



# Washington Insider

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# OUR TEAM



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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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USDA CUTS HIT FOOD BANKS,  
RISKING HUNGER FOR LOW-  
INCOME AMERICANS



TRUMP'S BID TO END  
BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP  
REACHES SUPREME COURT IN  
MAJOR LEGAL CLASH



ZELENSKY RESPONDS WITH  
HUMOR TO TRUCE REPORTS  
FROM MACRON AND STARMER

# U.S. Stocks Slip as Rally Pauses; Accenture, Tech Drag Down Market

BY LIAM FLYNN



US France (Washington Insider Magazine)— Wall Street's recent rebound lost momentum Thursday, with major U.S. stock indexes closing modestly lower amid a lack of fresh catalysts and cautious investor sentiment following the Federal Reserve's latest policy update.

The S&P 500 fell 0.2%, the Nasdaq Composite dropped 0.3%, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average ended the day down fractionally. The dip comes after a string of gains in three of the past four sessions,

driven in part by investor optimism following the Fed's decision to hold interest rates steady.

Despite Thursday's pullback, the S&P 500 is still up 0.4% for the week and poised to end a four-week losing streak. The Dow has gained 1.1%, while the Nasdaq is down 0.4%, reflecting continued volatility in tech stocks.

## Fed Keeps Rates Steady, Warns of Uncertainty

On Wednesday, the Federal

Reserve maintained its benchmark interest rate and signaled a cautious stance. While reaffirming expectations for two rate cuts in 2025, Fed Chair Jerome Powell emphasized the need for clarity amid growing concerns about the economy.

## After-Hours Movers: Micron Up, Nike and FedEx Down

Post-market action was mixed. Micron Technology (MU) rose over 1% in regular and extended trading after issuing strong

earnings and guidance. Nike (NKE) and FedEx (FDX), however, each dropped more than 5% after hours. Nike warned of weaker sales due to its turnaround strategy, while FedEx reported disappointing quarterly results.

### Fed Keeps Rates Steady, Warns of Uncertainty

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve maintained its benchmark interest rate and signaled a cautious stance. While reaffirming expectations for two rate cuts in 2025, Fed Chair Jerome Powell emphasized the need for clarity amid growing concerns about the economic

impact of Trump administration policies, particularly around tariffs.

The Fed's updated forecasts showed lower growth expectations and higher inflation projections, reinforcing a wait-and-see approach. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note dipped to 4.24%, down from 4.26%, reflecting investor demand for safer assets.

Government Spending Cuts Hit Accenture, Gartner

Accenture (ACN) was the day's biggest S&P 500 loser, plunging 7.3% after missing revenue and profit expectations. CEO Julie Sweet cited declining government spending as a significant drag, aligning with recent price target cuts from analysts at Jefferies and Morgan Stanley.

Gartner (IT) shares fell 6.8%, also hurt by reduced government

business and efficiency initiatives. UBS analysts flagged a difficult environment for firms with public sector exposure.

Microchip Technology (MCHP) dropped 6.5% after announcing plans to sell a facility in Tempe, Arizona, and issue a \$1.35 billion convertible stock offering. The move triggered a debt downgrade from Moody's

### Tech Stocks Mixed Amid Pressure

Mega-cap tech names were mostly lower. Broadcom (AVGO) declined 2%, while Apple (AAPL), Microsoft (MSFT), Alphabet (GOOG), and Amazon (AMZN) also slid. Notably, Nvidia (NVDA) gained around 1%, and Meta (META) and Tesla (TSLA) posted minor gains.

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### Winners: Darden, Jabil, Allstate Shine

On the upside, Darden Restaurants (DRI) led the S&P 500 with a 5.8% gain. Despite missing sales forecasts, earnings met expectations, and the firm announced an expanded delivery

partnership with Uber Eats.

Jabil (JBL) jumped 3.1% on better-than-expected results and an upbeat outlook driven by strong demand in AI and data infrastructure. Allstate (ALL) hit a record high, climbing 2.6% after reporting significantly lower catastrophe losses for February.

### Analyst Optimism Remains Strong

Despite market jitters, Wall Street analysts remain broadly bullish. According to FactSet, 55.7% of ratings on S&P 500 stocks are Buys—the highest since August 2022. The tech and energy sectors lead in bullish sentiment, with Microsoft, Amazon, and Nvidia ranking among the top-rated stocks. In contrast, consumer staples remain the least favored, garnering just 41% Buy ratings, reflecting defensive positioning amid potential recession fears.

### Bitcoin, Gold, and Oil Update

- Bitcoin traded at \$84,100, down from a peak of \$87,500.
- Gold futures rose 0.3% to \$3,050 an ounce, reaching a new record earlier in the session.
- WTI crude oil climbed 1.7% to \$68.30 per barrel.

### Cava Rises on Upgrade

Cava Group (CAVA) shares jumped more than 4% after JPMorgan upgraded the stock, citing optimism over location expansion. Even so, shares remain down over 40% since peaking in December.

# Black Sea Ceasefire Announced, But Zelensky Sounds Alarm

By Liam Flynn



US France (Washington Insider Magazine)— After intense diplomatic efforts in Saudi Arabia, Russia and Ukraine have agreed to a limited ceasefire focused on the Black Sea region, allowing commercial vessels to move safely without the threat of

**military attack. The White House confirmed that separate meetings between U.S. officials and representatives from both Kyiv and Moscow led to this agreement. However, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky has quickly**

cast doubt on the ceasefire’s terms, accusing Russia of “lying again.” According to Zelensky, Russia is misrepresenting the agreement’s conditions and using the ceasefire announcement to

manipulate international opinion. The Kremlin insists the ceasefire will only be enacted if certain sanctions are lifted—specifically those targeting Russian banks, insurers, and food exporters. Moscow is also pushing for reinstatement into the Swift payment system. Former U.S. President Donald Trump, now back in office, has indicated a willingness to consider these demands, raising concerns among Kyiv's allies.

While Zelensky acknowledged that the deal represents “the right steps” toward peace, he warned that any westward movement of Russian warships would be treated as a violation. BBC security correspondent Frank Gardner noted that although the deal marks progress, its long-term durability remains in question due to Russia's history of breaking past agreements.

### Wall Street Climbs for Third Straight Day as Tesla Surges

New York — March 25, 2025

U.S. stocks edged higher on Tuesday, continuing a three-day rally amid easing tariff fears and optimism surrounding corporate earnings. The S&P 500 rose 0.2%, the Nasdaq added 0.5%, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average finished slightly up.

The uptick followed news that President Trump may scale back impending tariffs on U.S. trading partners. Investors have largely shrugged off disappointing consumer confidence data, choosing instead to focus on broader economic signals. The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge, set for release

on Friday, remains the most anticipated report of the week.

### Tesla Leads Tech Stocks as Momentum Builds

Tesla shares climbed 3.5%, marking the electric vehicle (EV) giant's fifth consecutive day of gains. Despite declining European sales, investor confidence appears buoyed by recent technical indicators, including a bullish crossover of the 50-week and 200-week moving averages. The stock closed at \$288.14, up 28% over the last five sessions, though

still down 40% from its record high.

Other tech giants also contributed to the Nasdaq's strength. Apple, Amazon, Meta, and Alphabet all gained over 1%, while Microsoft made modest gains. Chipmakers Nvidia and Broadcom, however, slipped slightly.

Cybersecurity firms had a strong showing: Cloudflare rose nearly 3% after a Bank of America upgrade, while CrowdStrike and Palo Alto Networks gained around 3% each following bullish analyst notes.

### Corporate Movers: Winners and Losers

Among S&P 500 standouts, International Paper surged 6.5% after outlining aggressive growth targets at its annual investor day, including projected 2027 sales of up to \$28 billion. The company also announced efficiency upgrades

and plant closures to boost profitability.

Carvana also rallied nearly 4% following an optimistic Morgan Stanley upgrade that dubbed the company the potential “Amazon of auto retail.”

On the downside, United Parcel Service (UPS) dropped 5%, closing at its lowest level since mid-2020, after Bank of America slashed its earnings forecast due to trade and weather-related disruptions.

Pharmaceutical stocks also lagged, with Merck falling nearly 5% on news of a costly licensing deal with a Chinese firm, and AbbVie sliding 3.7% amid legal disputes over intellectual property.

Commodities and Crypto  
Bitcoin traded around \$88,000 by late afternoon, recovering from overnight lows. Gold edged up 0.3% to \$3,025 per ounce, while West Texas Intermediate crude oil ticked up to \$69.20 a barrel.

### A Fragile Peace and Financial Optimism

Tuesday's developments underscore the complex intersection of geopolitics and financial markets. While tentative steps toward peace in the Black Sea offer hope, skepticism remains high. Meanwhile, markets appear cautiously optimistic, fueled by corporate strength and the potential easing of trade tensions.

Whether the ceasefire holds—and whether the stock market rally continues—depends on the days ahead.

