



Washington Insider

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Washington Insider

ABOUT US

Transatlantic Today delighted to present the Washington Insider Magazine, a product that we present to our readers in Washington DC and beyond. Our magazine publishes unique and independent coverage on transatlantic relations with a Washington perspective. Transatlantic Today covers policymaking, politics and business related to the transatlantic relationship.

Our magazine strives to be become a key news analysis source for news on politics and policymakers in the US with particular focus on DC. Our coverage is designed with nonpartisan journalism and real-time tools create, inform and engage a those seeking timely and concise news.

We believe in providing our audience with indepen-

dent journalism throughout expert writers, analysts and journalists. Our culture is distinguished by unwavering grit, honesty, and a focus on innovation.

Our work is designed by relentless grit, integrity and a prioritization of urgent and newsworthy topics.

In both of our website and and this magazine we cover topics about Diplomacy, Security, Defence, Counter Terrorism, foreign policy and international affairs. Indeed our reporting, OPeds, interviews with various stakeholders provide unique insights and analysis as well as the tools to arm you with the intel you need to make informed decisions.

Here I wish to commend.

Editorial Team

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Global Stocks Tumble Amid Trump's New Tariff Offensive

BY ALICIA POZSONY



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Global financial markets reeled on Monday as President Donald Trump imposed sweeping tariffs on three of the United States' largest trading partners—

Canada, Mexico, and China—and warned that the European Union could be next. Economists and market analysts warned the move risks sparking a full-blown trade war, slowing global growth, and driving inflation

higher.

US Stocks Hit Lowest Levels Since Trump's Inauguration

The benchmark S&P 500 plunged 1.7 percent at the opening bell

, reflecting investor alarm over Trump's aggressive protectionist measures. The drop came on the heels of sharp declines in Asian and European markets, with Tokyo's Nikkei falling nearly 3 percent and Australia's ASX down 1.8 percent. European bourses mirrored the selloff: Germany's DAX lost 1.8 percent, France's CAC fell 1.9 percent, and the UK's FTSE 100 dropped 1.5 percent.

Economists said the tariffs—25 percent on Canadian and Mexican goods, 10 percent on Chinese imports—would likely push up prices on essentials such as food, electronics, and fuel, undermining the Federal Reserve's efforts to cool inflation and potentially forcing interest rates to remain higher for longer.

Canada, Mexico, and China Vow Retaliation

The affected countries have already begun responding:

- Canada removed the top five US liquor brands from BC Liquor Store shelves and vowed to take legal action through international bodies.
- Mexico agreed to deploy 10,000 National Guard troops to its border to curb drug trafficking, particularly fentanyl, in exchange for a one-month pause on tariffs. President Claudia Sheinbaum secured a US commitment to stem the flow of high-powered weapons into Mexico.
- China, currently on Lunar New

Year holiday, promised to challenge the tariffs at the World Trade Organization and warned of broader economic consequences, though Beijing said it remained open to dialogue.

Trump Justifies Tariffs as National Emergency Response

Speaking in Washington, Trump called the situation a “national emergency” linked to illegal immigration and the opioid crisis, particularly fentanyl. “Long term, the US has been ripped off by virtually every country in the world,” he declared.

In remarks targeting Europe, he said the EU does not take in US products fairly, especially cars and farm goods. While threatening tariffs on the 27-member bloc, he suggested the UK could be exempt, saying: “I think that one can be worked out.”

Economic Risks: Recession, Stagflation, and Supply Chain Shock

The response from economists was stark. ING analysts warned that Trump's tariffs would affect nearly half of all US imports, necessitating a doubling of domestic manufacturing output—an unrealistic goal in the short term.

- Stifel analysts estimated that tariffs could wipe out €8.2 billion of Volkswagen's

revenue and €16.5 billion from Stellantis, both heavily exposed to North American trade.

- Automakers like Ford and GM saw their stocks fall 4–5 percent due to fears over disrupted cross-border supply chains, where parts frequently move between Canada, Mexico, and the US before final assembly.

Meanwhile, Deutsche Bank projected a 0.5% hit to EU GDP if the US imposes a 10 percent tariff on European goods.

Currency and Energy Markets React

The market volatility extended to currency and energy markets:

- The Canadian dollar, Mexican peso, and Chinese yuan all depreciated against a surging US dollar.
- US oil prices climbed more than 1 percent, and petrol futures rose nearly 3 percent, as Canada and Mexico remain top suppliers of US crude.

EU Calls for Calm, Warns of China's Advantage

In Brussels, EU leaders condemned the US tariffs but emphasized diplomacy. EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas warned, “There are no winners in a trade war—and if one breaks out between Europe and the US, the one laughing on the side is China.” Despite calls for negotiations, the bloc said it was prepared to retaliate if the US moves forward with tariffs.

Tariffs Stir Unease as Markets Close Mixed

By Alicia Pozsony



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — Wall Street ended the day with mixed results on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, as investors balanced the impact of new tariffs announced by President Donald Trump with ongoing corporate earnings reports and commentary from Federal Reserve Chair

Jerome Powell.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average inched up 0.3%, boosted by gains in select industrial and consumer stocks. The S&P 500 closed flat, while the Nasdaq Composite dipped 0.4% following a pullback in technology shares.

This comes just a day after all three major indices rose, driven by optimism in AI stocks, before being weighed down again by the broader economic implications of escalating trade tensions.

Trump's Steel Tariffs Rattle Inflation Watchers

Late Monday, Trump moved ahead with sweeping tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports, set to take effect March 12. Economists warned that the move could fuel inflation, complicating the Federal Reserve's interest rate strategy.

Steelmakers had a mixed response:

- Cleveland-Cliffs (CLF) declined after spiking the previous day.
- Steel Dynamics (STLD) rose on expectations of improved margins.

Meanwhile, U.S. Treasury yields climbed, with the 10-year yield rising to 4.53%, reflecting investor concerns over inflation and future rate cuts.

Powell Signals No Rush to Cut Rates

In testimony before the Senate, Fed Chair Jerome Powell reiterated that the central bank will remain cautious amid persistent inflation and a robust labor market. He is scheduled to address the House on Wednesday.

Powell's stance suggests the Fed is unlikely to lower interest rates in the near term, especially if tariffs increase price pressures across sectors.

Top Movers: DuPont, Intel, Tesla, Super Micro

Big Gainers:

- DuPont (DD) surged 6.9% after reporting stronger-than-expected earnings and announcing a spin-off of its electronics division.
- Ecolab (ECL) jumped 6.2% after exceeding earnings forecasts and raising its guidance.
- Intel (INTC) climbed 6.1% after Vice President JD Vance pledged support for U.S.-based AI chip manufacturing. Intel's foundry business, despite recent losses, stands to benefit from this political backing.

Notable Decliners:

- Fidelity National (FIS) plunged 11.5% after offering weak guidance despite beating earnings expectations.
- Super Micro Computer (SMCI) fell 9.5% ahead of a highly anticipated business update.
- Tesla (TSLA) dropped 6.3% amid news that CEO Elon Musk and investors are pursuing control of OpenAI and as China's BYD launched a new driver-assist system challenging Tesla's EV dominance.

Sector Watch: AI, Gold, Oil, Bitcoin

Tech stocks showed mixed performance:

- Apple (AAPL) rose 2% on reports of a partnership with Alibaba for AI integration in China.

- Meta (META) gained slightly, marking its 17th straight session of advances.
- Other tech giants like Nvidia, Microsoft, Alphabet, and Amazon posted minor declines.

In commodities and crypto:

- Bitcoin fell to \$95,000 after briefly topping \$98,000 overnight.
- Gold futures pulled back to \$2,925 per ounce after hitting a record \$2,970.
- Crude oil prices rose for a second straight session, with WTI crude up over 1% to \$73 per barrel.

Shopify Rides Holiday Momentum

Shopify (SHOP) reported a 31.2% increase in Q4 revenue to \$2.81 billion, beating estimates. However, its forward guidance left some investors underwhelmed. Shares seesawed but ultimately finished the day up more than 4%. The stock has gained over 50% in the past year.

Looking Ahead

Markets continue to grapple with a mix of policy uncertainty, corporate earnings, and global trade friction. With Trump's tariffs fueling inflation concerns and Fed policy remaining cautious, volatility may persist in the near term—especially as investors await further economic data and Powell's second day of testimony.

The Fed Calms, Trump Roars: A Week of Cross-Currents in U.S. Policy

By HAlicia Pozsony



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — U.S. stocks surged on Thursday, February 13, 2025, after President Donald Trump announced preliminary peace talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and postponed the imposition of new tariffs on foreign goods. The decision, paired with hopes for an end to the Ukraine war, lifted investor sentiment across global markets.

The S&P 500 rose over 1%, the Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.8% (about 343 points), and the Nasdaq Composite jumped 1.5%, leading Thursday's gains.

Earlier in the day, Trump signed a memo on reciprocal trade, a symbolic gesture signaling continued commitment to U.S. trade interests, but refrained from imposing tariffs immediately, soothing concerns in foreign capitals.

Ukraine Peace Hopes Buoy Global Markets

President Trump's announcement that he and Putin had agreed to begin peace talks regarding the Ukraine war triggered a rally in European equities and a boost to the euro and British pound.



The STOXX Europe 600 index gained more than 1%, reflecting optimism that geopolitical tensions might ease in the near term. Markets in both the U.S. and Europe welcomed the prospect of de-escalation, which has been a persistent source of global uncertainty.

Inflation Still Running Hot, Fed Cautious

Despite the upbeat market mood, inflation data reminded investors of underlying economic pressures. The Producer Price Index (PPI) rose 0.4% in January, with December's figure revised upward, signaling continued pricing pressure for businesses. However, the categories that feed into the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) index, showed more subdued movement, leading some economists to expect PCE inflation to remain closer to target.

Still, analysts warn that Trump's protectionist trade moves, especially tariffs, could fuel additional inflation.

"The inflation prints are already above trend, and tariffs haven't really ramped up yet," noted Charlie Ripley, senior investment strategist at Allianz Investment Management. "The Fed is right to be cautious with rate cuts."

Following recent inflation readings, traders have dialed back expectations for near-term Federal Reserve rate cuts.

Treasury Yields Retreat, Dollar Weakens

- Benchmark 10-year Treasury yields dropped below 4.55% after spiking on Wednesday in response to the hotter CPI report.
- The WSJ Dollar Index weakened, while the euro and pound gained ground against the dollar, bolstered by European optimism.
- Bitcoin prices slipped slightly to \$96,000, continuing a volatile week.

Corporate Highlights: AppLovin Soars

One of the biggest gainers of the day was AppLovin, which saw its stock jump 24% following the release of strong quarterly results. The mobile advertising company also announced it would sell its mobile gaming division, signaling a strategic shift toward its core ad-tech business.

Looking Ahead

With tariffs temporarily off the table and diplomatic momentum building around the Ukraine conflict, market volatility may ease in the short term. However, inflation remains a persistent concern, and investors will continue to track how the Federal Reserve balances these pressures against its interest rate strategy. The next key event to watch will be additional commentary from Fed officials and further inflation-related data later in the month.

Stock Market Rebounds as Trump Eases Tariff Fears and Ukraine Talks Gain Traction

By Alicia Pozsony



US (Washington Insider Magazine)—Wall Street bounced back on February 13, 2025, with major U.S. indexes rising after President Donald Trump announced a shift in tone on international trade and Ukraine. Markets cheered news that the U.S. president and Russian President Vladimir Putin had agreed to open peace negotiations, boosting global investor sentiment.

Trump also signed a memo on reciprocal trade Thursday but delayed the imposition of new tariffs on foreign goods, alleviating immediate concerns in global markets. His remarks helped counter the previous day's anxiety triggered by stronger-than-expected U.S. inflation data.

The S&P 500 gained more than 1%, the Dow Jones Industrial

Average rose by 0.8% (about 343 points), and the Nasdaq Composite led gains, climbing 1.5%.

Hot Inflation Tempers Fed Rate Cut Hopes

Investor optimism was tempered by economic data showing sticky inflation. The Producer Price Index (PPI) rose 0.4% in January, with December's reading revised higher. Though some key inflation components were softer, analysts say the Federal Reserve may hesitate to cut interest rates too soon.

"The inflation prints are already above trend, and tariffs haven't really ramped up yet," said Charlie Ripley, senior investment strategist at Allianz

Investment Management. "The

Fed is doing the right thing by being more cautious with rate cuts." On Wednesday, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) showed inflation accelerating for a fourth straight month, rising 3% year-over-year. Core inflation ticked up to 3.3%, spiking Treasury yields and further dimming rate-cut expectations.

Treasuries, Currency Moves, and Commodities

- Benchmark 10-year Treasury yields dipped below 4.55% Thursday after surging the day before.
- The euro and British pound strengthened against the dollar, as the WSJ Dollar Index weakened.

Bitcoin retreated to around \$96,000.

- Gold futures hovered near \$2,925 after hitting a record high of \$2,965 earlier in the week.
- Oil prices slid, with WTI crude down over 2%, trading near \$71.50 per barrel.

Top Movers: Company Highlights and Earnings Reactions

Winners

- AppLovin (APP) surged 24% after reporting strong ad tech results and announcing the sale of its gaming unit.
- CVS Health (CVS) jumped 14.9% on strong earnings and strategic restructuring under new CEO David Joyner.
- Doordash (DASH) climbed 4% after holiday orders pushed Q4 revenue up 25% year-over-year.
- Upstart Holdings (UPST) rocketed 31% on upbeat lending outlook.
- Gilead Sciences (GILD) rose 7.5% after forecasting FDA approval for its HIV drug lenacapavir.

Losers

- Westinghouse Air Brake Technologies (WAB) sank 9.1% on disappointing earnings and freight demand concerns.
- Arista Networks (ANET) dropped 6.2% after insider stock sales spooked investors.
- Waters (WAT) fell 5.8% despite beating Q4 expectations, due to weak Q1 guidance and currency headwinds.

- Lyft (LYFT) declined 7% after projecting soft Q1 bookings amid intense competition with Uber and the loss of its Delta partnership.
- Zillow (Z) and Vertiv Holdings (VRT) dropped 9% and 10%, respectively, on weak earnings reports.

Alibaba Rallies on Reported Apple AI Collaboration

Alibaba Group (BABA) extended its rally with a 5% gain Wednesday, hitting a two-year high on reports of a potential AI partnership with Apple (AAPL). Media outlets including The Information and The Wall Street Journal said Apple had submitted joint AI features for Chinese regulatory approval. Analysts believe the collaboration could boost Apple's sales in China and deepen its AI integration using Alibaba's e-commerce data.

Jefferies raised its price target for Alibaba to \$150, while JPMorgan noted the deal could aid iPhone 16 or iPhone 17 sales later in the year. Apple shares rose 1.8%.

Mixed Results in Tech as Investors Eye Fed's Next Move

Tech stocks showed divergent trends:

- Tesla (TSLA) rebounded over 2%, regaining some of Tuesday's 6% slide.
- Palantir (PLTR) remained a top 2025 performer, gaining nearly 4%.
- Intel (INTC) added 6%, continuing a recovery from last year's slump.

- Apple (AAPL) edged higher on the Alibaba news.
- Nvidia (NVDA) and Alphabet (GOOG) dropped over 1% amid rate concerns.

Kraft Heinz Falls on Weak Outlook

Kraft Heinz (KHC) dropped 3.5% after missing sales targets and issuing a lackluster 2025 forecast. The company blamed changing consumer behavior and a decline in Lunchables sales, following their removal from schools amid criticism of processed food in school meals.

The firm expects organic sales to remain flat or drop up to 2.5% this year, with adjusted EPS between \$2.63–\$2.74, missing Wall Street expectations.

Outlook: Ukraine Talks, Fed Policy, and Trade Uncertainty in Focus

Markets are likely to remain sensitive to geopolitical developments, inflation readings, and Federal Reserve signals. Trump's tentative peace talks with Putin and paused tariff rollout provided a boost, but persistent price pressures continue to weigh on hopes for imminent interest rate cuts. Investors will be watching upcoming PCE inflation data, Fed commentary, and potential trade developments closely in the coming weeks.

