm payrolls last month and sharp upward revisions to July and August's jobs counts reported by the Labor Department in its closely watched employment report on Friday cemented expectations that economic activity accelerated in the third quarter. The labor market and the broader economy's resilience, 18 months after the U.S. central bank started raising rates to cool demand, suggest that monetary policy could remain tight for some time. The report followed news this week that job openings jumped in August and first-time applications for state unemployment benefits remained low in September. Financial markets and most economists believe the Fed is probably done hiking rates because long-term U.S. Treasury yields have jumped to 16-year highs. "With bond yields soaring, the dollar strengthening, and equity market volatility increasing there is a renewed tightening of financial conditions that does some of the work for the Fed, so it's not a done deal the Fed hikes rates again," said Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide.