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

By Henry Nicholas



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — The U.S. Federal Reserve soothed markets this week with a cautious tone on inflation and monetary tightening, but President Donald Trump has reignited tensions by demanding aggressive rate cuts. While

**markets welcomed the Fed's decision to slow its balance sheet reduction, concerns remain about inflation, political interference, and an aging workforce bracing for retirement amidst volatile equity markets.**

A Reluctant Fed and a Restless President

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell painted a relatively calm picture of inflation, even as geopolitical tensions and rising

tariffs stir uncertainty. Notably, the Fed held off on immediate interest rate cuts, prompting President Trump to break his relative silence on monetary policy.

“The Fed would be MUCH better off CUTTING RATES,” Trump posted on social media, urging the central bank to “do the right thing.”

The Fed has forecast two rate cuts this year, with futures markets now pricing in a 50% chance of a third. However, analysts say Powell’s stance is still measured compared to Trump’s insistence on stronger stimulus, especially as tariff hikes loom on April 2.

#### Balance Sheet: Slowdown but Not a Pause

One of the more market-moving announcements was the Fed’s decision to sharply decelerate its balance sheet unwind. While some had hoped for a full pause, the current move was enough to help Wall Street recover mid-week, with the S&P 500, Dow, and Nasdaq posting solid gains.

Yet, the broader economic picture remains mixed. Growth forecasts were revised downward, and inflation expectations edged higher—signaling continued caution ahead.

#### Retirement Shock: How Falling Stocks Could Skew Jobless Data

Beyond rate policy, an unexpected consequence of market volatility is emerging in the labor force: delayed retirements. With a record 4.18

million Americans reaching retirement age in 2025, many are rethinking their timelines as Wall Street wobbles.

According to the Alliance for Lifetime Income, more than half of Baby Boomers turning 65 between 2024 and 2030 hold under \$250,000 in assets. With equity markets under pressure, retirees may be forced to work longer, influencing employment figures and possibly lifting the obsolescence rate.

“If you see a stock market correction, it could not only impact spending but also delay retirement,” said Michael Reid, U.S. Economist at RBC Capital Markets.

This delay reduces the expected drawdown in the workforce and could, paradoxically, raise the unemployment rate even as hiring continues steadily.

#### Unemployment: Beneath the Surface

Although the headline U.S. unemployment rate remains low at 4.1%, a broader measure—including discouraged and underemployed workers—jumped to 8% in the latest jobs report, the highest since 2021. Labor force participation also slipped to a two-year low of 62.4% in February.

Immigration curbs add another layer to labor market complexity. While older Americans staying in work may relieve some pressure, they’re unlikely to fill gaps in industries dependent on younger or foreign workers.

#### International Dynamics: Central Banks Diverge

As global central banks react to the evolving economic landscape, divergence is increasing. The Swiss National Bank surprised many by cutting its policy rate to 0.25%, even suggesting a return to negative rates if needed. Meanwhile, the Bank of England and European Central Bank are holding firm, signaling inflation vigilance.

Markets now watch closely for signs of a return to post-2008 ultra-low interest rate norms. Yet most institutions argue that a more inflation-prone world—post-pandemic, post-globalization—is here to stay.

#### What to Watch Next

Upcoming economic and corporate highlights:

- Bank of England policy decision
- U.S. Q4 current account, jobless claims, and February existing home sales
- Bank of Canada and ECB officials speaking
- EU summit focused on economic competitiveness and defense
- Earnings from Nike, FedEx, Micron Technology, Accenture, and more

As political pressure mounts, retirements waver, and monetary policy teeters between caution and stimulus, both investors and policymakers face a landscape where economic outcomes are increasingly interconnected. With so many moving parts—from aging demographics to global trade friction—the Federal Reserve’s next moves may shape not only inflation but also the retirement dreams of millions.

# Trump's Policies Prompt Asia to Rethink U.S. Ties

By Eric Gahagan



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— President Donald Trump's aggressive trade and foreign policy stance is accelerating a long-simmering shift among Asian investors and companies: a drive to diversify away from overreliance on the United States. Interviews with over a dozen top bankers, investors, and officials across Asia reveal a marked increase in urgency around this diversification—though many admit there is still no true alternative to the U.S. market.

The current economic dynamics echo a deep structural shift. Since the end of World War II, the U.S. has dominated the global economic order, backed by institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations and a dollar-based reserve currency system. But Trump's unilateral policies—including sweeping tariffs and diminished support for multilateral alliances—are forcing regional actors to re-evaluate their dependence on Washington.

## Searching for 'America Plus One'

This urgency to reduce U.S. reliance is often referred to as the "America plus 1" strategy. While this concept gained modest traction last year, it has gained real momentum in 2025 as Trump's actions continue to unsettle markets and political relationships.

Ben Hung, President of



International at Standard Chartered, called it a "once-in-a-century transition," suggesting the global order is becoming increasingly multipolar, with the United States, China, and India emerging as its new anchors. Financial institutions are witnessing real-time behavioral changes. Citi reported record interest from Asian clients seeking strategies to mitigate geopolitical risk. Foreign exchange and hedging operations are booming in trade corridors stretching from Asia to the Middle East and Latin America. Yet, paradoxically, U.S. investment flows also remain strong, highlighting a dual-track mindset: wary of U.S. instability, yet still tied to its economic might.

## White House's America First Agenda

When asked about these shifts, White House spokesperson Kush Desai pointed to strong inbound

investment as a sign of confidence in Trump's America First policies. Citing commitments from Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) and Dubai's DAMAC Properties, Desai claimed these are validations of Trump's strategy centered on deregulation, energy independence, and protective tariffs.

However, regional analysts argue that these very same moves may be undermining U.S. credibility, especially concerning the rule of law. Trump's intervention in private sector decisions—like the forced sale of TikTok—has rattled confidence in America's historically stable regulatory environment.

## China Finds Opportunity in U.S. Disruption

Ironically, Trump's efforts to isolate China may be helping it widen its global influence. One Chinese official said tariffs on U.S. allies like Canada and Europe are creating friction within traditional Western alliances—giving Beijing a unique opportunity to step in.

Chinese firms, aware of increasing hostility in the U.S., are already shifting focus. Investment is growing in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. China's own trade corridors, backed by initiatives like the Belt and Road, are becoming more relevant as alternative routes for growth and influence.

## No Clear Alternatives to U.S. Assets

Despite growing discomfort, most Asian players agree there is still no real substitute for the U.S. market. Its capital markets remain the deepest, its economy among the largest, and its institutions more robust than those in authoritarian regimes.

Alternatives—such as gold, cryptocurrency, or the Chinese yuan—each come with significant limitations. Gold is considered a safe haven but isn't practical for routine transactions. Crypto assets remain volatile and underregulated. And the yuan, while increasingly used, lacks the financial instruments and convertibility that give the dollar its edge.

For instance, managing yuan exposure remains complex. Tools like Hong Kong's Swap Connect, which allows the trading of renminbi interest rate swaps, are growing—reaching 14.9 billion yuan in daily turnover in 2024—but remain far from mainstream.

## Fractured World = Blind Spots

This global economic fragmentation is also creating new blind spots. A prime example is the surprise U.S. market reaction to Chinese AI firm DeepSeek's emergence in January 2025. While the company was well-known in Chinese tech circles, it had flown under the radar of Western investors—exposing how isolation is reducing information flow and market awareness.

Bonnie Chan, CEO of the Hong Kong Exchange, noted that many newer Chinese firms haven't been courted by U.S. venture capitalists the way past tech unicorns were. As a result, more “jaw-dropping” surprises like DeepSeek are likely.

Western hesitation—fueled by geopolitical tensions and poor returns on past China investments—has left U.S. investors sidelined from the next wave of disruptive innovation emerging in Asia.

**Conclusion: The Future Is Multipolar, But America Still Matters**

Asia's push to diversify away from the United States marks a



significant shift in global finance and geopolitics. Trump's assertive policies may be driving this recalibration, but the entrenched strength of U.S. markets makes any clean break nearly impossible.

The world may be inching toward a multipolar economic order—but for now, the United States remains a central, if increasingly contested, pillar of that system.

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# Fed Stays Cautious as Trump Calls for Action

By Jan Frazier



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Financial markets found modest comfort this week as the U.S. Federal Reserve signaled a slower pace in its balance sheet reduction and maintained its projection for two interest rate cuts this year. Yet the Fed’s overall tone remained cautious, with growth forecasts revised downward and inflation estimates nudging higher.

President Donald Trump, however, expressed strong dissatisfaction. In a social media post, he criticized the Fed for not acting fast enough, stating:

“The Fed would be MUCH better off CUTTING RATES as U.S. Tariffs start to transition (ease!) their way into the economy. Do the right thing.”

This marked a return to public pressure on the central bank after a relatively quiet period. Though Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent reassured markets of the Fed’s independence, the recent dismissal of two Democratic commissioners at the Federal Trade Commission sparked new concerns about political interference in federal institutions.

## Markets Respond Cautiously to Mixed Fed Signals

Despite the Fed’s measured approach, Wall Street stock futures held onto gains, supported by expectations of easing monetary policy. Treasury yields dipped following the Fed’s



balance sheet announcement, while futures markets raised the probability of a third rate cut in 2025 to 50%.