China Retaliates with Tariffs on US Coal and LNG Over Trump's New Levies

By Alicia Pozsony



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — Beijing imposes 15% tariffs on key US energy exports and other goods, signaling rising tensions in the renewed US-China trade row. China has announced it will

impose 15% tariffs on US coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG), directly retaliating against President Donald Trump's decision to hike tariffs on Chinese imports. This latest move, unveiled by China's Ministry of Finance on February 4, adds to escalating trade tensions between the world's two largest economies.

The new Chinese tariffs will also target crude oil, agricultural machinery, large-displacement vehicles, and pickup trucks with a 10% duty and are scheduled to come into effect on February 10.

A Calculated Move Before Trump–Xi Call

The announcement came just hours before Trump revealed plans for a call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, indicating a potential window for diplomacy before the tariffs are enforced. China's Ministry of Finance described its measures as a response to the "unilateral tariff hike" by the US, emphasizing that Washington's approach violated World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and risked disrupting global economic cooperation.

Julien Chaisse, a professor at City University of Hong Kong, commented that China's move is a "calibrated response" rather than a full-blown escalation. According to Chaisse, the timing suggests Beijing is leaving room for negotiation, especially ahead of a possible dialogue between the two presidents.

"The February 10 start date

appears strategic. It creates space for last-minute diplomacy before the measures take effect," Chaisse noted.

Trump's Broader Trade Offensive

Trump's latest round of tariffs, announced over the weekend, target multiple top trading partners, including Canada and Mexico, alongside China. He framed the new measures as a response to foreign governments failing to curb the movement of undocumented migrants and drugs—especially fentanyl—into the US.

Although Trump paused his planned tariffs on Mexico and Canada for 30 days after securing certain border and crime-related concessions, China has refused to accept similar pressure tactics. Beijing rejected US claims over fentanyl and vowed to challenge the tariffs at the WTO, while also keeping the door open for negotiations.

Market Fallout and Economic Implications

The rising tensions immediately reverberated through global markets. Energy markets were particularly volatile, given China's position as one of the largest importers of US LNG and coal. Analysts warn that increased tariffs on American energy exports could redirect trade flows, disrupt supply chains, and push up costs for both Chinese industries and global consumers. The retaliatory tariffs also come at a time of fragile economic

recovery in both countries. The US is grappling with stubborn inflation, while China faces mounting challenges in its real estate and manufacturing sectors.

During Trump's first term, the 2018-2020 US-China trade war led to reciprocal tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of goods. It inflicted widespread damage to global supply chains and saw both nations absorb significant economic losses. Although a "Phase One" trade deal was struck in 2020, promising \$200 billion in Chinese purchases of US goods, the agreement was derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic and trade imbalances persisted.

What's Next?

Experts caution that the direction of the renewed trade conflict will depend heavily on how Trump responds to China's measured but firm counteraction. If the Biden administration—should Trump not win reelection—were to shift trade policy, it could ease tensions. But under Trump, the likelihood of additional tariffs or trade sanctions remains high.

"Much depends on Washington's interpretation," said Chaisse. "If viewed as an opening for negotiation, this could lead to talks. If seen as defiance, it may provoke further escalation."

For now, the spotlight turns to the anticipated Trump–Xi conversation, with hopes that diplomacy may prevail before a new trade war fully ignites.

'Day Without Immigrants': US Businesses Protest Trump's Immigration Policies

By Alicia Pozsony



US (Washington Insider the United States closed their administration's immigration Magazine)—Hair salons, doors as a powerful act of restaurants, and shops across defiance against the Trump

agenda.

Across the country, a wide array of businesses—from childcare centers to grocery stores and beauty salons—remained closed on February 4, in solidarity with immigrant communities. The protest, known as a “Day Without Immigrants,” was organized to oppose President Donald Trump’s intensified immigration enforcement and restrictive policies.

Protest Signs and Empty Streets

In Los Angeles, thousands gathered for the second day of demonstrations, waving Mexican and Salvadoran flags and holding signs declaring “Immigration Built This Nation,” “No I.C.E.,” and “Abolish I.C.E.” Veterans joined the rallies, voicing anger that their communities were being targeted by deportation forces despite their service to the country.

“I did not serve this country for you to belittle my people,” read one sign, capturing the sentiment of many in the crowd.

Meanwhile, cities like Chicago and Seattle saw entire neighborhoods join in the protest, with businesses taping signs on their windows declaring their closure in support of immigrants.

A Climate of Fear and Defiance

Since Trump’s return to office on January 20, he has signed several executive orders targeting undocumented immigrants, including a controversial push to end birthright citizenship. The government agency Immigration

and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has since ramped up its operations, sparking fear and panic in immigrant neighborhoods.

Many immigrants—both documented and undocumented—have reportedly stopped sending their children to school and have reduced their presence in public spaces, fearing raids and arrests.

“If we don’t have immigrants, we don’t have any work around here,” said Andrea Toro, owner of La Julieta Salon in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood. She closed her salon for the day to stand with the community, stating, “If we’re mute, we’re in silence, then they’re going to do whatever they want.”

Economic Dilemma for Workers

Despite strong emotional and symbolic support, participation in the protest was mixed, as many workers and small business owners struggled with the economic sacrifice of shutting down for the day. For people living paycheck to paycheck, even one day of lost income is too much.

Noel Xavier, organizing director for the North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, explained, “If I don’t go to work today, that’s one day less that I have to be able to pay my next rent.”

He added that while awareness is crucial, many workers he spoke to did not feel they could afford to participate in a protest of this nature.

Communities in Action

The “Day Without Immigrants” echoed similar protests in past years, aiming to underscore the economic and cultural contributions of immigrants in American society. Streets in heavily Latino neighborhoods like Chicago’s Little Village were noticeably quieter, and restaurants, salons, and local stores remained closed, sending a message of unity and resistance.

In Seattle, the popular eatery Paseo displayed a sign that read, “Closed today in solidarity with our immigrant community.”

Meanwhile, Los Angeles remained the epicenter of protests, with demonstrators chanting and waving flags over Highway 101, in scenes reminiscent of civil rights protests of decades past.

Looking Ahead

With immigration set to be a defining issue of the upcoming US presidential campaign, events like the “Day Without Immigrants” highlight the growing divide between immigrant communities and federal policy. As Trump’s administration presses forward with its agenda, immigrant advocates vow to keep the pressure on through protests, boycotts, and public mobilization.

This latest protest served as a stark reminder that immigrant workers form the backbone of many US industries, and their absence—even for a day—can reverberate loudly across cities and communities.

Grenade Explosion in Grenoble Bar Injures 12 People

BY MANDILEE HECHT



France (Washington Insider Magazine)— A grenade blast in a bar in Grenoble, France, left 12 people wounded, two of them in critical condition, authorities confirmed on Wednesday. The explosion occurred around 8:00 pm in the city's Olympic Village neighborhood, known for its history from the 1968 Winter Olympics.

Details of the Attack

Prosecutor François Touret-de-Courcy reported that a suspect entered the bar, threw a grenade without saying anything, and fled the scene. Emergency teams

quickly arrived and cordoned off the area. The bar was filled with patrons at the time, and many were injured in the blast.

"There's nothing to make us think it's linked to terrorism," Touret-de-Courcy said. The attack is being treated as an act of extreme violence, possibly connected to a personal vendetta or a settling of scores.

Investigations and Motive

Authorities are considering a potential link to drug trafficking in the incident. Reports suggest the assailant may have also

been carrying a Kalashnikov assault rifle. Investigators continue to examine all leads to determine the motive behind this brutal act.

Grenoble's Mayor Eric Piolle strongly condemned the attack, calling it a "criminal act of extraordinary violence." Deputy Mayor Chloé Pantel described the bar as a popular local spot, especially for watching football matches, frequented by both residents and outsiders.

The investigation remains ongoing, with authorities working to uncover the full extent of the motives behind the attack.

Belgian Men March Into Quarterfinals with Dominant Win Over Australia

BY MANDILEE HECHT

Belgium (Washington Insider Magazine)— Belgium's men delivered a commanding performance to secure their place in the quarterfinals of the FIH Indoor Hockey World Cup in Croatia, defeating Australia 7-3 in a match that showcased both firepower and defensive brilliance

Simar and Henet Steal the Show

Team captain Phillippe Simar led the charge in spectacular fashion, scoring all seven goals for Belgium in a match-winning performance that earned him joint player of the match honors alongside goalkeeper Romain Henet. Henet made three crucial saves that denied Australia the momentum to come back into the game.

"That was a top performance with seven goals against the main team of the pool," said Simar. "Romain had a really good game, saving three or four key shots at important moments."

Belgium's Women Also Advance

The success continued for Belgium's women, who joined their male counterparts in the final eight after a tactical 1-1 draw with the United States. Margaux Coudron, named player of the match, praised her team's composure: "We knew that a draw was enough, so we kept calm and managed the game."



Quarterfinal Line-Up Expands

Wednesday's action also saw Austria, Iran, and Germany's men move into the quarterfinals, while Germany, Namibia, and Belgium's women joined Czechia in the next round.

- Iran secured their spot with a 3-0 victory over Malaysia, thanks to standout player Sajjad Mamizadeh, who dedicated the win to the entire team's hard work.
- Germany's men overcame a spirited Argentina side 8-2, with Ben Hasbach scoring five goals after a slow start: "We started badly but found our rhythm in the second half."
- Germany's women thrashed Australia 7-0, with captain Fenja Poppa praising the team's offensive display.

• Namibia Makes Historic Strides

Namibia's women continued their impressive campaign with a 7-0 rout of New Zealand, achieving back-to-back victories for the first time in Indoor World Cup history. Player of the match Kiana-Ché Cormack expressed joy at meeting their first goal of finishing top two in their pool. Their male counterparts also kept quarterfinal hopes alive with a 6-3 win over Trinidad and Tobago.

Other Results

Czechia's women, already through to the next round, maintained their unbeaten streak with a 4-1 win over hosts Croatia. The United States women's team now awaits Thursday's results to see if they will join the elite eight.

BIT 2025: Milan Welcomes the World to a Premier Tourism Event

BY MANDILEE HECHT



Italy (Washington Insider Magazine)— BIT 2025 to Boost Global Tourism in Milan from February 9–11

Milan is preparing to host BIT 2025, Italy's most prominent international tourism exhibition, from February 9 to 11, 2025, at the renowned fieramilano (Rho) venue. This globally recognized event will bring together leaders in the tourism industry, travel enthusiasts, and influential media to foster innovation and global collaboration.

Organizers expect over 43,000 attendees and 1,300 exhibitors, underscoring the event's importance in shaping the future of travel. Participants can look forward to immersive exhibitions, thought-provoking panels, and opportunities to

forge new business partnerships and cultural connections.

Milan's Tourism Rebound Fuels Optimism

Following a record-breaking 8.5 million visitors in 2023, Milan is seeing a robust tourism resurgence, surpassing even pre-pandemic levels. BIT 2025 is poised to build on this momentum, positioning the city as a key player in sustainable and innovative tourism.

Key Airports Serving BIT 2025 Attendees

Travelers from around the world will benefit from Milan's accessible and efficient airport infrastructure:

Milano Malpensa Airport (MXP)

- Milan's largest international gateway.
- Offers direct flights across Europe, Asia, and the Americas.
- Well-connected by express trains and highways.

Milan Linate Airport (LIN)

- Just 7 km from the city center.
- Perfect for short-haul and business travelers.
- Fast-track services and convenient ground transport options.

Il Caravaggio International Airport (BGY)

- Located in Bergamo, 45 km from Milan.

Budget-friendly hub for European travelers.

- Easy connections to the city by shuttle and train.

These airports offer a seamless experience for BIT attendees, combining convenience, affordability, and connectivity.

Airlines Connecting Milan to the World

Several top airlines are enhancing routes to Milan to accommodate BIT 2025 travelers:

- American Airlines: Boosts U.S.–Italy travel with transatlantic flights.
- Ryanair: Offers budget-friendly options from European cities.
- Aegean Airlines: Connects Greece and surrounding areas to Milan.
- British Airways: Ensures premium travel from the UK.
- easyJet: Widens access across Europe with affordable fares.

Together, these carriers support global participation in the event, reinforcing Milan's strategic role in international tourism.

Where to Dine: Milan's Culinary Gems

Milan's food scene offers something for every taste during BIT 2025. Top recommended spots include:

- Panigacci – Rustic Tuscan flavors.
- Ristorante Nabucco – Milanese classics in Brera.
- Primè – Trendy, modern Italian cuisine.

- Albertone – Authentic Roman-style dishes.
- Il Faro – Fresh seafood and a cozy setting.
- Cantine Milano – Wine pairings and gourmet plates.
- Maccheroni – Famous for the best carbonara in town.
- Peck – Milan's historic destination for fine dining.
- Glory Pop – Eclectic and playful dining experience.

These restaurants showcase Milan's rich culinary diversity, perfect for networking or relaxing after the event.

Best Hotels to Stay in Milan for BIT 2025

From luxurious retreats to budget-friendly stays, Milan offers accommodation for every need:

- Duo Milan Porta Nuova – Sleek and modern in the heart of the city.
- Hotel Berna – Conveniently located near the Central Station.
- Crowne Plaza Milan City – Ideal for business travelers.
- Château Monfort – Romantic boutique elegance.
- NH Collection Milano City Life – Stylish comfort near event venues.
- Room Mate Giulia – Steps from the Duomo.
- Duomo Hotel & Apartments – Homey serviced apartments downtown.
- Hotel Bernina – Affordable with excellent access.
- iQ Hotel Milano – Contemporary and business-friendly.

- NYX Hotel Milan – Artsy, trendy, and centrally located

Must-See Milan Attractions in 2024

Attendees should take time to explore Milan's cultural highlights:

Duomo di Milano

This iconic Gothic cathedral offers breathtaking views from its rooftop and intricate interior detailing—a must-visit landmark.

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II

Italy's oldest shopping gallery features designer boutiques, historic cafes, and elegant architecture right next to the Duomo.

The Last Supper (Il Cenacolo)

Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece is displayed in the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie. Advance booking is essential due to limited access.

Why BIT 2025 Matters

BIT 2025 is more than just a tourism fair—it's a hub for sustainable travel innovation, cultural dialogue, and global tourism growth. The event empowers professionals and enthusiasts to explore future trends, strengthen networks, and inspire positive change in the travel industry.

Don't Miss BIT 2025

Mark your calendar for February 9–11, 2025, and get ready to shape the future of tourism in the dynamic city of Milan.

Germany Schengen Visa: Minimum Bank Balance for Feb 2025

By Mandilee Hecht



Germany (Washington Insider Magazine)— If you're a Pakistani citizen dreaming of wandering through Germany's castles, historic towns, and scenic

landscapes, obtaining a Schengen visa is the first step toward that goal. For February 2025, a clear understanding of the financial

requirements — especially your bank statement — is crucial for a successful application.

Who Needs a Visa?

Germany, one of the most sought-after travel destinations in Europe, attracts tourists with its mix of modern cities, medieval charm, and rich cultural experiences. While many nationalities can enter Germany without a visa, Pakistani citizens must apply for a short-term Schengen visa to travel for tourism, business, or family visits.

The German Embassy in Islamabad is responsible for processing visa applications from Pakistani and Afghan nationals, as well as residents legally staying in Pakistan.

Core Document Requirements for Schengen Visa

To apply, you'll need to prepare the following documents:

- A completed visa application form
- A valid passport (issued within the last 10 years)
- A recent passport-sized photograph
- Proof of biometric data (fingerprints, unless already stored in the Visa Information System)
- Travel insurance covering medical emergencies in the Schengen zone
- Travel itinerary and hotel bookings
- Return flight reservations

Among these, one of the most important — and sometimes confusing — requirements is the bank statement.