However, not all indicators were upbeat. The Fed’s balance sheet wind-down was less aggressive than expected, and its revised forecasts painted a cloudier economic outlook. Investors are now closely watching the upcoming April 2 tariff hikes and geopolitical developments for signs of further instability.

The U.S. dollar strengthened against most currencies, with traders likely hedging against the potential economic impact of tariffs. Meanwhile, the European Union pledged to increase competitiveness and military capability amid ongoing doubts about American support

under Trump’s administration.

## Trump’s Broader Economic Agenda Takes Shape

President Trump continues to advance his economic and political agenda. On Wednesday, he met with top oil executives to discuss plans to increase domestic production as global oil prices slide. The following day, he is expected to sign an executive order dismantling the Department of Education—fulfilling a long-standing campaign promise.

While these moves could reshape key aspects of U.S. policy, they also risk further rattling investors already wary of political uncertainty and trade tensions.

## Retirement Wave Could Reshape Labor Market

Beyond short-term market moves, deeper demographic shifts are poised to influence the U.S. economy—particularly through retirement trends.

In 2025, a record 4.18 million Americans are turning 65, according to the Alliance for Lifetime Income. This milestone kicks off a two-decade wave of retirements, primarily among Baby Boomers. Yet many of these individuals may delay retirement due to falling portfolio values and insufficient savings.

With stock markets under pressure, delayed retirements could significantly alter labor market dynamics. Economists warn this might temporarily increase labor force participation, which in turn could push up the unemployment rate.

Michael Reid, an economist at RBC Capital Markets, explains:

“If you see a stock market correction, it could impact both consumer spending and labor participation. Retirements may be delayed, creating upward pressure on unemployment figures.”

## Complex Picture Emerges for Labor Participation

While U.S. unemployment remains low at 4.1%, broader labor metrics reveal stress. The labor force participation rate has dropped to 62.4%, a two-year low and still below pre-pandemic levels. A more comprehensive unemployment measure—

accounting for discouraged workers and involuntary part-time workers—spiked to 8% in the latest report, the highest since 2021.

Immigration restrictions have further constrained labor supply, making retirement trends even more impactful. Although older workers are unlikely to replace roles traditionally filled by immigrants, their extended workforce participation could help ease labor shortages in some sectors.

## Outlook: Market Volatility Meets Policy Shifts

As economic anxieties rise amid political shakeups and central bank recalibrations, investors are increasingly cautious. Anecdotal evidence suggests many older workers are nervous about retiring in the current environment.

While stock market corrections

are not new, their impact may be amplified by today's demographic realities. For policymakers like the Federal Reserve, understanding these shifts will be critical in shaping responses to both inflation and labor trends.

## Key Data and Events to Watch

- U.S. Economic Releases: Weekly jobless claims, Q4 current account, March Philly Fed survey, February home sales
- Central Bank Decisions: Bank of England, European Central Bank, Bank of Canada
- Corporate Earnings: FedEx, Micron, Nike, Accenture, Lennar, Jabil
- EU Summit: Focus on economic resilience and defense spending

U.S. Treasury Auction: Sale of 10-year inflation-protected securities



# Stocks Close Mixed After Volatile Month Marked by Tariffs and Inflation Concerns

By Conor La Rouché



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— U.S. stock markets wrapped up March 2025 with a volatile session on Monday, finishing a month marked by renewed economic fears, tariff anxieties, and significant losses in tech stocks. Despite rebounding from steep early-session declines, major indexes closed mixed as Wall Street braced for new tariffs from the Trump administration.

## Index Recap: Worst Month in Over Two Years

- S&P 500 closed Monday up 0.6% but still suffered a 5.8% drop for the month, its worst since December 2022.
- Nasdaq Composite ended down 0.1%, rounding out an 8.2% monthly loss, its biggest since September 2022.
- Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1% on Monday, but fell 4.2% in March.

The declines extended a broader trend, marking the second straight monthly loss for the three major indexes. The Nasdaq

is now down over 10% in 2025, while the S&P 500 is down 4.6% and the Dow 1.3% year-to-date.

## New Tariffs in Focus

Investors remain cautious ahead of the rollout of reciprocal tariffs, announced by President Trump, scheduled to go into effect on April 2, dubbed “Liberation Day” by the

administration. The move is expected to impact trade with countries that impose levies on U.S. exports and could trigger retaliatory measures, raising

fears of a global trade slowdown.

## Inflation & Consumer Sentiment Rattle Markets

Friday's release of hotter-than-expected inflation data and weak consumer sentiment reignited concerns over economic stability. These reports, coupled with uncertainty around fiscal policy and trade, led to a sharp selloff last week that the markets only partially recovered from on Monday.

## Tech Sector Weighs Down Nasdaq

Mega-cap technology stocks, which have shown heightened volatility this year, were mostly in the red:

- Tesla (TSLA) dropped 1.7%, continuing its decline as one of the worst-performing S&P 500 stocks of Q1, with shares down over 33% this year.
- Nvidia (NVDA), Broadcom (AVGO), Microsoft (MSFT), and Amazon (AMZN) all slipped about 1%.
- Apple (AAPL) bucked the trend with a 2% gain.
- Alphabet (GOOG) and Meta Platforms (META) were flat.

Investor favorites in the AI space like Palantir (PLTR) and AppLovin (APP) continued to decline, down nearly 2% and 3%, respectively.

## Financials and Consumer Staples Lead Gainers

Despite the broader headwinds, some sectors showed resilience:

- Discover Financial Services (DFS) surged 7.5% on reports

- suggesting its acquisition by Capital One (COF) may win regulatory approval.
- Walmart (WMT) climbed 3%, helping the Dow as consumer staples stocks gained on Monday.
- Live Nation (LYV) jumped 4.4%, supported by a bullish note from Jericho Capital and a recent lawsuit settlement.
- American International Group (AIG) rose 4% after announcing a \$7.5 billion stock buyback program.

## Moderna Plunges on FDA Shake-Up

Moderna (MRNA) led S&P 500 decliners, falling nearly 9% after FDA vaccine chief Peter Marks announced his resignation, citing a rift with Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.. Other vaccine stocks also saw losses following the announcement.

## Tesla's First Quarter Turmoil

Tesla's troubles extend beyond the broader tech selloff:

- European sales fell for the second straight month.
- China sales plunged 50% YoY in February amid rising competition.
- CEO Elon Musk's political involvement, including his position in the Trump administration, has sparked backlash and concerns of a "brand tornado crisis" due to rising protests.

Despite this, Wall Street remains divided. Of 19 analysts tracked by Visible Alpha:

- 11 rate Tesla a "buy"
- 4 rate it "hold"
- 4 rate it "sell"

The average price target is \$349, significantly above Monday's close at \$259.16.

## Commodities and Crypto Round Out the Session

- Gold futures rose 1.4% to nearly \$3,160/oz, setting record highs.
- WTI crude oil gained 2.9% to \$71.40/barrel.
- Bitcoin rebounded to \$82,400, up from an earlier low of \$81,300.

are not new, their impact may be amplified by today's demographic realities. For policymakers like the Federal Reserve, understanding these shifts will be critical in shaping responses to both inflation and labor trends.

## Key Data and Events to Watch

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- Corporate Earnings: FedEx, Micron, Nike, Accenture, Lennar, Jabil
- EU Summit: Focus on economic resilience and defense spending

U.S. Treasury Auction: Sale of 10-year inflation-protected securities

# Europe Moves Clocks Forward for Daylight Saving Time Despite Longstanding Controversy

BY JAN FRAZIER

Europe (Washington Insider Magazine) – March 30, 2025 – Most Europeans woke up on Sunday to clocks moved one hour forward, as daylight saving time in Europe officially began. Despite growing criticism and previous EU efforts to abolish the system, the decades-old practice remains in place across much of the continent.

Every year, clocks across Europe are adjusted forward by one hour on the last Sunday of March and back by one hour on the last Sunday of October. This weekend marked another shift, with Central European Time (CET) changing to Central European Summer Time (CEST), and the UK switching from Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) to British Summer Time (BST).

## Origins and Purpose of Daylight Saving Time

Daylight saving time (DST) was originally introduced in Germany during World War I to conserve energy by extending daylight hours in the evening. The practice spread across Europe, resurfaced during World War II, and was again adopted widely during the 1970s oil crisis.

The main aim was to reduce energy consumption, but the effectiveness of this goal has

since been questioned. Nonetheless, European countries have maintained the biannual clock changes ever since.

## Divided Opinions and EU Inaction

The practice has faced growing opposition over the years. Critics argue that DST disrupts sleep patterns, harms public health, and causes confusion across sectors. Research also links it to economic losses and

medical issues, including increased risk of heart attacks shortly after the change.

In 2018, the European Union launched an open consultation that attracted nearly 4 million responses, with a majority voting in favor of ending daylight saving time. The European Parliament backed a proposal in 2019 to end the practice. However, resistance from some member states and other priorities—such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and trade tensions—led





to the proposal stalling.

### Poland Seeks to Reignite the Discussion

Poland, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency, has indicated that it intends to revisit the issue. A spokesperson from the Polish presidency said informal consultations will be held to determine if momentum exists to move the proposal forward.

“As the clock is ticking, we will take our time to assess the situation,” said the Polish government, acknowledging the political divide within the 27-member bloc.

### Global Trends: Daylight Saving Losing Favor

While Europe continues to debate, many countries around the world have already eliminated daylight saving time. Russia, Iran, Turkey, Syria,

Uruguay, and Azerbaijan are among those that have scrapped the practice in the past decade. According to the Pew Research Center, only about a third of countries worldwide still observe DST, most of them in Europe.

Egypt, which abolished daylight saving in 2014, reintroduced it in 2023 in a bid to reduce energy usage once more.

### Outlook: No End in Sight for Clock Changes in Europe

Despite the persistent controversy and overwhelming public disapproval shown in past consultations, daylight saving time in Europe appears set to continue—at least for now. While some EU governments and citizens are eager to eliminate the practice, political will remains fragmented, and major geopolitical issues continue to dominate the bloc’s agenda.

As Europeans adjust to their new schedules this week, the biannual time change serves as a reminder that even the simplest policies can be surprisingly hard to change.

# Macron Pushes ‘Reassurance Force’ for Ukraine as European Allies Show Division



France (Washington Insider Magazine)—March 27, 2025—Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron has confirmed that not all European countries are on board with deploying troops to Ukraine as part of a proposed “reassurance force”, following a high-level summit in Paris aimed at bolstering support for Kyiv. Hosted at the Élysée Palace, the summit brought together leaders from nearly 30 nations, including the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and top EU and NATO representatives. It marked the third meeting of the so-called “coalition of the willing”, which supports Ukraine’s efforts to negotiate a ceasefire with

Moscow.

## Diverging Opinions on Troop Deployment

Macron stated clearly that unanimity is not needed to proceed with the initiative, revealing that France and the UK would move forward with the creation of a joint European reassurance force. However, he acknowledged that not all allies were willing or able to participate. Some countries expressed hesitation. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni reiterated that Italy does not plan to contribute troops, while Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala labeled discussions on European boots on the ground as “premature”

concrete until ceasefire terms are more

## Not a Peacekeeping Force, But a Deterrent

Macron emphasized that the reassurance force is not intended as a front-line peacekeeping force, nor a replacement for the Ukrainian military. Instead, it would serve as a deterrent against potential future Russian aggression. Talks are now underway to determine where the force might be deployed, with decisions dependent on political support and logistical capabilities among participating countries.

## Macron and Starmer to Co-Lead Strategic Efforts

The summit concluded with an agreement that Macron and Starmer will “co-pilot” the coalition’s actions, shaping future European security architecture and contributing to what Macron called “tomorrow’s Ukrainian army”.

France has already committed an additional €2 billion (\$2.16 billion) in military aid, including missiles, aircraft, and air defense systems. Zelenskyy hinted that other countries may also unveil new aid packages shortly.

### Russian Response and Diplomatic Tensions

Russia condemned the reassurance force as a covert military intervention. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova accused the UK and France of using peacekeeping as a façade, warning of a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia.

At the same time, Moscow expressed outrage over sanctions tied to the SWIFT payment system, demanding the reinstatement of Roselkhozbank as a precondition for continued ceasefire talks in the Black Sea. The EU firmly responded, saying sanctions will only be eased when Russia withdraws its troops from Ukrainian territory.

### Zelenskyy Warns Against Sanctions Easing

Zelenskyy warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin is attempting to divide the West, criticizing any “dangerous



signals” of easing sanctions. He also accused Russia of violating a temporary US-brokered ceasefire agreement by bombing Kherson, killing at least two civilians and causing widespread power outages. Meanwhile, Russia claimed Ukraine had launched drone and artillery attacks on Bryansk and Crimea, targeting energy infrastructure in retaliation.

### Starmer: ‘Russia is Playing Games’

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer

echoed Zelenskyy’s concerns, stating, “Russia is playing games,” and insisted that the West must stay firm. He stressed that easing pressure now would be a strategic mistake.

Despite mixed opinions on military involvement, the summit displayed broad support for continuing to supply Ukraine with weapons and economic aid, reinforcing its position ahead of any future ceasefire negotiations.

# Trump Threatens 200% Tariff on EU Alcohol, Sparks New Trade War Tensions

By Mandilee Hecht



US (Washington Insider Magazine)—March 12, 2025 — President Donald Trump has threatened to impose a 200% tariff on alcoholic imports from the European Union in retaliation for what he called a “nasty” 50% tariff on American whiskey. The move marks the latest escalation in a broader global trade war, pitting the United States against key allies and trading partners.

## Industry Alarm Over Potential Damage

European alcohol producers quickly sounded the alarm,

warning that the tariffs could have “devastating” effects on exports, particularly for wine and spirits. A U.S. distillers association also criticized the plan, issuing a statement that said, “We want toasts, not tariffs.”

Trump’s threat comes amid already heightened tensions after his administration imposed 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminium entering the U.S. The EU responded swiftly by announcing new levies on up to €26 billion (\$28bn) worth of American goods—including bourbon, motorcycles, and boats—starting April 1.

## Canada-U.S. Trade Talks Amid Row

Meanwhile, Canada is also navigating its own disputes with Washington. Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc and Ontario Premier Doug Ford recently met U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick to address escalating trade concerns between the two nations. Ford expressed optimism, saying he felt “very positive” about the discussions. Canada-U.S. Trade Talks Amid Row

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### Tariffs: Central to Trump’s Economic Vision

Tariffs have become a cornerstone of Trump’s economic policy, which is based on protecting U.S. industries and manufacturing. Trump believes the tariffs will help the country recapture economic dominance by leveling trade imbalances and incentivizing domestic production.

“We’re going to take in hundreds of billions of dollars in tariffs,” Trump said recently. “You’re not going to know where to spend all that money.”

But economists and trade experts warn that the president’s strategy could increase costs for American consumers and undermine global economic growth, especially as the international economy continues to depend on low-tariff trade systems built over the past century.

### A Brief History of Tariff-Driven Policy

Trump’s approach to using tariffs as revenue harks back to the pre-World War I era, when they were a major source of income for the U.S. government. After President Woodrow

Wilson defeated Theodore Roosevelt in 1912, tariffs were steadily reduced and replaced by income tax. Trump, however, is attempting a revival of this older philosophy—cutting taxes domestically while increasing import duties.

### Rundown: Trump’s Trade War Measures and Reactions

Here’s a quick summary of where global tariffs currently stand under Trump’s administration:

#### U.S. Tariffs

- Steel & Aluminium: 25% on all imports.
- Canada & Mexico: 25% on all goods, with some exceptions.
- China: Base tariff raised from 10% to 30%, citing fentanyl trade.
- EU Alcohol: Threat of 200% on wines, champagnes, and spirits.

#### Retaliatory Tariffs

- Canada: Duties on \$20 billion worth of U.S. goods, including food, apparel, and metal products.
- European Union: Tariffs on \$28 billion worth of U.S. exports, starting in April.
- China: New 15% tax on various U.S. farm goods.
- Mexico: No counter-tariffs yet, though under pressure.

#### Exceptions

- Canadian energy: Only 10% tariff.
- Vehicles from Mexico and Canada: Temporarily exempt.
- Low-value Chinese imports (<\$800): Not subject to new tariffs.



### What’s Next?

With each side escalating, global observers warn of rising prices, disrupted supply chains, and fraying diplomatic ties. The EU is unlikely to remove its whisky tariff without a broader agreement, and Trump’s threat to slap 200% tariffs on Europe’s prized alcohol exports has placed luxury goods and global relations in the crosshairs.

As the trade war barrels forward, the world waits to see who will blink first—or whether international commerce will continue to suffer hangovers from diplomatic brinkmanship.

# China Hits Back With 125% Tariffs as Trump Escalates Trade War

By Mandilee Hecht

China (Washington Insider Magazine)—April 12, 2025—Global markets are on edge as China announced a major escalation in the ongoing trade war with the United States, raising tariffs on U.S. imports from 84% to an eye-popping 125%, effective Saturday. The move follows President Donald Trump’s intensifying tariff policy, which has sparked fresh tension with Beijing and rattled Wall Street.

## China’s Swift Counterpunch

The Chinese government’s response came just days after Trump imposed new tariffs and paused Liberation Day duties for 90 days. Beijing’s latest tariff hike targets a broad swath of American exports, signaling that China is prepared to retaliate forcefully — even as it suggested that further escalation was unlikely.

Despite its aggressive move, China hinted at restraint going forward, with signals from Beijing indicating it would not necessarily continue raising tariffs if Washington pushed ahead.

## White House Pushes for Talks, Warns Beijing

Reports from CNN indicate that Trump administration officials warned China against retaliation, urging Chinese President Xi

Jinping to request a direct call with Trump to de-escalate the situation.

The White House later clarified that U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports are actually at least 145%, not 125% as Trump previously suggested. Despite mounting pressure, Trump and his Cabinet are attempting to reassure investors, insisting that the situation is under control and that new trade deals are on the horizon.

“We’re looking for certainty and stability,” said Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, noting that the 90-day pause provides a window for negotiations.