How Much Money Should You Show?

As of February 3, 2025, the German Embassy requires applicants to show a minimum of €45 per day for their intended stay in Germany.

For a standard 30-day visit, this means:

- €45/day x 30 days = €1,350
- At the exchange rate of €1 = Rs286.04, this totals approximately Rs386,151

This figure is to be reflected consistently in your bank statement over the last three months, not just as a lump sum right before applying.

Why Is This Important?

This financial proof shows that you're capable of supporting yourself during your stay in Germany, without depending on local resources or violating visa terms. The German authorities take this requirement seriously to ensure applicants will not become a burden on public resources or overstay their visa due to lack of funds.

Tips for a Strong Visa Application

- **Consistent Deposits:** Avoid large, unexplained deposits. Instead, maintain a steady balance to demonstrate financial stability.
- **Clear Transaction History:** Ensure your statement is clean and doesn't raise red flags like bounced cheques or overdrafts.

Use Recognized Banks: Statements from reputable banks with a strong local and international presence often carry more credibility.

- **Supporting Evidence:** Include other financial proofs if available — such as credit card statements, property ownership documents, or sponsorship letters — to reinforce your case.

Visa Processing Overview

- **Processing Time:** 15 working days on average, but it's wise to apply at least 4 weeks in advance.
- **Where to Apply:** Applications are submitted through the German Embassy in Islamabad or designated visa centers (like VFS Global).
- **Appointment Booking:** Make an appointment early, as slots fill up quickly, especially during peak travel seasons.

Final Thoughts

Germany's rich cultural experiences and scenic beauty are within your reach, but only if your visa application is complete and compliant. For February 2025, be sure your bank account reflects at least €1,350 (around Rs386,151) for a one-month stay. This financial requirement is non-negotiable and plays a key role in your application's approval.

So prepare your documents, organize your finances, and get ready to embark on an unforgettable European adventure.

Zelenskyy: Europe Cannot Secure Ukraine Without US Backing

By Mandilee Hecht



Ukraine As the war in Ukraine grinds into its third year, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has issued a stark warning: Europe alone cannot guarantee Ukraine's security without the United States. In a candid interview with The

Guardian ahead of the Munich Security Conference, Zelenskyy outlined his concerns about US disengagement—particularly under Donald Trump—and unveiled a strategic pitch to keep American support alive.

The American Pillar of Security

"There are voices that say that Europe could offer security guarantees without the Americans, and I always say no," Zelenskyy stated. "Security

guarantees without America are not real security guarantees.”

Zelenskyy’s message is clear: Europe cannot fill the gap if the US pulls back its military, economic, and political support. His comments come as the Biden era gives way to a new Trump presidency, which many in Kyiv fear may signal a drastic shift in foreign policy—potentially one more favorable to Russia.

Appealing to Trump’s Business Mindset

In an effort to bring Trump and his allies onside, Zelenskyy is offering lucrative incentives to US firms: contracts for post-war reconstruction and investment access to Ukraine’s rich natural resources, particularly rare earth minerals, uranium, and titanium. These proposals aim to present Ukraine not just as a security ally but also as a valuable economic partner.

“Those who are helping us to save Ukraine will [have the chance to] renovate it, with their businesses together with Ukrainian businesses,” Zelenskyy explained, signaling that Ukraine is ready to open up sectors for American investment—especially in critical materials that Trump has frequently mentioned

Rare Earths and Reconstruction: Ukraine’s Strategic Bait

Ukraine holds some of the largest uranium and titanium reserves in Europe, assets that Zelenskyy argues should not fall into

Russian hands, where they might be shared with adversaries like China or North Korea. Trump has reportedly shown interest in this pitch, even sending US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to Ukraine for further discussions.

Zelenskyy emphasized, “We are talking not only about security, but also about money... Valuable natural resources where we can offer our partners possibilities that didn’t exist before.”

Diplomatic Tightrope and Trump Tensions

Zelenskyy is navigating a sensitive diplomatic path. With a potential Trump meeting still unconfirmed, he plans to meet Trump-aligned figures at the Munich Security Conference, including Vice President JD Vance—an outspoken critic of US support for Ukraine. Last year, Vance refused to meet Zelenskyy and questioned America’s stake in the conflict.

Although a direct meeting with Trump remains tentative, Zelenskyy is hopeful: “We are hoping that our teams will fix a date and a plan of meetings in the US... I am ready.”

Peacekeeping, Security, and Strategic Offers

On peacekeeping, Zelenskyy responded cautiously to proposals from European leaders, like Emmanuel Macron’s suggestion of a peacekeeping force in Ukraine post-ceasefire. He warned that only a large-scale

European deployment (100,000–150,000 troops) would make a difference—though even this wouldn’t match Russia’s military might. Without America, he reiterated, any such mission would be insufficient.

“I will be open with you; I don’t think that UN troops or anything similar has ever really helped anyone in history,” he said.

A Possible Territory Swap with Russia?

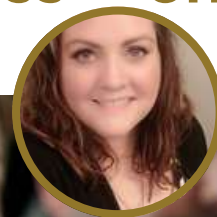
Zelenskyy also revealed that Ukraine could consider a territory exchange in future negotiations. He cited land in Russia’s Kursk region, captured during a surprise Ukrainian offensive six months ago, as a bargaining chip. However, he declined to specify which Russian-held territory Ukraine might demand in return. “All our territories are important, there is no priority,” he added.

Reflections on Biden and Uncertain Legacy

Zelenskyy was diplomatic but critical when asked about President Biden’s legacy. While he credited the US for eventual support, he criticized the slow initial response and arms hesitancy. “This lack of confidence gave confidence to Russia,” he remarked. Still, he withheld final judgment: “History shows that there are many things that you just don’t know, what happened behind the scenes... Later we will know everything.”

Zelenskyy: Ukraine's Survival Hinges on Continued US Support

By Mandilee Hecht



Ukraine Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has delivered one of his most sobering warnings yet: Ukraine has a “low chance to survive” Russia’s aggression without the continued support of the United States. Speaking in an interview on NBC’s *Meet the Press*, Zelenskyy underscored the vital role the US plays in Ukraine’s defense and future security.

The statement comes amid a dramatic shift in American diplomacy, as President Donald Trump initiated separate phone calls with both Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin—the first such conversations since Trump took office.

“Very Difficult” Without US Help

“Probably it will be very, very, very difficult. And of course, in all the difficult situations, you have a chance. But we will have a low chance—a low chance to survive without support of the United States,” Zelenskyy told NBC.

The excerpt, released ahead of the full Sunday broadcast, highlights Ukraine’s growing concern over a potential pivot in Washington’s stance, especially as Trump adopts a more assertive role in seeking a negotiated end to the war.

Trump’s Diplomatic Debut: Separate Calls with Putin and Zelenskyy

On Wednesday, President Trump spoke to both Putin and Zelenskyy in what he described



as a major step toward ending the war in Ukraine. The call with Putin reportedly lasted around 90 minutes, while Zelenskyy’s team confirmed their discussion ran for about an hour. Trump later characterized both conversations as positive.

However, his follow-up remarks stirred unease in Kyiv: Trump dismissed the practicality of Ukraine joining NATO and cast doubt on whether Ukraine could regain all of its occupied territory.

Ukraine’s Position: Security Guarantees or NATO Membership

Ukraine maintains that lasting peace can only be achieved if Russia withdraws from all occupied areas and if Kyiv receives firm, long-term security guarantees—ideally through NATO membership or an equivalent alternative.

These demands have grown more urgent as Ukraine faces a war of attrition with Russia, which launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, following the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Zelenskyy: Putin Seeking Ceasefire to Regroup

In the NBC interview, Zelenskyy

warned against being misled by Russia’s interest in negotiations, stating that Putin’s motive is not peace, but pause.

“He wants pause, prepare, train, take off some sanctions, because of ceasefire,” Zelenskyy said, suggesting that Moscow is seeking a break in hostilities to rebuild its military strength and regain international standing.

Zelenskyy’s remarks echo growing skepticism among Ukrainian and Western officials, who suspect that a ceasefire without clear terms would play to Russia’s advantage.

The Stakes for Ukraine—and the West

Zelenskyy’s comments mark a crucial moment in the conflict’s geopolitical narrative. As Trump prepares to reshape America’s foreign policy approach, Ukraine finds itself once again fighting not only on the battlefield but also in the halls of global diplomacy.

With Trump casting doubt on NATO accession and hinting at a potential shift in priorities, Zelenskyy’s appeal is urgent: without robust US support—military, financial, and diplomatic—Ukraine’s future remains perilously uncertain.

‘She Gave and Gave’: Asra Hussain-Raza Remembered After Tragic D.C. Plane Crash

By Christina Levandowski



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— When Hamaad Raza arrived at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport on January 29, he was expecting a hug, a kiss, and a dinner shared with his wife, Asra Hussain-Raza. Instead, he would soon learn that the love of his life had perished in a devastating midair collision that claimed 67 lives and left two families — and an entire community — grieving.

Asra, 26, was on board American Airlines Flight 5342, returning to Washington, D.C., from a work trip in Wichita, Kansas. Just moments before the crash, she had texted her husband, “We’re landing in 20.” But when Hamaad’s reply bounced back, a deep sense of dread crept in.

Shortly after 8:50 p.m. Eastern Time, tragedy struck. Flight 5342 collided with a Black Hawk military helicopter while descending toward Reagan

National Airport. Both aircraft plunged into the icy Potomac River, killing all aboard. Among the victims was Asra Hussain-Raza, a gifted healthcare management consultant whose life was defined by generosity, intelligence, and compassion.

The couple had met years earlier at Indiana University Bloomington, introduced through the Muslim Student Association. Asra, a sophomore from Carmel, Indiana, was studying health care management, while Hamaad, a freshman from St. Louis, pursued finance. Asra graduated with honors in 2020. The couple married in 2023 and had only recently relocated to D.C. to start their new life together.

“She gave and gave and gave,” Hamaad said in interviews with CBS and NBC. “She gave so much to everyone around her, often forgetting to think about herself. She had so much more to give.”

In an emotional tribute shared with WFIU/WTIU News, he reflected: “If there was ever someone who took full advantage of her 26 years, it was Asra.”

Her father-in-law, Hashim Raza, shared warm memories of Asra with WTHR Indianapolis, recalling her radiant smile, intelligence, and warmth. One memory stood out: her chocolate chip cookies. During

visits to her in-laws in St. Louis, Asra would always bake them from scratch.

“I remember she once called and said, ‘I think I’ve made the best chocolate chip cookie I’ve ever made, and I want to make it for you,’” he said. “My wife tried to give some away, and I wouldn’t let her.” He never asked for the recipe, believing there would always be more time.

Her passing sent waves of grief through her extended community. On Facebook, Imam Ahmed Alamine, board member of the Greater Indianapolis Multifaith Alliance, honored her memory. He had officiated Asra and Hamaad’s wedding and knew her parents, Saba and Altaf Hussain, as respected community figures.

“Asra blossomed into a remarkable young woman — radiant with kindness, faith, and generosity,” he wrote. “To the Hussain and Raza families — you have lost Asra, but you have gained an entire community supporting and praying for you. Her legacy of love and kindness will never fade.”

As investigations continue into the crash — one of the deadliest in recent U.S. history — families like the Raza and Hussain families are left to navigate immense loss. But amid the sorrow, Asra’s life serves as a poignant reminder of how deeply one person’s goodness can touch others.



Bird Flu Outbreak Drives Egg Prices to Record Highs Across the U.S.

By Christina Levandowski



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— If you’ve noticed egg prices creeping higher — or disappearing altogether from store shelves —you’re not alone. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average price of a dozen large Grade A eggs rose 65% in 2024, far outpacing general food inflation. And there’s more to come: another 20% increase is expected this year.

The primary culprit? A devastating bird flu outbreak that has been wreaking havoc on poultry farms since 2022. The virus, known as H5N1, has

already led to the slaughter of over 145 million birds, including egg-laying hens, turkeys, and other poultry. The unprecedented supply disruption has driven prices to record highs, leaving both consumers and farmers struggling.

A Disease-Driven Spike

“From a historical standpoint, these are all-time high egg prices,” said David Anderson, a livestock economist at Texas A&M University. Although long-term trends such as higher protein consumption contribute

to egg demand, he explained that they pale in comparison to the sudden impact of disease outbreaks. “It’s a shock to the supply chain,” Anderson said.

The situation is worse in coastal states like New York and California, where transportation costs add to already inflated prices. “Getting eggs to urban stores like those in New York City is just more expensive,” Anderson explained.

A Worsening Viral Threat

Virologist Angela Rasmussen of the University of Saskatchewan added another layer of concern:



the virus isn't going away — and it's evolving. Multiple strains of bird flu are now circulating not only among wild birds, but also in dairy cattle and even domestic cats. This cross-species infection dynamic has made it harder to contain.

"The H5N1 virus is now firmly embedded in the environment," Rasmussen noted. "Some of the viruses in poultry may be getting passed from wild birds or even from infected cattle." These spillovers have caused repeated outbreaks in poultry farms, increasing the likelihood of further destruction.

Human Risk Remains Low — For Now

Despite increasing infections in animals, human risk remains low, according to Rasmussen. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported 66 confirmed human cases in the U.S., mostly among people with direct contact with infected animals. One recent case resulted in the first U.S. fatality, involving a person exposed to a backyard flock.

"The key is that we've seen no sustained human-to-human transmission," Rasmussen

explained. "Most infections come from occupational exposure — not grocery shopping."

Still, scientists warn that the more the virus spreads and mutates, the higher the chance it could adapt to spread among humans, making surveillance and containment efforts critical.

Are Eggs Safe to Eat?

Yes — as long as they're cooked properly. Rasmussen emphasized that both eggs and milk are safe when cooked or pasteurized. "What I wouldn't recommend is eating raw eggs right now," she said. "Influenza viruses can grow in eggs — that's how many vaccines are developed."

What Will Bring Prices Down?

According to Anderson, the return to normal egg prices depends on two main factors: stopping the virus and rebuilding flocks. Once a poultry farm is infected, the entire flock is culled to stop the spread. Rebuilding takes time — around 26 weeks for young hens, called pullets, to mature and start laying market-ready eggs.

"We're limited by biology," Anderson explained. "Even if we act fast, it takes time to grow chickens."

He pointed out that prices can fall dramatically once supply stabilizes. "In 2023, prices went from over \$5 per dozen to just 84 cents in a few months. So yes, recovery is possible — but not immediate."

Nurses Suspended Nationwide After Anti-Israeli Threats in Video

By Christina Levandowski



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Two NSW nurses, Ahmad Rashad Nadir and Sarah Abu Lebdeh, have been banned from practicing anywhere in Australia after their involvement in a controversial social media video. In the footage, the nurses were seen making threatening remarks towards Israeli patients, stating they would refuse treatment and even go as far as to harm them.

Following the viral video, which sparked outrage, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) suspended their professional registrations. Health Minister Mark Butler confirmed that they are now unable to practice in Australia under any circumstances, emphasizing that such behavior

violates core values of the healthcare profession.

The nurses, who worked at Bankstown Hospital, were immediately stood down after the video surfaced. Minister Butler remarked that healthcare professionals have a duty to care for all individuals, regardless of their background or nationality. He condemned the nurses' actions, stating their comments were "sickening" and contrary to the principles of healthcare and safety.

The video, which has since been circulated widely on social media, has led to widespread condemnation. The incident has raised significant concerns about the behavior of

healthcare workers and the implications for patient safety.

Authorities are closely monitoring the situation, with some calling for a broader review of the country's immigration and citizenship policies in response to the controversial incident. The suspension of these nurses highlights the commitment of Australian health officials to uphold standards of professionalism and ethical conduct in healthcare.

The incident continues to dominate headlines as Australians grapple with the implications for the health system and the broader societal issues of racism and discrimination.