## Markets Swing Wildly But End Higher

The trade war has caused significant turbulence in the U.S. stock market. After a roller-coaster week of steep declines, historic rebounds, and renewed losses, major indexes closed the week on a surprisingly positive note.

- S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average posted their best weekly performance since 2023.
- The Nasdaq Composite had its strongest week since 2022, rising by 7%.

Market analysts attributed the rally to optimism that the pause in new tariffs might lead to renewed diplomacy, though sentiment remains fragile.



## Tariffs in Effect: Who’s Affected?

The baseline 10% U.S. tariff that went into effect on April 5 continues to apply to all targeted imports.

Under the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA):

- Compliant goods continue to move tariff-free across North America.
- Non-compliant goods face a 25% tariff, except energy and potash, which are taxed at 10%.

## What’s Next?

The world is watching closely as both Washington and Beijing play a high-stakes economic chess game. With global supply chains at risk and investor nerves fraying, any further escalation could have wide-reaching implications.

For now, all eyes are on whether President Xi will open a direct communication channel with Trump and whether the current pause period will yield any real breakthroughs—or merely delay the next chapter of an already unpredictable trade war.

# Turkish Trade Minister to Visit Bulgaria for Economic and Trade Talks

By Conor La Rouché



Istanbul (Washington Insider Magazine)—March 25, 2025 — Turkish Trade Minister Ömer Bolat will lead a high-level business delegation to Bulgaria as part of a diplomatic and commercial mission aimed at strengthening bilateral trade relations and exploring new investment opportunities.

The visit, organized with the support of the state-run Anadolu Agency, marks a renewed push to deepen Türkiye's economic footprint in the Balkans.

## Key Delegates and Agenda

Joining Minister Bolat will be Mustafa Gültepe, the President of the Türkiye Exporters' Assembly (TİM), along with top executives and representatives from various Turkish companies active in export and foreign trade.

According to official sources, the Turkish delegation will meet with a Bulgarian trade delegation, followed by high-level discussions with Petar Dilov, Bulgaria's Minister of Economy and Industry.

The key topics of discussion will include:

- Expanding bilateral trade volume
- Encouraging mutual investments
- Enhancing sectoral cooperation in manufacturing, logistics, and energy



- Addressing cross-border trade challenges

## Trade Figures Reflect Strong Partnership

Türkiye and Bulgaria share a robust trade relationship. In 2024, the total bilateral trade volume reached \$7.79 billion, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK). Of that, Türkiye exported goods worth \$5.15 billion, while imports from Bulgaria totaled \$2.64 billion.

These figures reflect a growing interdependence between the two nations, particularly in energy, construction materials, machinery, and food products.

## Community Engagement and Cultural Diplomacy

In addition to official meetings, Minister Bolat and his team will attend an iftar dinner with Turkish and Bulgarian business community members. The

dinner symbolizes not just economic dialogue but also cultural diplomacy during the holy month of Ramadan.

Beyond Trade: Bulgaria's Role in Tourism

Bulgaria is also a key tourism partner for Türkiye. With shared borders and rich historical ties, the two countries see significant cross-border tourism traffic. Discussions are expected to touch on ways to facilitate travel and tourism partnerships, especially in border regions.

## A Strategic Relationship

This visit is seen as part of Türkiye's broader strategy to deepen economic ties with neighboring countries, especially within the European Union framework, of which Bulgaria is a member. By reinforcing commercial links and investment dialogue, both sides aim to create sustainable economic growth and regional stability.

# Russia and Ukraine Agree to Black Sea Ceasefire, but Zelensky Warns of Russian “Lies”

By Jan Frazier

Russia (Washington Insider Magazine)— The breakthrough comes after separate U.S.-brokered talks with Russian and Ukrainian officials in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. According to U.S. sources, the discussions focused narrowly on de-escalation in the Black Sea to prevent economic collapse in global grain markets and avoid maritime disasters involving neutral cargo ships.

This deal differs from the more ambitious ceasefire proposals floated earlier during talks in Jeddah, highlighting how negotiations have been scaled back to more focused goals, such as protecting trade routes.

## Russia’s Conditions: Sanctions Relief and Swift Reinstatement

Russia has tied its commitment to the ceasefire to a series of economic demands, including:

- Lifting of sanctions on its banking and insurance sectors
- Re-entry into the SWIFT payment system
- Removal of restrictions on food exporters

These conditions raise doubts over the immediate implementation of the truce. Russia has a long track record of delaying or reversing peace agreements, and its latest demands are seen as a way to gain economic relief while preserving military leverage.



## Zelensky’s Doubts and Red Lines

Zelensky has urged caution, stating that Ukrainian forces will view any westward movement of Russian warships as a breach of the agreement. Speaking to reporters, he acknowledged the deal as “the right steps” but insisted it was far from comprehensive peace.

He also emphasized that Ukraine had not agreed to any territorial concessions, pushing back against speculation that Kyiv might freeze hostilities in exchange for limited security guarantees.

## Expert Analysis: A Ceasefire That Could Collapse at Any Time

BBC security correspondent Frank Gardner warns that despite the temporary calm, this agreement could unravel at any moment. Russia’s past violations of ceasefires —

including during the 2015 Minsk agreements — cast a long shadow over current negotiations.

While both nations may be feeling the exhaustion of prolonged warfare, neither side has achieved decisive strategic goals, leaving incentives for further conflict intact.

## Conclusion: A Pause, Not Peace

The Black Sea ceasefire marks a modest diplomatic achievement and offers a temporary reprieve for international shipping and agriculture markets. However, with Zelensky accusing Moscow of dishonesty and Russia demanding sanction relief, the agreement remains highly fragile. The world will be watching not just for compliance, but also for signs that this localized truce could become the foundation for a broader peace — or simply another footnote in a long and bloody war.

# Protesters Flood National Parks Nationwide Over Federal Job Cuts

BY ERIC GAHAGAN



US (Washington Insider Magazine) – From Yosemite to Yellowstone, thousands of protestors descended on nationwide parks across the United States this weekend, decrying President Donald Trump’s sweeping cuts to the federal workforce that have left the future of public lands in jeopardy.

The protests were sparked by the Trump administration’s recent move to fire approximately 2,000 new employees from the U.S. Forest Service and eliminate another 1,000 jobs at the National Park Service (NPS). The mass terminations form part of a broader initiative to shrink the federal bureaucracy, which critics argue is putting public lands, environmental safety, and visitor services at risk.

## A Nationwide Show of Dissent

Demonstrations took place at major parks like Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountains, and Yellowstone, as well as dozens of smaller sites across the country. Protesters carried signs reading “Protect Our Parks”, “Yellowstone is Not for Sale”, and “Public Lands Belong to the People”, voicing anger at the job cuts and support for the employees who maintain and safeguard America’s natural treasures.

John Goodwin, a retired National Park Service employee, joined a protest in San Francisco’s Golden Gate National Recreation Area. “We need to hire back the people who were fired, not only at national parks but every federal employee who has lost their job

in the last six weeks,” he said.

In Washington state, more than 50 demonstrators gathered at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site. “Sometimes it feels like there’s not a whole lot that we can do in the current political environment,” said local protester Austin Woods. “But one thing that we can do is be present, be vocal, and be passionate.”

## Impact on Park Services

Employees who lost their jobs warned that the cuts will lead to longer wait times at entrances, unhygienic restroom conditions, and compromised safety on trails and campsites. Many of those let go were within their probationary periods, making them easier to dismiss without standard due process protections.

Laid-off employees at Yosemite staged a symbolic protest by hanging an upside-down American flag from the summit of El Capitan — a traditional symbol of “dire distress” in the U.S. Flag Code.

The administration’s decision to implement these layoffs followed failed attempts to encourage voluntary buyouts and a government-wide hiring freeze. A memo released last



week instructed agencies to prepare for additional “large-scale reductions in force.” However, that directive was swiftly blocked by a federal judge, who ruled it legally invalid and ordered it rescinded.

### Public Outrage and Political Fallout

While the administration has promised to reinstate at least 50 jobs and hire up to 3,000 seasonal workers to cover park operations during the busy summer months, critics argue that this is a short-term fix for a long-term problem.

“Public lands belong to all

Americans, and federal agencies and federal employees work on behalf of the American people,” said protester Peri Sasnett, who demonstrated at the Roger Williams National Memorial in Providence, Rhode Island. She and others have called the terminations “illegal” and are demanding the full reinstatement of fired employees.

This growing discontent is the latest in a series of public reactions to Trump’s restructuring of federal agencies. Since his return to office in January, the administration has cut staff

across sectors, aligning with conservative goals to reduce government spending and bureaucracy. A Turning Point for Public Lands?

The protests mark one of the largest grassroots mobilizations in defense of public lands in recent years. As the administration presses forward with its cuts and reforms, park advocates, environmentalists, and former federal employees vow to keep up the pressure.

“These parks are a part of our national identity,” said Woods. “They should be protected — not gutted for politics.”