‘A Day Without Immigrants’ Protest Shuts Down Businesses Nationwide

By Christina Levandowski



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— As the United States enters a new chapter of immigration policy under President Donald Trump’s second term, a growing grassroots protest known as “A Day Without Immigrants” is gaining momentum. On Monday, February 3, 2025, immigrant communities and their allies are planning a nationwide boycott to underline the essential role immigrants play in American society and the economy.

The campaign, which is being coordinated largely through

social media, urges immigrants to avoid going to work, school, or shopping on Monday in a unified act of protest. The goal is to create a noticeable economic void that reminds the nation of just how much it relies on immigrant labor and participation.

Movement Returns Amid Renewed Crackdowns

This year’s protest echoes a similar movement that took place on February 16, 2017, during Trump’s first presidency. That earlier boycott made

headlines when hundreds of businesses closed and dozens of workers were reportedly fired for participating.

Now, with Trump’s return to the White House and new promises to enforce stricter immigration policies, many immigrants fear a resurgence of harsh measures. Organizers say the 2025 boycott is not just a message to the president but also a call for meaningful immigration reform.

Minnesota Businesses Join the Movement

Several businesses in Minnesota

have announced closures in solidarity with the protest, emphasizing the state's significant immigrant population and its contributions to the local economy.

In Minneapolis, the well-known restaurant Barquette announced it would remain closed on February 3. "We stand in solidarity with our Mexican and Latino communities," the restaurant stated on its social media, adding, "No work. No shopping. No participation."

Other establishments have followed suit, including La Costa Mexican Sports Bar and Grill, which also posted its full closure in support of the movement. "This decision is deeply meaningful to us as a business founded by immigrants," the owners wrote. "We stand united in hope and solidarity, praying for meaningful immigration reform in the near future."

The Book Club restaurant, also located in Minneapolis, released a similar statement. "Today, our doors remain closed as a sign of support and unity," it shared online, while also pledging to reopen Tuesday.

Wider Participation Across the U.S.

While Minnesota is seeing strong participation, the movement has gained traction nationwide, with businesses in cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Houston also announcing temporary



closures. Online hashtags such as #DayWithoutImmigrants and #SinInmigrantesNoHayUSA are trending, with thousands sharing their reasons for supporting the boycott.

A Message Beyond Economics

Though the protest is primarily economic in its form, the message is deeply political. Organizers want the American public and lawmakers to recognize the human cost of immigration enforcement and

the need for comprehensive immigration reform that protects families, workers, and communities.

For many participants, this is more than a one-day action — it's a call to reshape the national conversation about immigration and dignity.

Whether the boycott leads to policy change remains to be seen, but its visibility and resonance are undeniable.

Nationwide Protests Erupt Against Trump's Policies, Elon Musk, and Project 2025

By Eric Gahagan



US (Washington Insider Magazine)—As President Donald Trump began his second term, a wave of nationwide protests swept across the United States on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, targeting his administration's controversial early actions. Demonstrators gathered at state capitols and

major cities, voicing opposition to the president's immigration crackdown, his rollback of transgender protections, and a proposal to forcibly relocate Palestinians from Gaza.

The coordinated demonstrations, part of a movement branded #50501—50

protests, 50 states, one day, were supported by a surge of online activism under hashtags like #BuildTheResistance and #RejectFascism. The protests also took aim at Elon Musk, who now heads the newly formed Department of Government Efficiency, and the Project 2025 policy blueprint, seen by critics

as a roadmap toward authoritarian governance.

“Defend Democracy” Becomes National Rallying Cry

In Philadelphia, protesters held signs reading “Reject Fascism” and “Defend Our Democracy.” Similar scenes unfolded outside statehouses in California, Minnesota, Michigan, Texas, Wisconsin, Indiana, and beyond. Despite harsh weather in some areas, crowds showed up in force to voice their dissent.

Margaret Wilmeth, who joined the protest in Columbus, Ohio, said the demonstrations reflect a growing unease about the direction of American democracy. “I’m appalled by democracy’s changes in the last — well, specifically two weeks — but it started a long time ago,” she said. “So I’m just trying to put a presence into resistance.”

Anger Over Elon Musk’s Role in Government

A surprising figure at the center of the protests is billionaire Elon Musk, who was recently appointed head of Trump’s Department of Government Efficiency — a new agency focused on reducing what the administration deems “bureaucratic waste.” Critics view the department as a mechanism for centralizing executive power and silencing opposition through mass firings and policy overhauls.

Musk has dismissed the criticism, calling the protests



“hysteria from the entitled class,” but organizers see his involvement in federal governance as a dangerous precedent. Some protest signs in San Francisco read: “No Tech Tyrants” and “Elon Doesn’t Belong in Government.”

Project 2025 Draws Broad Condemnation

At the heart of the protest is Project 2025, a conservative agenda document drafted by the Heritage Foundation and other right-wing think tanks. The project proposes sweeping changes to federal governance, including replacing thousands of civil servants with loyalists, curbing LGBTQ+ rights, expanding executive authority, and increasing the role of religion in policymaking.

Opponents argue Project 2025 seeks to dismantle democratic institutions and reshape America into an illiberal state. LGBTQ+ activists in Austin, Texas, led chants like “Queer Rights Are Human Rights” while

waving rainbow flags alongside American flags.

A Flashpoint for Broader Resistance

Although Trump’s policies have sparked outrage in specific communities — particularly among immigrants, Palestinians, and LGBTQ+ individuals — organizers say this is only the beginning of a broader resistance. “This is a line in the sand,” said one protester in Los Angeles, “a national stand against creeping authoritarianism.”

Calls to action are expected to continue over the coming weeks, with organizers planning further demonstrations, petitions, and legal challenges to Trump’s executive actions and appointments.

As opposition builds, the protests serve as a stark reminder that America’s ideological divide is deepening — and that the battle for the nation’s democratic identity is far from over.

Nationwide Economic Blackout Set for February 28: Will It Make an Impact?

By Christina Levandowski



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— A nationwide economic blackout is scheduled for February 28, 2025, as a protest against the corporate rollback of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, fueled by backlash against the Trump administration. Organizers behind the movement, led by The People's Union, are urging consumers to withhold spending for one day to send a clear message about the power of consumer influence.

John Schwarz, the founder of The People's Union, shared with Newsweek that the goal is to "show that we, the people, are the backbone of this economy." While the idea of boycotts to drive social change is nothing new, experts are divided on whether such a short-term protest can have a lasting economic impact.

What Is the Economic Blackout About?

On February 28, participants are encouraged to refrain from spending at major retailers, fast food chains, gas stations, and other corporate establishments. The movement aims to highlight the financial influence that consumers have in the economy and to protest corporate actions that undermine DEI policies. This initiative follows a

growing backlash against large corporations that have reversed DEI efforts, particularly after President

Trump's administration took steps to dismantle federal DEI programs.

A Call for Action: Corporate Accountability

Schwarz stressed the importance of collective action, stating that the protest is not just about one day but is the beginning of a broader movement aimed at creating sustained economic resistance. "This blackout is a wake-up call," he said, "a first step in proving that we have the power to disrupt their system when we stand together."

Social media campaigns have been instrumental in spreading the word, with hashtags like #BuildTheResistance and #EconomicBlackout helping to mobilize support. The success of the boycott, Schwarz added, will largely depend on the level of participation, which will be monitored through online registrations, social media interactions, and campaign visibility.

Expert Opinions on the Potential Impact

While the initiative is gaining traction, experts are split on whether a one-day boycott will significantly affect corporate profits. Some financial analysts argue that a single day of no consumer spending is unlikely

to make a meaningful financial dent. Kevin Thompson, a finance expert, pointed out that while short-term boycotts may have minimal direct impact, their power lies in their potential to spark a broader, more sustained protest movement. He referenced historical boycotts like the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 as examples of how such actions can lead to lasting change.

However, Alex Beene, a financial literacy instructor at the University of Tennessee, suggested that a more effective long-term strategy might involve cutting personal spending in areas where individuals can make a significant impact, such as donating to causes that align with their values rather than focusing solely on specific retailers.

Voices of Support and Opposition

Civil rights advocate Nekima Levy Armstrong, founder of the Racial Justice Network, expressed strong support for the economic blackout, framing it as an opportunity to fight back against what she called "nonsensical attacks" on DEI policies. "This spending freeze is an opportunity to use the power of the purse to push back on harmful ideas," she said, adding that it also serves as a complementary protest against Target for its decision to scale

back DEI initiatives.

Despite some skepticism about its immediate financial effect, analysts suggest that if the February 28 blackout leads to ongoing boycotts, particularly targeted at companies like Amazon, the movement could evolve into a significant force for social change. As Michael Ryan, CEO of MichaelRyanMoney.com, noted, the true power of this protest lies in its potential for escalation. "If this gains traction, it could turn into something much bigger," he said.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Economic Activism

Beyond February 28, organizers are already planning future actions, including targeted boycotts and economic resistance campaigns. The focus will be on maintaining momentum and encouraging people to stay engaged through social media and ongoing protests.

While the economic blackout may only have a temporary effect on corporate revenues, it is clear that the organizers are hoping for it to spark a larger movement aimed at holding corporations accountable for their social responsibility efforts. If successful, the People's Union hopes to create a long-term shift in how consumers wield their economic power.

US Defence Chief Signals Major Shift in Ukraine Support at NATO Meeting

By John Ruehl



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— In a landmark address at NATO headquarters in Brussels, US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth outlined a significant shift in Washington's approach to the war in Ukraine. During his first meeting with NATO allies, Hegseth emphasized the need for a realistic strategy, signaling a hardline pivot from the previous administration's policies.

The Pentagon chief stated that while ending the conflict in Ukraine remains a top priority for the US, Ukraine must reconsider its goals, particularly its desire to return to pre-2014 borders. The reference to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its involvement in the Donbas region highlighted the challenges facing Ukraine in its pursuit of reclaiming lost territory.

Hegseth made it clear that NATO membership for Ukraine is not "realistic," a stance that diverges from previous US support for Ukraine's NATO aspirations. He explained that any long-term security guarantee for Ukraine must be backed by capable European and non-European forces, without relying on Article 5 protections, which invoke a collective military response from NATO members.



The US secretary also stressed that European countries would need to bear the brunt of future military aid to Ukraine, calling on them to take on the "overwhelming share" of lethal and non-lethal assistance. This message reflects the broader shift in US foreign policy, where global concerns—particularly the rising influence of China—are now seen as a higher priority than Europe's security.

Hegseth's comments were met with mixed reactions. NATO and European leaders had been hoping for a stronger commitment from the US to support Ukraine's defense. However, the new US approach suggests a pivot away from the traditional European focus, as the US looks to redirect its resources toward countering China's growing economic and military power.

In addition, Hegseth reinforced President Trump's call for NATO members to significantly increase their defense spending, proposing a rise to 5% of GDP, a target far above the 2% commitment currently in place. This shift marks a pivotal moment in the US's involvement in the Ukraine conflict, with the future of Ukraine's NATO membership and its territorial integrity now more uncertain than ever. The change in US policy has raised concerns in Kyiv, which continues to hope for greater Western support in its fight against Russian aggression. As the conflict continues to evolve, the US's new stance could have profound implications for Ukraine's strategy and its ability to secure long-term peace.

Republican Leaders Reject Trump's NATO Command Reform

By John Ruehl



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Marles held a significant bilateral meeting at the Pentagon on February 7, 2025. The meeting marked the first direct engagement between the two defense leaders, focusing on

shared defense roles, security priorities, and the growing challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

A central topic of discussion was the progress on AUKUS, the trilateral security agreement between Australia, the United

Kingdom, and the United States, which has been in place for over three years. The agreement aims to strengthen military ties, with a key component being the development of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia and other joint defense capabilities.



Key Developments in AUKUS

The first pillar of the AUKUS agreement involves the delivery of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines to Australia, alongside substantial investments in the defense industrial base of all three nations. As part of this agreement, Australia will purchase three Virginia-class submarines from the US, with deliveries expected in the

2030s. Additionally, a new platform called the “SSN-AUKUS” will be developed, expected to be available for the UK by the 2030s and for Australia by the 2040s.

Secretary Hegseth emphasized the importance of the AUKUS partnership, noting that President Donald Trump strongly supports the agreement. He highlighted the significant role the agreement plays in enhancing defense capabilities, particularly in the

subsurface domain, and stressed the need for robust partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region.

“AUKUS is not a mission the US can undertake alone; it requires strong allies and partners,” Hegseth said. “Technology sharing and submarines are a huge part of it.”

Australia’s Contribution to the Defense Industrial Base

Australia’s investment in the US defense industrial base is a key element of AUKUS. During Marles’ visit, Australia made its first payment of \$500 million towards a \$3 billion commitment to the US submarine industry. Marles underscored Australia’s dedication to building its defense capabilities and contributing to the industrial base, stressing that this investment is crucial for both nations.

“AUKUS represents a significant increase in the American footprint on the Australian continent,” Marles explained. “It enhances Australian defense capabilities and signals our commitment to paying our way in this partnership.”

Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region

The AUKUS partnership is seen as a powerful symbol of US-Australian cooperation, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, a region facing increasing geopolitical tensions. Both leaders emphasized the importance of the partnership in countering emerging threats in the region, with Hegseth pointing out that the US cannot address these challenges alone. The collaboration not only strengthens military capabilities but also reflects the strategic alignment of the three nations in the face of rising concerns, particularly regarding China’s influence in the region.

As the partnership moves forward, the continued investment and collaboration between the US, Australia, and the UK under AUKUS will play a critical role in shaping the future of defense and security in the Indo-Pacific. The focus on advanced submarine technology and interoperability between the nations underscores the growing importance of this trilateral alliance.

The Largest Near Abroad Threat to the United States: Cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations

By Jan Frazier



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— In a significant shift in U.S. national security priorities, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has issued new guidance following President Trump's Executive Order, designating drug cartels and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs). This move

marks a crucial evolution in U.S. counter-narcotics and counterterrorism policy. For years, cartels and other TCOs have exploited the sovereignty of countries with limited capacity or unwillingness to control their activities. Operating with near impunity within countries like Mexico, these groups have long benefited from the legal gray areas that allowed them to

evade full-scale U.S. enforcement. By elevating these criminal entities to the same level of threat as ISIS or al-Qaeda, the Trump administration has brought cartels and TCOs into the national security fold, recognizing them as complex, quasi-insurgent entities that destabilize governments, incite violence, and contribute to mass casualties on both sides of the

U.S.-Mexico border.

The Evolving Threat of Cartels

Mexican cartels and TCOs control the production and trafficking of fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine, and cocaine, contributing to over 80 percent of illicit drugs entering the U.S. Over 700,000 Americans have died from opioid overdoses since the early 2000s. In addition to drug trafficking, cartels earned an estimated \$13 billion from human trafficking in 2021. Violence from these criminal organizations is not confined to the U.S.; Mexico has suffered over 431,000 homicides since 2006, with the cartels fueling much of this death toll.

A Shift to Total Elimination

President Trump's executive order asserts that cartels have "functionally controlled nearly all illegal traffic" across the southern U.S. border, committing acts of violence that destabilize both Mexico and the U.S. The administration has now moved beyond efforts to curb the flow of illicit substances, instead focusing on the "total elimination" of cartels and TCOs. This marks a decisive shift toward addressing these groups not just as criminals but as a threat to U.S. national security. Despite prioritizing near-peer competitors like China and Russia, cartels have continued to exploit ambiguities in the legal

and strategic frameworks. With the new designation, the U.S. has removed the legal gray area, treating these organizations like terrorist groups in terms of counterterrorism law and enforcement.

DOJ's New Approach to Counteracting Cartels

Attorney General Pam Bondi has outlined a comprehensive strategy to tackle cartels and TCOs, emphasizing the need for an aggressive, proactive approach. Under the new directives, prosecutors can charge cartel leaders with terrorism-related offenses, granting them access to harsher penalties, including life sentences or even the death penalty. This policy shift also eliminates bureaucratic delays, allowing federal agencies to act swiftly against these criminal organizations.

Bondi's office has also prioritized legislative reforms to strengthen the fight against cartels, particularly focusing on the fentanyl crisis. While efforts like the SUPPORT Act addressed the opioid epidemic, they failed to address the unique challenges posed by fentanyl. The ongoing battle against fentanyl and related substances has resulted in significant legislative efforts, such as the proposed HALT Fentanyl Act, aimed at permanently classifying all fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs.



Weapons of Mass Destruction

Fentanyl's lethality has prompted calls to classify large-scale trafficking as a weapon of mass destruction (WMD). With just two milligrams of fentanyl capable of causing death, its capacity for widespread harm demands a new legal framework. Designating fentanyl trafficking as a WMD would grant federal agencies the authority to coordinate a more robust, unified response to this growing crisis.

In conclusion, the U.S. has dramatically shifted its approach to addressing cartels and TCOs, treating them as major threats to national security, akin to terrorist organizations. These legal and policy changes aim to strengthen the U.S. response, providing the tools necessary to combat the escalating drug and violence crisis fueled by cartels in the Western Hemisphere.

US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth Prioritizes Indo-Pacific Amid Growing China Threat

By Jan Frazier

US (Washington Insider Magazine)— In a pivotal address at the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting in Brussels on February 12, 2025, U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth highlighted the critical importance of the Indo-Pacific region in the face of China's expanding military power. While the U.S. remains deeply engaged in European security due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Hegseth made clear that the rising threat from China demands urgent attention and a focused U.S. defense strategy.

China's Growing Military Might and Regional Impact

China's swift military modernization is rapidly reshaping the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. Its naval buildup, highlighted by the commissioning of advanced aircraft carriers like Shandong and Fujian, directly challenges U.S. supremacy in the region, particularly in the contested South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. Additionally, China's sophisticated missile systems, including the DF-21D and DF-26, are designed to counter U.S. aircraft carriers and surface vessels.

The U.S. is responding by enhancing deterrence, emphasizing a multi-domain

strategy that integrates land, sea, air, cyber, and space capabilities. As part of this strategy, the U.S. military is maintaining a strong, forward-deployed presence in the region, with over 300,000 personnel stationed in key locations such as Japan, South Korea, and Guam.

Strengthening Alliances and Deterrence

In response to China's military assertiveness, the U.S. has been strengthening its military ties with regional allies. Through agreements like the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the Philippines and increasing military rotations in Australia, the U.S. is bolstering its deterrence capabilities. Joint military exercises with Japan and Australia are also becoming more frequent, reinforcing collective security and readiness.

These efforts underscore the importance of a unified approach to maintaining regional stability, with the U.S. and its allies working together to prevent Chinese military escalation.

Taiwan: A Key Flashpoint

Taiwan remains a major point of contention between the U.S. and China. Despite the U.S.



policy of strategic ambiguity, China's growing military capabilities raise concerns about its ability to launch a full-scale invasion. The U.S. remains committed to defending Taiwan, although the evolving military situation poses significant challenges to this longstanding policy.

Looking Ahead: Containing China's Global Ambitions

Beyond the Indo-Pacific, China is seeking to expand its global influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and military expansions in regions like Africa and the South Pacific. These actions are increasing tensions and challenging U.S. interests worldwide.

As Secretary Hegseth emphasized, the U.S. must continue to prioritize the Indo-Pacific, balancing defense commitments globally while leveraging its technological and military advantages. The next decade will be crucial in determining whether the U.S. can effectively deter China's ambitions and prevent broader regional conflict.

NATO Defence Ministers to Address Defence Spending, Industrial Capacity, and Support to Ukraine

US (Washington Insider Magazine)— NATO defense ministers are set to meet in Brussels on February 13, 2025, to prepare for the upcoming NATO Summit in The Hague in June. This important meeting will focus on key areas such as defense spending, industrial capacity, and support for Ukraine.

Increased Defence Spending Across NATO

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte previewed the meeting by highlighting significant progress in defense spending. In 2024, NATO Allies in Europe and Canada allocated \$485 billion towards defense, marking a nearly 20% increase from the previous year. Rutte emphasized that Allies are expected to spend even more in 2025, building on the \$700 billion invested since the 2014 Defence Investment Pledge. While commending these advancements, Rutte stressed the importance of continued investment to ensure equitable burden-sharing among NATO members.

Strengthening NATO's Defence Industrial Capacity

Another crucial agenda item is strengthening NATO's defense industrial capacity. Rutte stressed the urgency of

enhancing production capabilities across the Alliance, stating that NATO needs to "go further and faster." An updated Defense Production Action Plan is expected to guide this acceleration, ensuring that NATO is equipped to meet future challenges.

Addressing Russia's Destabilizing Actions

NATO ministers will also discuss Russia's ongoing destabilizing activities, including sabotage, assassination attempts, and attacks on critical infrastructure against NATO allies. In response, NATO has bolstered its presence with operations like "Baltic Sentry" in the Baltic Sea, reinforcing vigilance and countermeasures across the region.

Continued Support to Ukraine

A major focus of the meeting will be NATO's continued support for Ukraine. In the NATO-Ukraine Council session, NATO will address the current situation in Ukraine and discuss urgent military and humanitarian needs. Rutte praised the substantial contributions from member countries like Sweden, Finland, and Canada, highlighting the over 50 billion euros provided in 2024 alone. More than half of

By John Ruehl



this support came from European Allies and Canada. Rutte also emphasized the role of NATO's new command in Wiesbaden, Germany, in coordinating this assistance.

Upcoming NATO Summit and Global Security

The NATO defense ministers' discussions come just ahead of the NATO Summit in June 2025, where further strategic decisions are expected. The meeting will set the stage for continued cooperation on a global scale, focusing on countering emerging threats and ensuring the security of NATO members.

As NATO strengthens its defense posture, the organization remains committed to supporting Ukraine and addressing the broader challenges posed by Russia's actions and growing global tensions.

US Officials to Meet European Leaders for High-Level Ukraine War Talks

By John Ruehl

US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Senior officials from the Trump administration are heading to Europe this week for crucial discussions on ending the ongoing war in Ukraine. The talks come nearly three years after Russia's all-out invasion and as military and diplomatic efforts intensify.

Trump's Engagement with Putin and Shifting US Approach

President Donald Trump's National Security Adviser revealed that the Trump administration is focused on pushing for a negotiated end to the war. A key part of this strategy is engaging with European leaders about their role in the conflict and emphasizing their responsibility to support Ukraine moving forward. Trump's recent phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, though unconfirmed by the Kremlin, is seen as part of broader efforts to initiate dialogue toward peace.

While Trump refrained from discussing the specifics of his call with Putin during a flight to the Super Bowl, he stressed his determination to end the war and signaled that further conversations would take place. "It's going to end," he asserted.

The Need for European Leadership

National Security Adviser Mike



Waltz also underscored that the US is looking for European allies to take a more prominent role in Ukraine's defense. Waltz mentioned that European countries must "own this conflict going forward," as the US plans to recoup some of its financial support to Ukraine by leveraging natural resources, oil, and gas partnerships.

Waltz also noted that Trump is prepared to use sanctions and tariffs to pressure Russia into negotiations, and that European nations will play a crucial part in any security guarantees for Ukraine's future.

Key US Officials Heading to Europe

This week's diplomatic push includes several high-profile US officials. Vice President JD Vance will attend the AI summit in Paris before heading to the Munich Security Conference. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, and Trump's special envoy for Ukraine and Russia, Keith Kellogg, will join him in Munich. Hegseth is set to participate in NATO's defense ministers' meeting in Brussels, which will

focus on military support for Ukraine.

Ukraine's Strategic Struggles Amid Russian Advancements

Despite growing US and European efforts, Russian forces continue to gain ground in Ukraine, with little incentive for President Putin to enter peace talks. Putin has shown admiration for Trump's pragmatism, but recent threats from Trump—such as tariffs and oil price cuts—have been dismissed by the Kremlin.

Trump's earlier campaign claims of ending the war quickly were adjusted to six months, but no substantial progress has been made. The Biden administration, which firmly believes in Ukraine's involvement in any peace agreement, continues to back Kyiv's stance: "Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine." The diplomatic developments this week will test the viability of Trump's strategy, with the war's outcome still uncertain and Ukrainian leaders calling for continued support and participation in any peace discussions.

Petro Versus Trump: The Diplomatic Standoff That Could Reshape Colombia's Future

BY JAN FRAZIER



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— In the early hours of January 26, Colombian President Gustavo Petro took to social media to condemn the treatment of Colombian migrants deported from the United States. His post sparked a rapid and escalating diplomatic crisis with US President Donald Trump — a clash that could leave long-lasting marks on Colombia's foreign policy, economy, and political future.

The Spark: Deportation Flights and a Public Rebuff

At 3:41 am local time, Petro posted on X (formerly Twitter) criticizing the conditions aboard US deportation flights, where reports had surfaced that Colombian migrants were handcuffed like criminals. He immediately blocked two in-transit US flights from landing in Colombia, declaring, "The US cannot treat Colombian migrants as criminals."

His demand? Migrants should be returned on civilian aircraft and treated with "the dignity a human being deserves."

President Trump fired back within hours. He threatened a 25% tariff on Colombian goods entering the US — escalating to 50% by the end of the week if deportation flights were not allowed. He revoked visas for Colombian officials and promised sweeping economic sanctions. The pressure worked: Petro allowed deportations to resume within

two days, using Colombian Air Force planes.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt declared it a diplomatic win: “Today’s events make clear to the world that America is respected again.”

Domestic Fallout and Political Turbulence

The confrontation with Trump triggered political ripples back home. On January 28, Colombia’s centre-left Liberal Party withdrew from the ruling coalition, citing the diplomatic debacle. The move undermined Petro’s legislative agenda and exposed rifts in his already fragile political alliance.

Sergio Guzmán of Colombia Risk Analysis described the episode as a major misstep: “Petro wanted to confront Trump, and it backfired badly.” He argued Petro misjudged Trump’s readiness to escalate and was unprepared for the economic risks.

Others see it as part of a larger pattern in Petro’s presidency: impulsive foreign policy, lack of coordination, and political fallout. His dispute with Israel in 2024, which led to severed diplomatic ties, was a similar case of confrontational politics driven by social media.

A Weakening Administration?

Petro’s term has been marked by stalled reforms and internal instability. His proposed overhauls to Colombia’s

healthcare, pension, and labor systems have struggled in Congress. Cabinet changes and a scandal involving his son’s campaign financing have chipped away at public trust.

Analyst Will Freeman of the Council on Foreign Relations noted: “The tragedy of Petro is that he’s been an extremely weak president. He really hasn’t been able to get things done.”

Despite these setbacks, Petro’s approval rating hovers around 30% — a significant drop from the 56% he had when elected, but stable among his base. Progressive voters, human rights advocates, and left-leaning Colombians continue to support him, viewing his resistance to US pressure as a bold assertion of national dignity.

Shifting Foreign Policy and Strategic Implications

Colombia has long enjoyed strong ties with the United States, bolstered by joint efforts in the war on drugs and \$1.5 billion in US aid since 2017. Petro’s approach — reducing coca eradication and focusing on development — has already strained relations. US aid to Colombia has dropped by over 8% from 2023 to 2025.

Petro’s defiance of Trump, however brief, marks an unprecedented challenge to a historically close alliance. Political analyst Jorge Mantilla



said the crisis was “unprecedented in the relationship with the US.”

Guzmán added: “Colombia is rudderless in terms of its foreign policy. This incident shows the dangers of an impulsive and uncoordinated diplomatic strategy.” He argues Colombia needs to diversify its international alliances but lacks the long-term strategy to do so effectively.

A Populist Opportunity?

While many in Colombia’s political and business sectors saw the standoff as reckless, some view it as a populist win. Petro’s supporters believe he stood firm against foreign coercion.

Economist Robinson Duarte, a Petro voter, praised his stance: “We are not going to bow down to the US’s way of doing politics.” He saw the incident as a rare moment of asserting Colombia’s sovereignty on the world stage.

Looking ahead to Colombia’s 2026 elections, the long-term impact of the crisis remains uncertain. If economic instability grows, Petro-aligned candidates could suffer. But if framed as a principled defense of national dignity, the confrontation could energize his base and bolster his legacy.

Trump Revives ‘Maximum Pressure’ on Iran: What It Means for Future Diplomacy

By Liam Flynn



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Seven years after first initiating his “maximum pressure” campaign, US President Donald Trump has officially renewed efforts to squeeze Iran economically and diplomatically. Despite his assertion that he wants Iran to prosper and avoid developing nuclear weapons, Trump’s latest move—signing a national security memorandum on

February 4—signals a return to aggressive tactics. This leaves the future of the long-stalled US-Iran nuclear deal hanging in the balance.

Trump’s Mixed Messages

In his Oval Office announcement, Trump appeared conflicted. He said he was “torn” about reinstating the pressure campaign, calling it a

necessary but unpleasant measure. Yet, he promised to slash Iranian oil exports to “zero,” despite acknowledging hopes that such a drastic step may not need to be enforced in full.

Trump emphasized that his top concern is preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. In a stark warning, he said Iran would be “obliterated” if it attempted to assassinate him in

retaliation for the 2020 killing of General Qassem Soleimani. Despite these threats, Trump's rhetoric on social media attempted to soften the tone, claiming he seeks a "nuclear peace agreement" and that fears of an imminent military strike are "greatly exaggerated."

The Ghost of JCPOA

In 2018, during his first term, Trump withdrew from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a multilateral deal that had placed strict limits on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. The deal had capped uranium enrichment, reduced centrifuge deployment, and imposed robust inspections. Trump's withdrawal and the ensuing sanctions effectively collapsed the deal, which has since lingered in diplomatic limbo.

While the Biden administration made efforts to revive JCPOA through indirect talks, no breakthrough occurred. Now, as Trump reinstates pressure without offering a clear diplomatic alternative, analysts fear the final nails may be driven into the JCPOA's coffin.

Economic Pressure Reimagined

Trump's renewed campaign could see an even more aggressive enforcement of sanctions than in his first term. Measures may target:

- Iran's "ghost fleet" of oil tankers

- Third-party countries aiding in oil trade, especially China
- Foreign financial networks supporting Iran's economy

During the pandemic and beyond, sanctions have crippled Iran's economy. The rial recently hit an all-time low of 840,000 to the dollar, compared to 40,000 before Trump's first sanctions. Inflation and reduced purchasing power continue to affect millions of Iranians, making sanctions a highly sensitive issue domestically.

Iran Holds Its Line — But Leaves the Door Open

Iran has consistently stated it does not seek nuclear weapons. President Masoud Pezeshkian, who succeeded hardliner Ebrahim Raisi after a fatal helicopter crash, has maintained a centrist stance. He has called for OPEC unity in opposing further sanctions and aims to deepen regional ties.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi recently suggested that avoiding a nuclear bomb is an "achievable" goal—if that is truly all Trump wants. Meanwhile, Iran continues to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), even as it enriches uranium up to 60% purity. This level is still below the 90% needed for weapons but is alarmingly close.

Military Posturing and Regional Strategy

Iran's recent military drills and



unveiling of new weapons systems signal another form of pressure—one grounded in deterrence. The Iranian military has showcased

- Underground missile bases
- Anti-ship drones and speedboats
- A new drone carrier
- Long-range projectiles capable of striking Israel

These moves underscore Iran's intent to prepare for any escalation, especially as tensions in the region remain high amid Israeli strikes on Iranian positions in Syria and elsewhere.

A Fading Path to Diplomacy?

While Iran has not ruled out further negotiations, and European powers recently held consultations with Iranian diplomats, Trump's renewed stance may harden positions. As a sunset clause in the JCPOA expires later this year, allowing for fewer mechanisms to reimpose UN sanctions, time is running out.

Iran's cautious language—emphasizing "dignity, wisdom, and expediency" in foreign policy—suggests that it is open to diplomacy but unwilling to show weakness.