# USDA Cuts Hit Food Banks, Risking Hunger for Low-Income Americans

By Christina Levandowski

US (Washington Insider Magazine) – Food banks across the United States are warning of worsening hunger and food insecurity following over \$1 billion in funding cuts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) under President Donald Trump’s administration. As demand for food assistance continues to grow, these cuts are leaving organizations scrambling to meet community needs with fewer resources and dwindling supplies.

## Food Aid Programs Frozen or Cancelled

At the heart of the crisis are the Trump administration’s decisions to pause funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and terminate the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program. Together, these programs have served as lifelines for millions of Americans and supported local farmers by purchasing food for distribution through food banks and pantries.

Feeding America, the nation’s largest network of food banks, said USDA has frozen half of TEFAP’s funding—around \$500 million—from the Commodity Credit Corporation. The LFPA, which contributed another \$500 million annually, was also canceled entirely, cutting off major avenues of local produce and meat procurement for food pantries.



In a letter to USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins, 26 U.S. Senators, including two independents, voiced concern that these cuts could have a “significant and damaging impact upon millions of people.”

## Devastating Effects Across the Country

Reuters interviewed food banks in seven states—West Virginia, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, California, and Nebraska. All reported a sharp drop in USDA food deliveries and warned of the consequences.

In Charleston, West Virginia, the Roosevelt Community Center and Trinity’s Table, both reliant on USDA deliveries, say their food shipments have shrunk drastically.

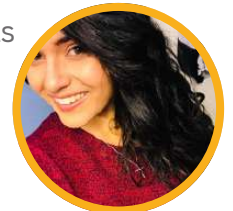
Volunteer coordinator Sara Busse described how an 18-wheeler’s

worth of food has been reduced to just a few boxes of dried goods. “It’s

dreary, it’s very frightening. We’re all losing sleep,” she said.

Mountaineer Food Bank, also in West Virginia, anticipates losing 40% of its April TEFAP shipments, according to head Chad Morrison. That includes essential items like cheese, eggs, and milk for its 450 pantries and feeding programs.

In Illinois, Northern Illinois Food Bank CEO Julie Yurko reported receiving \$3 million in LFPA funding over the past 18 months—now completely gone. “We are going to have less produce to give to our neighbors,” she said. Illinois alone has seen \$14.7 million in terminated funding and an additional \$6.4 million frozen, ending a popular food box initiative.





In California, the Community Action Partnership of Kern says it is relying on leftovers from restaurants to make up for shortfalls. Around 50% of its usual stock from TEFAP has paused, threatening its ability to feed communities in Kern County.

### Rising Hunger Amid Inflation

These cuts come at a time when U.S. hunger rates are at their highest in nearly a decade. According to USDA data, 13.5% of Americans struggled with food insecurity in 2023, with rural communities facing even higher rates of 15.4%.

The rollback of pandemic-era food aid programs and rising inflation have made it harder for low-income families to access food. For many, food banks are a last safety net.

Anna Pesek, a farmer in Iowa, said 20% of her farm's sales went to the LFPF program last year. With that lifeline gone, she doubts her pasture-raised pork and turkeys will reach food pantries again. "It feels really devastating," she said.

### Looking Ahead

Although the USDA insists that it is continuing to support food banks, officials have not addressed detailed questions

about the funding freeze. Feeding America is urging the Trump administration to unfreeze the TEFAP funds swiftly.

Meanwhile, organizations across the country are bracing for continued strain. At a senior meal hosted at the East End Resource Center in Charleston, 78-year-old Martha Ross scanned the meager USDA-supplied offerings and sighed, "I guess we'll get real skinny."

As hunger climbs and supplies dwindle, food banks and the communities they serve are left wondering how long they can sustain the growing need—without urgent intervention from the federal government.

# Huge Power Outage in Cuba Leaves Millions in the Dark

By Eric Gahagan



US (Washington Insider Magazine) – Cuba has once again been plunged into darkness following the collapse of its national power grid late Friday evening, leaving millions across the island without electricity and compounding the country’s deepening economic and energy crisis.

According to officials at Union Electrica (UNE), the outage began at 8:15 p.m. local time due to a failure at the Diezmero substation in Havana. The breakdown triggered a cascading shutdown of power generation systems across the island, affecting all of Cuba’s 9.7 million residents.

By sunrise on Saturday, UNE reported that it was generating a mere 225 megawatts—less than 10 percent of national demand. Critical services such as hospitals were being powered by parallel circuits and generator units. President Miguel Díaz-Canel addressed the public via social media, confirming that efforts were underway to reconnect various regions to the grid.

“Several provinces have parallel circuits and generator units are starting to be synchronised,” Díaz-Canel wrote on X (formerly Twitter).

## A Pattern of Power Failures

This is the fourth nationwide blackout in under six months, with three similar outages

occurring in late 2024. Some of those blackouts lasted for several days, severely disrupting life on the island.

While Havana experiences daily blackouts of four to five hours, residents in rural and eastern provinces such as Holguín are seeing rolling outages of up to 20 hours a day.

“My God, this is terrible, we’re in for a dark weekend,” said Karen Gutierrez, a 32-year-old ice cream seller in Havana.

“It really bugs me,” said Andres Lopez, a 67-year-old from Holguín. “Let’s see when they get the power back on.”

Many residents told local and international media they were growing increasingly frustrated and demoralized by the power shortages, which have become a regular feature of life in Cuba

## Sanctions and Fuel Shortages Deepen the Crisis

The current blackout comes amid Cuba’s worst economic crisis in three decades, worsened by longstanding U.S. sanctions, an outdated energy infrastructure, and declining oil shipments from Venezuela. For years, Cuba relied on subsidized oil from its South American ally, but Venezuela’s own economic struggles have made that support unreliable.

The U.S. trade embargo, originally imposed during the Cold War, has been tightened under President Donald Trump,



who has pledged to restore a “tough” stance against the Cuban government. These sanctions have complicated Cuba’s access to fuel, spare parts, and financial transactions, further impairing efforts to stabilize its aging energy grid.

## A Push for Solar Power

In a bid to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and strengthen energy resilience, Cuba is currently working on the construction of at least 55 solar farms using Chinese technology. These installations are expected to generate around 1,200 megawatts, accounting for 12 percent of the national power supply when completed.

However, for now, that promise remains in the future. Cubans are left facing dark homes, spoiled food, and a disrupted daily routine with little clarity on when reliable electricity will return.

“Right now, no one knows when the power will come back on,” said Abel Bonne, speaking to Reuters from Havana’s Malecon boulevard.

Until then, the island remains in a deepening shadow—both figuratively and literally.

# Wholesale Egg Prices Are Dropping—But When Will Shoppers Feel the Relief?

By Christina Levandowski

US (Washington Insider Magazine) – After a long stretch of high prices in the egg aisle, Americans may finally get some relief. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced Friday that wholesale egg prices have been steadily falling since late February—raising hopes that cheaper cartons could soon appear on store shelves.

According to the USDA, the average wholesale price for large white eggs has dropped to \$4.15 per dozen—about half of what it was just weeks ago. But while distributors are paying less, grocery store prices haven't yet followed suit. So, when exactly will shoppers see a difference?



## Why Retail Prices Lag Behind

Even though wholesale prices are falling, retail prices typically respond more slowly. That's because stores are still selling inventory purchased at higher prices, according to Joseph Balagtas, professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

"The eggs we see [at] the store today were purchased by the retailer at a wholesale price that prevailed a couple weeks ago," he explained in an email.

Supply chain delays, retail caution, and inventory turnover rates all contribute to the lag. Jadrian Wooten, an economist at Virginia Tech, adds that supermarkets are wary of slashing prices too fast,

especially with the ongoing threat of more bird flu outbreaks.

"They're always going to lower egg prices a little bit slower than the wholesale side of things would do," Wooten noted.

If current trends hold—and bird flu remains contained—retailers could lower egg prices within the next few weeks.

## Bird Flu Recovery Fuels Supply Growth

The recent stability in egg prices is tied directly to the absence of major bird flu outbreaks this March. With fewer flocks affected, egg production has started to rebound, easing the strain on supply and pushing

down wholesale prices.

Egg farmers, however, are still recovering. When a flock is culled due to avian flu, it can take six months to a year to fully restore egg-laying operations.

Many experts say mid-to-late summer is when production may stabilize significantly—if no new outbreaks emerge.

## Holidays May Cause Temporary Demand Spikes

With Easter and Passover approaching, seasonal demand for eggs is expected to increase.

Still, economists believe this won't significantly delay a fall in prices—unless bird flu returns





## No Sign of Price Gouging, Say Economists

Amid rising consumer frustration earlier this year, some lawmakers accused food companies of price gouging. But economists interviewed by NPR are skeptical.

Wholesale prices increased 350% from May 2024 to early 2025, while retail prices rose only 120% during the same period. Balagtas said this suggests retailers did not pass the full cost burden onto consumers.

“Retailers are trying not to pass the full costs of higher wholesale prices on to consumers,” he said.

David Anderson, a livestock economist at Texas A&M,

agreed. He emphasized that bird flu dramatically reduced supplies, which alone would drive prices up—not necessarily opportunistic pricing strategies. “If you got bird flu, then you have no eggs to sell and you are not benefiting from higher prices,” Anderson said.