Trump and Modi Reaffirm Ties Amid Tariff Tensions and Global Policy Shifts

By Liam Flynn



US(Washington Insider Magazine) — On February 13, 2025, US President Donald Trump welcomed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the White House in a high-stakes meeting marked by warm public gestures but underlined by tensions over trade, global security, and diplomatic policy shifts.

Reciprocal Tariffs Take Center Stage

President Trump announced a new executive order calling for reciprocal tariffs, instructing his administration to calculate equivalent tariffs on goods from countries that impose higher import taxes on US products.

“I had discussions with India in the first term about the fact that their tariffs were very high, and I was unable to get a concession,” Trump said. “So we’re just going to do it the easy way. Whatever

you charge, we charge.”

He also criticized the European Union and China for their trade policies, emphasizing that India remains one of the most protectionist nations in the world.

Modi’s Response: Economic Diplomacy and Strategic Alignment

Modi used the visit to highlight India’s growing economic ties

with the US. He announced an ambitious goal to more than double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, emphasizing the importance of energy trade and strategic investments.

“In order to ensure India’s energy security, we will focus on trade in oil and gas,” Modi said. He also unveiled plans for expanded collaboration with NASA, strengthening the Indo-US space partnership.

Modi echoed Trump’s political branding with a rhetorical flourish of his own: “If MAGA is ‘Make America Great Again’, then MIGA is ‘Make India Great Again’. MAGA plus MIGA equals mega – a mega partnership for prosperity.”

Security Focus: Terrorism and Extraditions

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to fighting terrorism. Trump pledged to extradite Tahawwur Rana, a Chicago businessman accused of involvement in the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Modi thanked Trump for this step, labeling it a crucial action in the fight against “cross-border terrorism.”

“In 2008, somebody who carried out genocide in India – that criminal is now going to be handed over to India,” Modi declared.

Divergence on Ukraine and NATO

Trump reignited controversy by attributing Russia’s 2022 invasion



of Ukraine to Ukraine’s aspirations to join NATO. He implied that, under his presidency, the war might have been averted and cast doubt on the potential of Ukraine ever reclaiming its 2014 borders.

“Russia has gotten themselves into something that I think they wish they didn’t,” Trump said. “They’ve said they cannot have Ukraine be in NATO... that was the thing that caused the start of the war.”

Other Major Headlines During the Day

- **US-India Strategic Framework:** Trump and Modi agreed to increase military sales and AI cooperation to maintain Indo-Pacific stability.
- **Rikers Island Controversy:** NYC Mayor Eric Adams agreed to reinstate ICE operations at the city jail, a sharp pivot from previous sanctuary policies.
- **Mount Denali Renaming Dispute:** Trump’s decision to rename Denali to Moun

t McKinley was strongly opposed by Alaskan senators defending the indigenous name.

- **Mexico vs Google:** Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum threatened legal action against Google for adopting the name “Gulf of America” in place of “Gulf of Mexico.”
- **Federal Funding Lawsuit:** Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro sued the Trump administration for withholding funds, calling the spending freeze “flagrantly lawless.”

Analysis: Can Modi Avoid Full Tariff Impact?

Experts suggest that Modi’s diplomatic charm offensive may help soften the blow of Trump’s tariff order, though a full exemption remains unlikely.

“Modi may rely on personal diplomacy and the chemistry they share,” said Sarang Shidore of the Quincy Institute. “It’s hoped that that will reduce the tariff burden.”

DC Plane Crash Victims: Skaters, Students, a Professor, and a Young Pilot Among the Lives Lost

BY MANDILEE HECHT



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — A tragic aviation disaster continues to unfold in Washington DC, as recovery efforts are underway following a deadly collision between an American Airlines flight from Kansas and a military helicopter on Wednesday night. Sixty-four passengers and three helicopter crew members were on board. Among the DC plane crash victims are teenage athletes, legal professionals, a university professor, a young pilot, and

other individuals from all walks of life.

Below are some of the stories of the people lost in this heartbreaking accident:

Plane Passengers

Asra Hussain Raza, 26

A hospital management professional from Indiana, Asra was returning from a work trip, still actively working mid-flight. Her husband Hamaad Raza

described her as someone who truly lived every moment of her 26 years: “She gave a lot, but she had so much more to give.”

Professor Kiah Duggins

A civil rights lawyer set to teach at Howard University’s School of Law. Known for her work on unconstitutional policing and unjust bail practices across the U.S., Duggins was remembered by the university as a “brilliant mind and fierce advocate for justice.”

Sarah Lee Best, 33

Elizabeth Keys, 33

Both were lawyers at Wilkinson Stekloff. Best, remembered as kind and hard-working, was planning a Hawaii trip with her husband. Keys, who died on her birthday, was described by her partner as someone who “always managed to have fun.” The firm called them “cherished members” and “wonderful colleagues.” Casey Crafton

A beloved Little League coach from Salem, Connecticut, Casey was a father and husband. Tributes described him as a pillar of his community, known for his dedication and warmth.

Michael “Mikey” Stovall

Returning from an annual hunting trip with friends, Mikey was known as the “life of the party” and loved by everyone. He had no enemies, his family said.

Jesse Pitcher, 30

Mikey’s friend and fellow traveler, Jesse had recently married and started his own business. “He was just getting started with life,” said his father.

Colonel Pergentino N. Malabed

The Philippine police official was on an official trip to test protective gear. His body was recovered from the Potomac River.

Vikesh Patel

A senior engineer at GE Aerospace, Patel had been with the company for over a decade. CEO Larry Culp described him as “a cherished colleague.

Wendy Shaffer

Wife and mother of two young children, Shaffer was described by friends as “always smiling” and incredibly kind. Her husband shared, “She was truly amazing—inside and out.”

Grace Maxwell

A junior engineering student at Cedarville University, Grace was returning from her grandfather’s funeral. Known for her dream of developing prosthetics, she was a “bright light” to those around her.

Lori and Bob Schrock

Kansas couple and parents of a Villanova student, Lori and Bob were en route to visit their daughter in Philadelphia. They were remembered as loving, supportive parents and community members.

Melissa Nicandri

A young professional from Florida, Melissa had been returning from a business trip. Her father said, “She was beautiful, smart, generous, and funny... just everything you’d want in a daughter.”

Figure Skaters and Families Lost in the Crash

At least 14 athletes and coaches returning from a figure skating camp in Wichita were among

those lost:

Spencer Lane, 16, and Christine Lane, 49

Spencer was a rising star with the Skating Club of Boston. His father said, “He was a force of nature.” Christine, his mother, was described as a creative and fiercely supportive parent.

Jinna Han, 13, and Jin Han

Jinna, a young skater from Massachusetts, once told reporters her Olympic dreams kept her going. Her mother, Jin, was known for her unwavering support for all young athletes.

Olivia Ter, 12

From Maryland, Olivia was remembered as a talented and kind-hearted competitor who inspired others through her sportsmanship.

Brielle Beyer, 12, and Justyna Magdalena Beyer, 42

Brielle was known for her vibrant energy and love for music. Her father, who was waiting at the airport, recalled, “She lit up the house with her voice.” Justyna was remembered as a nurturing and joyful presence.

A Nation in Mourning

As the full extent of this tragedy continues to emerge, communities across the U.S. and abroad mourn the DC plane crash victims—from children to parents, engineers to athletes. They leave behind dreams unfulfilled, families shattered, and legacies of love, talent, and service.

City of Philadelphia Updates on Northeast Plane Crash Tragedy

BY LIAM FLYNN

US (Washington Insider Magazine) — In the wake of the tragic plane crash that occurred on January 31, 2025, in Northeast Philadelphia, the city continues to provide essential updates, resources, and aid to residents, businesses, and all those impacted. From disaster declarations and small business grants to mental wellness support and document recovery services, the response reflects a coordinated citywide effort led by Mayor Cherelle L. Parker and supported by federal, state, and local agencies.

Government Response and Leadership

Mayor Parker, Governor Josh Shapiro, and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy have visited the crash site, reaffirming their commitment to those affected. The mayor's office declared a disaster emergency on February 14, enabling access to emergency funds and public assistance.

Key Resources and Updates

Mental Health and Trauma Support

To assist with the emotional aftermath, the Network of Neighbors Trauma Response Program is offering virtual sessions in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin. Sessions are designed to provide coping strategies and connect

individuals to free mental health resources.

Key Contacts:

- Email: networkofneighbors@phila.gov
- Phone: 267-233-4837
- Crisis Line: 988 (24/7)
- Community Behavioral Health: 888-545-2600
- Walk-In Mental Health Clinic: 3125 N. Broad St., 11 AM–6 PM daily

Small Business Emergency Relief

The Merchants Fund, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, is providing grants up to \$20,000 for small businesses impacted by the crash. The application deadline has been extended to March 7, 2025.

In-person office hours are also offered by the Mayor's Business Action Team to help businesses with applications and recovery efforts at the Northeast Regional Library, 2228 Cottman Avenue.

Document Recovery and Housing Assistance

The Register of Wills is replacing important documents like marriage and probate records free of charge. For help, visit phila.gov/wills or call 215-686-6250.

Housing assistance through the FreshStartPHL program is also available, including rent and relocation grants. Contact FreshStartPHL@phdc.phila.gov



or call 215-448-3004.

Property Access and Tax Adjustments

Residents of the most affected blocks can request escorted access to their homes via the Fire Department's Community Action Team (CAT). Call 267-250-8046 and leave your name, number, and address.

For damaged properties, owners may apply for real estate tax adjustments through the Office of Property Assessment (OPA) for potential assessment reductions.

Recovery Support Services

The Neighborhood and Community Action Center, located at 7374 Edmund Street, remains the main hub for in-person support. Operating hours are Monday to Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM.

The One Philly Fund, created to help disaster victims, is also collecting donations for those directly impacted by the crash. Donations and eligibility information are available at www.philacityfund.org/onephilly.

Friedrich Merz Poised to Become Germany's Next Chancellor Amid Political Shift

BY LIAM FLYNN

US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Exit polls from Sunday's federal election indicate that Friedrich Merz, leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), is likely to become Germany's next chancellor, marking a significant political shift after years of center-left leadership. Merz, 69, secured a leading share of the vote and is expected to form a coalition government with the Social Democrats (SPD).

The early results deliver a strong blow to Chancellor Olaf Scholz's embattled three-party coalition, which dissolved amid economic dissatisfaction and immigration concerns. Voter turnout was the highest in decades, reflecting growing anxiety over Germany's direction both domestically and within Europe.

"We have won it," Merz declared in Berlin, pledging swift coalition talks and promising to restore Germany's leadership in Europe. He emphasized a focus on economic revitalization, tax cuts, and a tougher stance on immigration.

Despite never having held a ministerial post, Merz's business background and reputation for decisiveness resonated with voters seeking stability. Still, many supporters admitted they



voted for him more out of necessity than enthusiasm, viewing him as "the lesser evil" in a fragmented political climate.

The election also saw the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) surge to second place, nearly doubling its vote share from 2021. Though mainstream parties continue to enforce a "firewall" against cooperating with the AfD, its growing base — especially in former East Germany — signals increasing polarization.

Merz has firmly ruled out any coalition with the AfD, which has been linked to extremist rhetoric and figures. Instead, he will likely turn to the SPD for a coalition resembling the centrist stability of Angela Merkel's era. Smaller parties like the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance and Die Linke played a pivotal role in

shaping potential coalition

paths. Die Linke, which ran on a pro-immigration and anti-austerity platform, exceeded expectations and could serve as a counterbalance in the new parliament.

With coalition talks set to begin, Germany enters a critical phase. Merz's leadership will be tested as he navigates rising far-right pressure, strained transatlantic relations, and an economy in need of revival. He has already called for European strategic independence, citing "interference" from the Trump administration and pledging stronger European unity.

As Germany prepares for a new chapter, voters hope for a government that can balance domestic concerns with its role as a European anchor in uncertain times.

Pezeshkian Accuses US of “Fake Diplomacy” Amid Rising Iran-US Tensions

By Paul M. Joyal



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— As Iran celebrated the 46th anniversary of its Islamic Revolution, President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned what he called Washington’s double-dealing diplomacy and vowed that Iran would never bow to foreign pressure. In a powerful speech delivered

in Tehran’s iconic Azadi Square, President Pezeshkian denounced the United States for returning to “maximum pressure” tactics while claiming to seek diplomacy. He accused US President Donald Trump of undermining Iran’s sovereignty under the guise of wanting to negotiate.

“Trump says he wants to negotiate, yet at the same time, he signs off on every possible conspiracy to bring this revolution to its knees,” Pezeshkian declared to thousands gathered in celebration of the 1979 Islamic uprising.

Sanctions and Contradictions

Earlier this month, Trump reimposed harsh economic sanctions on Iran, targeting its oil exports and nuclear activity. Despite these moves, Trump also expressed optimism about reaching a deal with Tehran.

Pezeshkian responded sharply:

“He [Trump] claims to be open to dialogue, but while saying so, he accuses Iran of destabilising the region. That’s not diplomacy. That’s deception.”

Iran, under Pezeshkian’s leadership, has been increasingly vocal in rejecting what it views as Western hypocrisy—criticizing Iran’s defense and regional policies while simultaneously supporting military actions by allies like Israel.

Revolution Celebrations and Resistance

The Iranian president’s remarks came during nationwide celebrations of the 46th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which saw the overthrow of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the return of Ayatollah Khomeini from exile. Tens of thousands of people rallied in cities across the country—Bandar Abbas, Rasht, Mashhad, and Tehran—chanting anti-US and anti-Israel slogans, burning flags, and waving portraits of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.



Officials had urged a strong turnout in light of the newly announced sanctions. The message was clear: Iran stands united against foreign threats.

“We are not looking for war,” Pezeshkian said. “But we will never bow to foreigners.”

Iran’s Stance on Gaza and Regional Conflicts

Pezeshkian also addressed the US role in Middle East conflicts, directly criticizing Washington’s support for Israel’s military operations across Gaza, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria.

“The US claims to be working for peace,” he said. “But who is truly responsible for the destruction and bloodshed across the region?”

His comments tapped into growing regional outrage over the ongoing conflict in Gaza, where Israeli operations have resulted in civilian casualties and infrastructure destruction. Iran has positioned itself as a leading voice condemning Western silence on these issues.

Assassination Threats and Security Concerns

Tensions between the US and

Iran escalated further after Trump publicly warned on February 4 that if Iran attempted to assassinate him, the response would be absolute obliteration.

“I’ve left instructions—if they do it, they get obliterated. There

won’t be anything left,” Trump said.

This followed allegations made by the US Justice Department in November 2024 that it had foiled an Iranian plot to assassinate the former president. Iran dismissed the accusations as baseless.

Unity and Defiance

Calling for unity, Pezeshkian urged Iranians to resist foreign pressure, saying:

“If we join hands, we are capable of resolving all the country’s problems. They are trying to divide us—don’t let them succeed.”

The president’s speech marked a clear continuation of Iran’s defiant posture against US influence while keeping open the idea of diplomacy based on mutual respect—not coercion.

Trump Team Makes Rocky Start to Ukraine Diplomacy, Sowing Global Confusion

By Conor La Rouche



US(Washington Insider Magazine)— In his first serious attempt to address the war in Ukraine, US President Donald Trump’s administration has sparked widespread confusion and criticism with inconsistent messages about its diplomatic strategy—leaving allies and adversaries alike unsure of America’s next steps.

Just weeks into Trump’s return to the White House, a flurry of contradictory comments from his top aides have

overshadowed efforts to kickstart negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, raising concerns about potential concessions and the role of US and NATO forces in the conflict.

Trump’s Tariff Offensive

Speaking from the Rose Garden at the White House, Trump said the new tariffs are long overdue and will “correct the years of economic abuse America has suffered.” Holding a thick

Direct Calls, Mixed Messages

On Wednesday, President Trump spoke separately with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, initiating what he described as a new diplomatic push to end the nearly three-year war. He also suggested an in-person summit with Putin in Saudi Arabia could be forthcoming.

However, while the move hinted at serious engagement, Trump’s

defense secretary Pete Hegseth delivered a speech to NATO allies that sent shockwaves through European capitals.

Hegseth asserted that Ukraine's NATO membership was off the table, restoring its 2014 borders was "illusionary," and ruled out sending US troops to help enforce any peace settlement. A day later, Hegseth reversed course, saying at a press conference that "everything is on the table."

This abrupt pivot triggered skepticism and frustration.

Vice President Adds to the Confusion

Further complicating the administration's stance, Vice President JD Vance told the Wall Street Journal on Friday that the US might consider sending troops to Ukraine as part of a broader strategy to pressure Moscow—a statement that would mark a sharp departure from the previous Biden administration's policy of avoiding direct American military involvement.

Vance later walked back his remarks on social media platform X, claiming his words had been distorted and emphasizing that US troops should not be deployed unless directly tied to American security interests.

Allies Critical of "Clumsy" Approach

European allies, already rattled

by Trump's unpredictable foreign policy in his previous term, reacted with alarm.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius called the US administration's handling of the issue "clumsy" and warned that the West appeared to be making concessions to Putin without securing any reciprocal commitments.

"Putin has not budged an inch on his position," Pistorius said at the Munich Security Conference. "It would have been better to discuss NATO and territorial issues at the negotiating table—not beforehand."

Similar criticism came from Senator Roger Wicker, Republican chairman of the US Senate Armed Services Committee, who slammed Hegseth's remarks as a "rookie mistake."

"You don't announce your concessions before you've even started negotiating," Wicker said in an interview with Politico.

Leadership Gaps and Confusion on the Ground

Adding to the uncertainty, Trump announced on social media that Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff would be part of the Ukraine negotiating team after leading a prisoner swap mission to Russia—surprisingly omitting Keith Kellogg, his Ukraine envoy.

The White House later clarified that Kellogg was still involved, but the oversight only deepened doubts about who is truly steering US policy.

Is There a Coherent Strategy?

Despite the chaos, some analysts see strategic threads emerging.

Retired diplomat Daniel Fried, now with the Atlantic Council, noted that while the administration has struggled to maintain a consistent message, the underlying goals appear to be:

- Achieving a ceasefire quickly
- Guaranteeing Ukraine's long-term security
- Using European, not US, troops to secure peace

"They're all over the map, but they haven't ruled anything out," Fried said. "That ambiguity might actually give them room to negotiate a good outcome."

Fried defined a good outcome as ending the war with 80 percent of Ukrainian territory freed, enforceable security guarantees, and a structure that prevents Russia from reigniting the war.

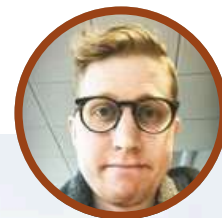
What Comes Next?

While the Trump administration's early diplomatic attempts on Ukraine have been anything but smooth, the world is watching to see whether the White House can translate its chaotic messaging into concrete peace-building measures.

For now, uncertainty reigns as allies brace for the next move—and Ukrainians continue to wait for clarity on whether the United States still stands firmly behind them.

Trump Orders Foreign Service Overhaul to Ensure Loyalty to “America First” Agenda

By Henry Nicholas



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— U.S. President Donald Trump has ordered a sweeping revamp of the U.S. Foreign Service, aiming to align American diplomacy strictly with his foreign policy objectives and enforce loyalty across the diplomatic corps.

On February 12, Trump issued an executive order directing Secretary of State Marco Rubio to implement reforms across the Foreign Service that would ensure “faithful and effective implementation” of the president’s “America First” foreign policy. The move marks

the latest step in Trump’s broader effort to “clean out the deep state,” a term he has repeatedly used to describe career officials and civil servants he views as obstructive to his political agenda.

Discipline for Dissent

The executive order goes beyond previous administrative reorganizations by explicitly stating that failing to implement Trump’s agenda will be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

“The Secretary must maintain

an exceptional workforce of patriots,” the order reads, emphasizing the need to “reform the Foreign Service and the administration of foreign relations” to ensure the president’s foreign policy is carried out without resistance.

The directive grants Secretary Rubio broad authority to revise recruitment, evaluation, and retention standards. It also permits overhauls to training programs at the Foreign Service Institute and modifications or replacements to the Foreign Affairs Manual, a core reference for diplomats.

A Purge in Practice?

This latest order follows a string of dramatic shake-ups within U.S. foreign policy institutions since Trump's return to office on January 20, 2025.

Hours after his inauguration, Trump froze most U.S. foreign aid, launching a review to assess whether existing assistance programs aligned with his "America First" framework. Shortly after, staff at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) were placed on leave and ordered not to report to work. Signs were removed from the agency's headquarters, the USAID website went offline, and Marco Rubio was appointed acting administrator.

The USAID disruption alarmed former diplomats and civil service experts, who now see the executive order on the Foreign Service as part of a wider campaign to remake the U.S. diplomatic machinery in Trump's image.

Reactions from the Foreign Policy Community

The move has sparked concern in Washington's foreign policy circles, where many see it as an attempt to undermine the independence and professionalism of American diplomacy.

Critics say that career diplomats—trained to serve across

administrations regardless of political affiliation—could now face dismissal for offering expertise or policy advice that conflicts with Trump's directives. Some fear the reforms could have a chilling effect on internal dissent and policy debate.

"This is not reform—it's a loyalty test," said a former senior State Department official speaking anonymously. "Diplomacy depends on trusted expertise, not blind allegiance."

A Part of a Bigger Agenda

Trump's administration has made no secret of its desire to reshape federal institutions. During his campaign and early presidency, Trump vowed to "drain the swamp" and has since targeted what he claims is an entrenched bureaucratic elite resistant to his leadership.

This new Foreign Service directive reflects the administration's determination to impose ideological conformity across government agencies, particularly those involved in global diplomacy, foreign aid, and national security.

According to the order, reforms will be structured to produce a diplomatic corps committed to implementing presidential directives without deviation. Training, internal guidelines, and staffing evaluations will all be retooled under this vision.



Outlook: What Happens Next?

The executive order gives Secretary Rubio significant discretion in determining how these changes are implemented, but the policy shift already appears to be underway. Observers expect a wave of reassignments, terminations, and program closures as Rubio and Trump's inner circle redefine the scope and function of the U.S. diplomatic service.

Although some Republican lawmakers have expressed support, others have warned that gutting institutional knowledge and eroding the apolitical foundation of the Foreign Service could weaken U.S. influence abroad and leave American diplomacy vulnerable to erratic policymaking.

As the Trump administration moves forward with its restructuring, U.S. allies, global partners, and diplomats worldwide are left to wonder: what will American diplomacy look like in a world led by loyalty rather than experience?

In the Trump Era of Shakedown Diplomacy, Everything Has a Price

By Eric Gahagan



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Three weeks into Donald Trump’s second term, a new diplomatic style has fully emerged—one that trades tradition and principle for transactional threats. It’s a form of international brinkmanship that places a price tag on alliances and outcomes, weaponizing tariffs and intimidation in service of what Trump calls “America First.”

This shakedown diplomacy, as critics now label it, has already seen countries from Canada to Panama pushed into uncomfortable concessions. Allies may credit the strategy with quick wins—but beneath

the surface, deeper damage to global stability and America’s long-term influence could be brewing.

The Return of Trump, But Meaner

Many global observers see the return of Trump’s combative, grievance-fueled style as familiar—only this time, more aggressive. In his first term, he rattled the postwar order by threatening to leave NATO, starting trade wars with China, banning travelers from Muslim-majority countries, and abandoning multilateral

agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

But Trump 2.0 is different. Tariffs are no longer a bargaining chip used sparingly—they are now his primary diplomatic tool, deployed preemptively and aggressively in nearly every negotiation.

So far, the threat of economic pain has been wielded against Canada, Mexico, China, Colombia, Denmark, the EU, and even Panama, which was warned of a U.S. invasion. Canada has been threatened with annexation. The UK, once a preferred ally, now lies low, hoping to stay off the radar.

Quick Wins—At What Cost?

Supporters of Trump's approach boast of recent wins:

- Colombia conceded on migration policies.
- Panama promised to pull out of China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- Mexico agreed to deploy 10,000 troops to its northern border.
- Canada pledged C\$200 million for cartel intelligence and named a "fentanyl tsar."

Even Ukraine has reportedly offered rare earth minerals in exchange for continued U.S. support. NATO's Mark Rutte praised Trump for raising Arctic security concerns, while China is negotiating over TikTok's Western operations.

Everything, it seems, has a price—and Trump is determined to collect.

The Limits of Hardball

However, Trump's shake-the-tree strategy is not without consequences. Mexico's president, Claudia Sheinbaum, was already taking tougher stances against drug cartels—but Trump's accusations of collusion have soured potential cooperation. Canadian Premier Doug Ford, once a Trump backer, reacted angrily:

"Election day, was I happy this guy won? One hundred percent.

But then the guy pulled out the knife and f***ing yanked it into us."

That resentment could prove costly. Strong-arm tactics might work on smaller nations, but taking on economic powerhouses like China or the EU is a different matter. French President Emmanuel Macron has already warned that Europe "must be respected" and will retaliate if its interests are attacked.

Moreover, middle-income nations, sensing U.S. hostility, may increasingly align with China, seeing it as more stable and less vindictive. Trump's dismantling of soft power tools like USAID only accelerates this drift.

The "Madman" Doctrine Revisited

Trump's unpredictability echoes Richard Nixon's "madman theory"—the idea that appearing dangerously volatile can compel adversaries to back down. In 1968, Nixon instructed aides to signal to Moscow and Hanoi that he was erratic and possibly capable of nuclear action. It didn't work. Vietnam called his bluff, and the war dragged on.

Today, Trump seems to be following a similar script, presenting himself as a leader unrestrained by norms or alliances, using unpredictability as leverage

But modern geopolitics may not reward this strategy. In an interconnected, multipolar world, where economic and political influence is shifting eastward, erratic strong-arming can isolate even a superpower.

The Erosion of American Exceptionalism

Historically, U.S. presidents have claimed the moral high ground, portraying American leadership as guided by values and ideals. Trump abandons that entirely. His diplomacy is purely transactional, guided not by principles but by deals.

"We used to be the world's conscience. Now we're its debt collector," said one European diplomat.

What's gone is any pretension that the U.S. stands for global norms or collective responsibility. Trump's approach strips diplomacy down to a raw exchange of power and profit, often dictated by tweets and threats.

Final Thoughts

In the short term, Trump's approach may force quick policy changes or compliance from nations unable—or unwilling—to confront American power. But the long-term costs could be immense: weakened alliances, emboldened rivals, and an erosion of trust that took decades to build.

Canadian Leaders Take Push Against Tariffs to White House

By Christina Levandowski



US (Washington Insider Magazine)—In an unprecedented move, all 13 of Canada's provincial and territorial leaders gathered in Washington, D.C., to press the White House on the looming threat of tariffs that U.S. President Donald Trump has imposed on Canadian goods. The visit underscores the seriousness with which Canada views the potential for a full-blown trade war with its closest neighbor and largest trading partner.

The tariff threats, which could impose 25% taxes on all imports from Canada and 10% on energy,

have already caused tension between the two nations. The tariffs were initially paused for 30 days earlier this month after Canada agreed to new border security measures. However, Trump's recent announcement of additional tariffs—especially 25% taxes on global steel and aluminum imports—has put the relationship back on edge.

A Critical Meeting at the White House

After a day of talks with U.S. lawmakers, the Canadian premiers were able to secure a

last-minute meeting with senior Trump administration advisers. Ontario Premier Doug Ford called the conversation “constructive,” while British Columbia Premier David Eby described the dialogue as

“frank” and direct. The White House urged the Canadian leaders to understand the rationale behind the tariffs, citing national security and the need to ensure that the U.S. isn't “taken advantage of” in trade relationships.

Despite the tension, the Canadian delegation's message

was clear: the two countries are better off as economic allies, and Canada is a secure supplier of critical commodities like energy, metals, and minerals, with over 75% of Canada's exports going to the U.S.

A Double-Edged Sword for Canada

The potential tariffs, particularly on steel and aluminum, would have a severe impact on Canada, as it is the largest exporter of these metals to the U.S. If the tariffs on both metals and imports were to be implemented, Canada would face what is effectively a doubling of the existing taxes.

On the same day, Canada's Finance Minister Dominic Leblanc met with Trump's pick for commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, and Kevin Hassett, director of the National Economic Council. The discussions focused on how deeply integrated the steel and aluminum industries are between the two countries, with Leblanc expressing confidence that they had gained the attention of key U.S. officials.

Canada's Countermeasures and Retaliation Threats

As tensions rise, Canada has vowed to retaliate swiftly if the tariffs go into effect, although the country's primary goal remains avoiding levies altogether. One of the major concessions made by Canada involves the appointment of a



new fentanyl czar, former RCMP officer Kevin Brosseau, who will focus on joint U.S.-Canada efforts to target fentanyl trafficking.

Despite claims by the U.S. that less than 1% of fentanyl seized at its border originates in Canada, the Canadian government is taking steps to show commitment to combating the flow of the drug. Canada is investing \$1.3 billion in border measures, which include frontline workers, Black Hawk helicopters, and drones to monitor the lengthy U.S.-Canada border.

Tariff Threats and Economic Fallout

Trump's repeated threats to impose tariffs reflect his ongoing view that such measures are tools for economic growth, job protection, and tax revenue

generation. While some in the U.S. administration believe the tariffs will help protect domestic industries, many economists warn of the potential ripple effects, predicting higher prices on everything from cars and lumber to food and alcohol.

The tariffs are part of a broader trade conflict between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, the U.S.'s three largest trading partners. On February 4, Trump delayed the imposition of tariffs for 30 days in exchange for additional border security measures from both Canada and Mexico. As the U.S.-China trade war

intensifies, the stakes of the tariff battle with Canada grow even higher. The trade relationship between the two nations is so deeply integrated that even small disruptions could have wide-ranging consequences.

Rubio Heads to Munich Amid Diplomatic Push for Ukraine Peace Deal

By Christina Levandowski



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio is set to travel to Munich and the Middle East this week as part of a diplomatic push to address Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine and to follow up on President Donald Trump's plans for the post-war Gaza Strip. The visit comes amid mounting international efforts to bring an end to the war, which has entered its third year.

In Munich, Rubio is expected to hold critical talks with counterparts from Japan and South Korea on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

If the meetings proceed as planned, they would mark the first U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral foreign ministerial under the Trump administration. The U.S. has expressed concerns over North Korea's military ties with Russia and China's support for Russia's defense industry, as well as ongoing security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

U.S. Diplomatic Efforts to End Russia's War in Ukraine

As the war in Ukraine approaches its third year, the U.S. is exploring multiple

diplomatic avenues to secure a peace deal. While Rubio's efforts are not directly tied to a peace agreement, U.S. officials have expressed cautious optimism after Russia released American teacher Marc Fogel, calling it a positive sign for negotiations.

Rubio has reaffirmed that the U.S. remains committed to ending the war and will continue to use international platforms like the Munich Security Conference (Feb. 14-16) to engage in discussions. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will attend the conference, along with U.S. Vice President

J.D. Vance and U.S. Special Envoy for Ukraine, Keith Kellogg.

During the conference, Ukraine plans to present its position on ending the conflict and lay out its vision for lasting peace. Meanwhile, the country is negotiating security guarantees with both the U.S. and Europe.