## Should You Buy in Bulk Now?

Experts recommend avoiding panic-buying or hoarding eggs. In fact, doing so could slow the price recovery by spiking demand. Higher prices encourage consumers to cut back—leading to lower overall demand, which helps normalize costs.

“High prices are a market signal to buy fewer eggs,” Anderson

noted.

Wooten echoed this advice: “Some of what might be driving egg prices is the panic buying that people have been doing.”

## Will Eggs Ever Be \$2 Again?

That’s the big question. In early 2023, a dozen eggs cost around \$2. But by February 2025, the national average had jumped to \$5.90, with some regions seeing prices over \$8.

Still, Wooten is cautiously optimistic.

“I don’t think it’s going to take years to get us back to \$2 or \$3 eggs,” he said. “Hopefully by summer, farms will be back at full production—assuming bird flu stays away.”

# North Dakota Poised to Challenge Same-Sex Marriage Ruling in Symbolic Supreme Court Appeal

By Christina Levandowski



US (Washington Insider Magazine) – North Dakota is on the brink of becoming the first U.S. state to formally urge the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision that legalized same-sex marriage nationwide. The effort, although symbolic and nonbinding, has ignited fierce debate and sparked outrage from LGBTQ+ advocates and community members within the state.

The measure passed the Republican-led House of Representatives in February and now awaits a Senate vote, which remains uncertain. If approved, the resolution would formally reject the Supreme Court's landmark decision and call on

the justices to reconsider and reverse it.

## Framing It as a Constitutional Issue

Republican Rep. Bill Tveit, who sponsored the resolution, claims the 2015 decision violated the Tenth Amendment, North Dakota's state constitution, and the North Dakota Century Code. "Every one of us in this building took an oath to uphold the Constitution," Tveit said, defending the measure as a matter of legal and constitutional integrity. But critics say the resolution does little beyond conveying hostility toward LGBTQ+ citizens. Among them is Laura

Balliet, a lawyer and North Dakota National Guard member who married her wife in 2020.

"I don't know what this resolution does other than to tell people like myself, my friends and my family that we're not welcome here," Balliet told a Senate panel on Wednesday. "This is my home."

## A National Push with Limited Traction

The effort is part of a wider push across conservative states, spearheaded by MassResistance, a Massachusetts-based organization labeled an anti-LGBTQ hate group by GLAAD. While similar measures have

been proposed in Idaho and a few other states, none have gained as much legislative momentum as North Dakota's. Ironically, while some states attempt to roll back marriage equality, others are moving in the opposite direction. States like California, Colorado, Hawaii, and Nevada have repealed outdated bans on same-sex marriage in recent years. Virginia may follow suit in 2026.

### Political Backtracking and Divided Views

After the resolution passed the House, several Republican lawmakers expressed regret or clarified their votes. Rep. Matt Ruby said he misunderstood the intent and now believes it sent the wrong message.

"The vote sent a bad message — that your marriage isn't valid and you're not welcome," Ruby said, clarifying his support for marriage equality.

Rep. Dwight Kiefert, however, stood by his vote, citing his Christian faith and a belief that marriage is rooted in the biblical union between Adam and Eve.

The resolution asserts that marriage is between "one man, a biological male, and one woman, a biological female," raising further alarm among LGBTQ+ advocates who view it as religiously motivated legislation.

### A Deeply Polarizing Symbol

Though the resolution would carry no legal weight, it symbolizes a growing divide



over LGBTQ+ rights in conservative states. It also echoes broader national concerns following the 2022 reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, in which Justice Clarence Thomas suggested the Court should revisit other precedents — including *Obergefell*.

For many North Dakotans,

particularly LGBTQ+ residents, the proposal is more than political posturing—it feels like a personal attack.

"It's a slap in the face," said Balliet. "I want to be welcome here. This is where I live, where I serve, and where I've built my life."

# Trump's Bid to End Birthright Citizenship Reaches Supreme Court in Major Legal Clash

By Eric Gahagan



US (Washington Insider Magazine) – In a bold legal move with sweeping implications, the Trump administration has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to lift a nationwide block on the president's executive order ending birthright citizenship for children born in the U.S. to undocumented immigrants and non-citizen residents.

Signed by President Donald Trump on his first day in office, the controversial order aims to deny automatic U.S. citizenship to babies born on American soil unless at least one parent is a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident.

Three lower courts — in Massachusetts, Maryland, and Washington State — quickly issued nationwide injunctions to halt implementation, deeming the order constitutionally dubious. Now, administration lawyers are challenging the

broad reach of these judicial blocks, marking the first time the dispute has reached the nation's highest court.

## What the Trump Administration Wants

In emergency applications filed this week, Acting Solicitor General Sarah M. Harris argued that the nationwide injunctions should be limited in scope. The administration isn't asking for the policy to go into effect everywhere — just in states not actively involved in the lawsuits. "Universal injunctions have reached epidemic proportions since the start of the current administration," Harris wrote, calling the administration's request a "modest" limitation.

The administration's push reflects a long-simmering debate over the power of federal judges to block policies nationwide, a

tool used by courts under both Democratic and Republican administrations. If the Supreme Court agrees to limit or end such injunctions, it could dramatically reshape how federal policies are challenged in court.

## Legal Experts Warn of Chaos

Some legal scholars argue that dismantling nationwide injunctions could cause confusion and flood the courts with individual lawsuits.

"You're asking each and every one of those families to bring a suit," said Amanda Frost, a law professor at the University of Virginia. "For a year or two or three while a case is making its way to the Supreme Court, lots of individuals may suffer."

Others, like Notre Dame law professor Samuel L. Bray, say this case presents an "unusually good vehicle" for the Court to finally clarify whether such sweeping judicial orders are legal.

The Supreme Court has so far avoided directly ruling on nationwide injunctions despite repeated opportunities in recent years. Justices have voiced skepticism in past opinions, but the legal question remains unsettled.



## Constitutional Questions on Birthright Citizenship

At the heart of the controversy is a deeper, more explosive question: Is birthright citizenship guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution?

The 14th Amendment, adopted in 1868, states that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States.” This principle has long been upheld, most notably in the 1898 Supreme Court ruling, *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, which confirmed citizenship rights for almost all U.S.-born children regardless of their parents’ status.

Still, conservative legal scholars like John Eastman have argued that this interpretation is overly broad. They point to the phrase “subject to the jurisdiction thereof” as excluding children of undocumented immigrants, who, they claim, do not have full legal ties to the country.

This argument has not held up in court so far. A Seattle federal judge called Trump’s executive order “blatantly unconstitutional,” reaffirming the longstanding precedent that birthright citizenship applies broadly.

## Political and Legal Stakes

If the Supreme Court agrees to lift the injunctions, the executive order could be enforced immediately in states not covered by the lawsuits,

creating a patchwork of legal standards across the country. The broader constitutional question may not be resolved right away, but legal experts expect it to eventually return to the Supreme Court after appeals.

Critics fear the administration’s moves could erode foundational legal protections and politicize the courts even further.

“The universal relief cases are

pushing the courts to act fast,” said Bray, suggesting that political urgency is distorting legal processes.

Meanwhile, immigrant rights advocates are preparing for a drawn-out battle.

“This is an attack on the Constitution, pure and simple,” said one advocate who asked to remain anonymous. “And it won’t stop here.”



# Ukraine Calls for Firm US Measures as Russia Reviews Ceasefire Offer

By Jan Frazier

US (Washington Insider Magazine) – As tensions intensify on the Eastern European front, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has urged the United States to take “strong steps” if Russia rejects a proposed 30-day ceasefire, which Kyiv has already accepted.

The ceasefire proposal, drafted by US officials and endorsed by Ukraine, aims to temporarily halt hostilities and provide breathing room for further diplomatic negotiations. However, Moscow has not yet confirmed its stance and is reportedly still “studying” the offer.

## Ceasefire Proposal in Limbo

The truce effort has reached a pivotal point, with US President Donald Trump sending Steve Witkoff, his Middle East envoy, to Moscow for further talks. Though Witkoff is not a Russia expert, he previously brokered the release of an American prisoner in Russia, giving him a degree of credibility with President Vladimir Putin.

“Reaching a truce is now up to Russia,” Trump said, highlighting what he described as “positive messages” surrounding the effort.

Still, Ukrainian officials remain cautious. Former defense minister Andriy Zagorodnyuk warned that critical issues—



especially territorial integrity—remain unresolved.

“We still don’t understand what Russia will want in exchange for peace,” Zagorodnyuk told Reuters.

Ihor Zhovkva, another top Ukrainian official, was even more blunt:

“Ukraine will never cede any territories. It’s very simple.”

This position clashes with concerns raised by Keir Giles of Chatham House, who said that any agreement freezing the front lines could solidify Russian territorial gains and create a long-term frozen conflict instead of a true resolution.

## Putin in Kursk as Military Push Continues

Even as diplomacy unfolds, President Putin made a surprise

visit to military positions in the Kursk region, where Russia claims to have made significant advances. Clad in military gear, Putin was seen alongside top generals, including Valery Gerasimov, reviewing operations in a region where Ukrainian forces have been active for months.