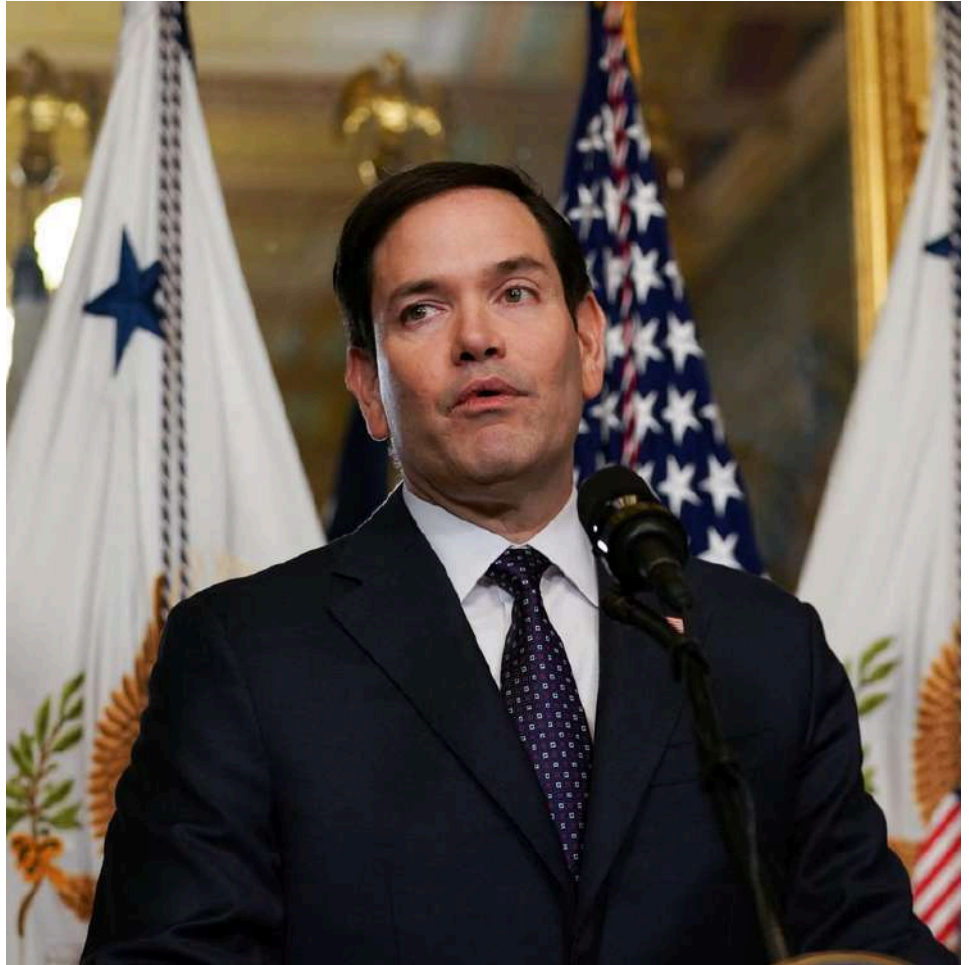
Ukraine's Reconstruction and Rare Earth Minerals

Zelenskyy has emphasized that Ukraine is willing to offer lucrative reconstruction contracts to U.S. companies, signaling a potential avenue for U.S. involvement in rebuilding the war-torn country. Additionally, rare earth minerals are a significant focus, as Ukraine holds vast reserves of critical minerals like lithium, titanium, and uranium, which are essential for both economic and national security.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent recently visited Kyiv to discuss the potential for cooperation in the energy and minerals sectors. If Russia were to permanently seize Ukrainian territory, it would gain control of significant mineral resources, undermining both European and U.S. security.

Strengthening U.S.-Japan-South Korea Relations

In addition to the Ukraine talks, Rubio's meetings in Munich will focus on strengthening the



trilateral U.S.-Japan-South Korea relationship. The cooperation between these countries has become increasingly vital as they face shared challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. Rubio's upcoming discussions are expected to tackle issues such as North Korea's military ties with Russia and the broader security landscape in Asia.

Experts note that the trilateral framework, established under former President Joe Biden's administration, has become deeply institutionalized, and there is little indication that this cooperation will reverse, despite political challenges within South Korea.

Middle East Diplomacy and Ceasefire Efforts

After his Munich trip, Rubio will head to the Middle East for talks, including a visit to Abu Dhabi to meet with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Their discussions will center on the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, the release of hostages by Hamas, and the long-term security of the region.

President Trump has stated that if Hamas does not release all hostages by Saturday, he will consider canceling the ceasefire. Rubio's Middle East discussions are scheduled to run from February 13-18, following his participation in Munich.

Global Reaction to Trump's Gaza 'Takeover' Plan: Widespread Outrage and Rejection

BY PAUL M. JOYAL



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — U.S. President Donald Trump's recent proposal to take control of the Gaza Strip after forcibly relocating Palestinians has drawn severe international criticism. The plan, presented alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, suggests that Palestinians would be moved out of Gaza to make way for U.S.-led reconstruction. Trump envisions rebuilding the area as the "Riviera of the Middle East."

Hamas, PLO, and Palestinian Leaders Reject Forced Displacement

Hamas swiftly condemned the proposal, with senior official Sami Abu Zuhri labeling it a "recipe for chaos" and a direct call for ethnic cleansing. Hamas officials, including Izzat al-Risheq, expressed outrage, calling the proposal "absurd" and warning of the potential for heightened regional instability.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Palestinian Authority also vehemently opposed any plan to displace Palestinians from Gaza, reaffirming their commitment to a two-state solution. President Mahmoud Abbas emphasized that such proposals violate international law and the rights of Palestinians to remain on their



ancestral land.

International Condemnation Across the Globe

Reactions from global leaders have been overwhelmingly negative. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, and Iran have expressed strong disapproval, with Saudi Arabia firmly rejecting any efforts to displace Palestinians and reasserting its support for the creation of a Palestinian state. Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called the proposal "unacceptable," warning that sidelining Palestinians would only escalate conflict.

European nations, including Germany, France, and Spain, also voiced their opposition. French officials described Trump's plan as a "serious violation of international law," while Spain's Foreign Minister reaffirmed Gaza's status as Palestinian land that must remain within the context of a future Palestinian state.

U.S. Lawmakers and Advocacy Groups Respond

In the U.S., criticism came from both sides of the political spectrum. Senator Chris Van Hollen condemned the plan, calling it ethnic cleansing. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian-American, expressed her outrage, urging her colleagues to stand against what she described as the "funding of genocide." The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) labeled the proposal a "crime against humanity."

Conclusion: Calls for Peace and Justice

As tensions rise, global leaders and organizations continue to emphasize the need for a negotiated two-state solution as the only path to lasting peace in the Middle East. The international community remains united in defending Palestinian rights, calling for a peaceful resolution that respects the sovereignty of both Palestinians and Israelis.

WHO Chief Urges U.S. to Reconsider Withdrawal

BY JAN FRAZIER



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed regret over the United States' decision to withdraw from the WHO under President Donald Trump's executive order. Speaking at the 156th session of the WHO Executive Board, Tedros called for a "constructive dialogue" with the US government, emphasizing the importance of preserving the historic relationship between the two. He also defended the WHO's actions during the COVID-19 pandemic, rejecting accusations of mishandling the crisis and affirming the agency's impartiality in serving global health interests.



Global Gender Parity Still a Distant Goal: One in Three Women Affected by Violence

A new UN report reveals alarming statistics about the state of gender equality. Around one in three women experience physical or sexual violence, with 800 women and girls dying every day due to preventable pregnancy and childbirth-related causes. Andrea Ori from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) highlighted the global backlash against women's rights, pointing to attacks on abortion providers, reduced funding, and diminished civic spaces for women human

rights defenders. The UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reported that the world remains far from achieving gender parity, despite significant historical milestones like the Beijing Declaration.

WHO Urges Nordic Countries to Maintain Alcohol Restrictions Amid Growing Concerns

The World Health Organization (WHO) issued a warning to Nordic countries, urging them to reconsider changes to their long-standing alcohol regulations. Nations like Finland, Iceland,

Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands have historically implemented strict controls on alcohol sales, contributing to low alcohol consumption and reduced health-related issues. However, recent legislative efforts to privatize alcohol sales in the region threaten to reverse this progress, WHO experts caution. Dr. Carina Ferreira-Borges of WHO warned that easing alcohol restrictions could lead to a rise in alcohol-related harms, such as liver disease and injuries, highlighting the importance of maintaining stringent policies to protect public health.

China Retaliates with Tariffs as Trade Tensions Escalate

BY CONOR LA ROUCHE



US (Washington Insider Magazine) —In response to the latest US tariffs on Chinese goods, China has announced a set of retaliatory tariffs that will come into effect on February 10. This follows President Donald Trump's decision to impose a 10 percent levy on Chinese imports, further intensifying the ongoing trade war between the two global economic powers.

These new counter-tariffs are part of China's broader strategy to assert its position in the face of what it views as unfair trade practices by the US. The move is expected to exacerbate the tensions that have already disrupted global supply chains and raised costs for businesses and consumers in both countries.

Mexico and Canada Join Forces with US on Border Security

In a separate but related development, Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum and Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a temporary suspension of US tariffs. This 30-day pause comes after the leaders reached agreements with the Trump administration, which included deploying thousands of police officers to their shared borders with the US. The deployment aims to tackle drug trafficking and curb undocumented migration, two key issues that have been at the



forefront of the US's foreign policy agenda under Trump.

US Government Faces Scrutiny Over Domestic Moves

Domestically, the Trump administration's actions have also sparked controversy. The US Agency for International Development (USAID), a key agency responsible for international development and aid, has been locked down, with workers barred from accessing their Washington, DC headquarters as part of a broader plan to shut the agency down. Meanwhile, lawmakers, especially from the Democratic Party, have voiced concerns over the legality of billionaire Elon Musk's involvement in significant changes at US federal agencies,

including the Department of the Treasury and USAID. These sweeping shifts in government control have raised alarms about transparency and accountability in key institutions.

Federal Spending Freeze Faces Legal Challenges

In another legal battle, a judge in Washington, DC has extended an order that temporarily halts Trump's plans to freeze federal government spending, a move that could potentially impact trillions in US government budgets. The legal challenges surrounding this decision add to the uncertainty surrounding the Trump administration's fiscal policies as the nation grapples with internal and external economic pressures.

Trump's Renewed 'Maximum Pressure' on Iran: What's Next for a Deal?

BY ERIC GAHAGAN



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — US President Donald Trump has reignited his “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran, promising to drive Tehran’s oil exports to “zero” and enforce strict sanctions, all while claiming his primary goal is to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. The move, announced on February 4, 2025, marks a sharp continuation of policies that have strained US-Iran relations over

the years.

Trump’s new national security memorandum on Iran echoes his earlier approach, which has already caused severe economic hardship for Iran. While the US president expressed reluctance to intensify pressure, he stressed that Iran must never possess nuclear capabilities. He also voiced hopes for a “nuclear peace agreement,” claiming that such a deal would bring

celebrations across the Middle East.

The Fallout from the US Withdrawal from the Nuclear Deal

Trump’s reimposition of maximum pressure comes nearly seven years after he unilaterally pulled the US out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, a multilateral



agreement aimed at limiting Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. Since the US exit, Iran has continued to expand its nuclear activities, enriching uranium to levels that are just a step away from weapons-grade material.

The US has not only implemented strict sanctions targeting Iran's economy but also sanctioned entities and individuals associated with Tehran's nuclear and military programs. Despite these actions, Iran maintains its position that it is not pursuing nuclear weapons, although it has engaged in nuclear enrichment beyond the original limits set by the JCPOA.

Iran's Resilience and Policy Shifts

Despite the mounting pressure, Iran has not backed down. Iranian officials assert that their country's nuclear ambitions are entirely peaceful. President Masoud Pezeshkian has called for OPEC members to unite against US sanctions, and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated that Iran's commitment to not seeking nuclear weapons was "achievable" and not difficult. Iran's leadership, however, has left the door open for dialogue. Mohammad Eslami, Iran's nuclear chief, reiterated that the country would continue its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Moreover, Iran is keen on maintaining relations with its neighbors and other international partners to mitigate the impact of sanctions.

Potential New Sanctions and Escalation Risks

The Trump administration's new sanctions could target Iran's so-called "ghost fleet" of ships used to secretly transport oil. These actions are likely to exacerbate tensions between the US and Iran, with Tehran warning that any attack on its nuclear facilities would lead to an all-out war. The US could also ramp up pressure on China, Iran's largest oil buyer, which may prove to be a challenging diplomatic hurdle for Trump.

As US sanctions tighten and Iran continues its nuclear enrichment, both sides face increasing risks of further escalation. Despite ongoing diplomatic talks, including recent consultations between Iran and European powers, the chances of a comprehensive deal remain uncertain.

Looking Ahead: Will Diplomacy Prevail?

While Trump signals a willingness for dialogue, his hardline stance suggests that any potential Iran-US deal would be complicated and fraught with challenges. As tensions continue to rise, the future of the Iran nuclear deal and broader US-Iran relations remains highly unpredictable. The coming months will likely reveal whether diplomatic efforts can overcome the vast differences between the two nations or if maximum pressure will push them closer to a new conflict.

Inflation Surges in January, Outpacing Expectations

BY ALICIA POZSONY



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — U.S. inflation continued its upward trend in January, with consumer prices rising 0.5% for the month, higher than expected. This marks a 3% increase from the previous year, up from the 2.9% annual rate reported in December. The core index, excluding volatile food and energy costs, also saw a 0.4% rise, now at 3.3%.

Key factors driving this inflationary pressure include increases in shelter, food, and transportation costs, which accounted for much of the rise. In particular, shelter costs were responsible for nearly a third of the monthly increase.

The news sent shockwaves

through the financial markets, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average falling over 400 points. Bond yields also spiked as investors reacted to the inflation data, which raised concerns that the Federal Reserve might delay any plans to lower interest rates.

Skyler Weinand, chief investment officer at Regan Capital, noted that the Federal Reserve now faces significant uncertainty surrounding President Donald Trump's economic policies. With tariffs, fiscal deficits, and potential changes to tax and spending policies in 2025, the Fed's ability to manage inflation becomes more complex. "If inflation expectations rise

further, it's likely the Fed will have

to raise interest rates again," Weinand said.

Adding fuel to the fire, President Trump posted on social media calling for lower interest rates, which would align with upcoming tariffs and his broader economic agenda. This statement follows remarks from Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, who indicated the central bank is in no rush to increase rates but may need to respond to inflationary pressures.

As inflation remains a significant concern, the trajectory of U.S. economic policies under Trump will likely continue to influence market sentiment and the Federal Reserve's decisions in the coming months.

World Leaders Condemn Trump's Sanctions on ICC

BY ALICIA POZSONY



US (Washington Insider Magazine) —In a move that has sparked international outrage, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC) on February 4, 2025. The sanctions target ICC officials, employees, and their families, including anyone who supports the court's investigations into alleged war crimes by Israel.

In response, 79 countries, roughly two-thirds of the ICC's members, issued a joint statement condemning the sanctions. These nations, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Brazil, and Bangladesh, warned that such measures could embolden war criminals and weaken international law.

The statement highlighted that the sanctions would “increase the risk of impunity for the most serious crimes” and undermine the ICC's ability to ensure justice. Many of the countries that signed the statement, including the Netherlands, reaffirmed their commitment to the court's independence. Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof emphasized his nation's support, stressing that the ICC's work must continue despite the U.S. sanctions.



Trump's decision came after the ICC issued arrest warrants for Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, over alleged war crimes committed in Gaza. The U.S. has consistently opposed international efforts to investigate actions by Israel, with Trump calling the ICC's actions “illegitimate” and “baseless.”

Human rights advocates have been vocal in their criticism, with Omar Shakir from Human Rights Watch accusing the U.S. of siding with war criminals by imposing

sanctions on the court. He argued that the ICC's role in holding perpetrators accountable is essential for justice.

The sanctions mark the first time a U.S. president has taken such a step against the ICC. While the Trump administration asserts that these measures are meant to protect American and Israeli interests, critics argue they pose a direct challenge to global justice and the enforcement of international law. The fallout from this decision could have lasting consequences for the future of international accountability.



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