The optics of Putin’s visit are being interpreted as a strong signal that Russia remains committed to the battlefield, even as ceasefire negotiations take shape.

## US and Europe Weigh Next Steps

The European Union’s defense ministers pledged closer cooperation amid the uncertain ceasefire, and the United Kingdom announced it is



accelerating efforts to form a “coalition of the willing” to support Ukraine.

Meanwhile, US Senator Lindsey Graham, a close Trump ally and vocal foreign policy advocate, expressed deep skepticism that Russia will accept the deal.

“Zelensky has passed the test of wanting peace. It is now up to Putin,” Graham posted on social media.

“If Russia doesn’t act in good faith, there will be hell to pay.”

Graham also announced plans to introduce “bone-breaking sanctions” and new tariffs targeting Russia if it refuses the ceasefire.

### **A Strategic Move or a Political Delay?**

Critics warn that Russia’s delay in responding to the US-backed truce may be a strategic ploy to consolidate military gains. The Kremlin’s calculation could hinge on how Washington responds if Moscow continues its offensive despite Ukraine’s diplomatic openness.

Adding to the tension, Russia conducted a strategic bomber flight over neutral waters in the Baltic Sea. The Tu-22M3 bombers were shadowed by NATO fighters during the four-hour mission — another sign of

Russia’s assertive military posture in the region.

### **The Stakes Ahead**

If Russia rejects the proposal, the credibility of the US and its influence over conflict resolution in Europe could be tested. For Ukraine, the ceasefire represents a short-term opportunity to regroup, but not at the cost of ceding territory or legitimacy.

The Biden administration faces a critical choice: How far will the US go to back Ukraine if Russia walks away from the negotiating table?

# Republican Leaders Reject Trump's NATO Command Reform

By John Ruehl



US (Washington Insider Magazine) – In a rare display of internal dissent, senior congressional Republicans have warned the Trump administration against a controversial defense restructuring that could see the United States give up its command of NATO forces in Europe. The proposal, if enacted, would end a 75-year tradition of American leadership in the alliance and signal a sharp shift in U.S. military posture. Senator Roger Wicker and Representative Mike Rogers—the top Republicans on the Senate and House Armed Services Committees—issued a joint statement voicing strong opposition to the reported changes, first revealed by NBC News.

“We will not accept significant changes to our warfighting structure that are made without a rigorous interagency process,” the statement read. “Such moves risk undermining American deterrence around the globe.”

## A Strategic Realignment?

According to NBC, the Trump administration is considering relinquishing the role of Supreme Allied Commander

Europe (SACEUR), a position held exclusively by American generals since NATO's formation in 1949. Additionally, the administration is exploring the consolidation of U.S. European and African Commands into a single joint command based in Germany. It is also weighing the cancellation of a planned military expansion in Japan, which would mark a retreat from America's strategic pivot to the Indo-Pacific.

These potential moves come on the heels of an 8% proposed cut to the Pentagon's budget, reportedly orchestrated by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth in coordination with Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. The budget reductions have already triggered backlash for what critics say are “brutal cuts” to key areas of federal defense spending.

## Republican Divide Widens

The Wicker-Rogers statement signals a growing rift between defense hawks in Congress and Trump's inner circle. While both lawmakers expressed continued support for Trump's calls to increase NATO members' defense spending, they were unequivocal in their support for maintaining U.S. leadership.

“We support continuing America's leadership abroad,” they emphasized, adding that the role of SACEUR is central to maintaining global stability.

This criticism is particularly notable given the broader trend of Republican acquiescence to Trump's policies since his return to office. Observers say this could mark a turning point in intra-party dynamics, especially as defense-related decisions begin to test longstanding Republican orthodoxy on international engagement and deterrence.

## NATO Legacy at Stake



Military experts and former commanders have also sounded the alarm. Retired Admiral James Stavridis, who served as SACEUR from 2009 to 2013, told NBC News that relinquishing the post would be “a political mistake of epic proportion.”

“This would be seen, correctly, as probably the first step toward leaving the alliance altogether,” Stavridis warned.

Since the post was first held by General Dwight D. Eisenhower—who later became U.S. President—SACEUR has symbolized America's leading role in global security and collective defense. Other prominent holders of the role include Alexander Haig, a future U.S. Secretary of State. With current SACEUR General Chris Cavoli expected to complete his term this summer, Trump's reported plans raise immediate questions about succession, alliance unity, and the future of U.S. strategic leadership.

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# Trump Defends Waltz Over Signal Group Chat Leak, Calls Incident a ‘Glitch’

By Jan Frazier



US (Washington Insider Magazine) – President Donald Trump has said he will “look into” the use of the encrypted messaging app Signal within the U.S. government after a major security blunder placed his administration in the spotlight. The controversy erupted after Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, revealed he was mistakenly added to a Signal group chat involving senior Trump administration officials discussing military strikes on Yemen.

Trump, while defending his national security adviser Mike Waltz—the person Goldberg claims added him—downplayed the incident, referring to it as a “glitch” and insisting that “these things happen.” Trump added, “Michael Waltz has learned a lesson,” but made it clear that he

doesn’t believe Waltz needs to apologize or face consequences

## **Democrats Demand Accountability, Intelligence Chiefs Deny Breach**

The leak sparked immediate backlash from Democratic lawmakers who labeled the incident as “sloppy, careless and incompetent.” Many are demanding a full Senate investigation and potential disciplinary action. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Roger Wicker has confirmed that an official probe will be launched.

Despite the uproar, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and CIA Director John Ratcliffe have denied that any classified data was shared.

Ratcliffe testified before Congress that the use of Signal is permitted for unclassified discussions and emphasized that no actionable intelligence was exposed.

## **The Journalist’s Account: A Blunder Exposed**

According to Goldberg, he received a connection request on March 11 from “Michael Waltz” and was later added to a group chat labeled “Houthi PC Small Group.” The chat, he says, included participants using names of senior officials such as CIA Director Ratcliffe, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, and Vice President JD Vance.

The group reportedly discussed ongoing and future airstrikes on Yemen, including sensitive details like target coordinates,

strike sequences, and even names of CIA agents. Goldberg realized the conversation was real only after airstrikes occurred at the predicted time and promptly left the chat.

### Human Error, Not App Vulnerability

Experts note the incident reflects human error rather than a technological flaw in Signal itself. Matt Navarra, a social media expert, likened the mistake to “forgetting to close

the door to a classified briefing room.” He emphasized that even the most secure apps cannot guard against user mistakes like misidentifying a contact.

### Ex-Officials and NSA Sound Alarm

Mick Mulroy, a former Pentagon official and CIA officer, condemned the use of Signal for such a sensitive conversation, saying “this is unacceptable.” He warned that adversaries like Russia could exploit such lapses, especially when officials are traveling, as was reportedly the case for envoy Steve Witkoff.

Adding to the concern, internal NSA documents obtained by CBS News show that the agency had previously flagged Signal as a high-risk app due to its popularity among surveillance targets and recent phishing attempts by Russian hackers.

### Trump Sticks to Defense, Signals End of Signal?

Despite mounting criticism,



Trump remained firm in his support of Waltz. He told reporters that “nothing classified was shared,” and blamed technology for the mishap. He also said he was unfamiliar with Signal but implied it might not be used again for government matters.

The White House appears to be banking on the idea that this scandal—like many before—will eventually pass. But with bipartisan concern in the Senate and an open investigation looming, the Signal group chat leak may be far from over.

# U.S. Defense Chief to Visit Philippines Amid Rising South China Sea Tensions

By Jan Frazier

(Washington Insider Magazine)—MANILA, Philippines — U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is set to make his first visit to the Philippines as part of his initial Indo-Pacific tour, signaling Washington's renewed focus on bolstering defense ties and responding to rising tensions in the South China Sea.

The visit, scheduled for March 28–29, will involve high-level discussions with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro. Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose Manuel Romualdez confirmed the itinerary and emphasized the importance of the visit in reaffirming U.S. support amid growing Chinese aggression in the disputed maritime region.

## A Strategic Message to Beijing

“This sends a strong message to China about the strength of U.S.-Philippine relations,” Romualdez told the Associated Press. The ambassador noted that talks will focus not only on the rising incidents between Chinese and Philippine forces but also on “more significant support” for Philippine security efforts from the Trump administration.

China continues to assert sweeping claims over nearly the entire South China Sea, a strategic waterway critical to global trade. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan also have overlapping claims. However, Chinese-

Philippine confrontations—especially involving naval and coast guard units—have escalated notably over the past two years.

## Mutual Defense and Military Capability

In a phone call with Teodoro in February, Hegseth reaffirmed America's commitment to the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, a cornerstone of U.S.-Philippine security ties. According to a Pentagon statement by spokesperson John Ulyot, the leaders agreed on “the importance of reestablishing deterrence in the South China Sea” and enhancing the capacity of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The U.S. and Philippines have long held joint military drills, but recent maritime confrontations have pushed both sides to reassess the need for greater military interoperability and faster response mechanisms.

## “America First” Policy Under Scrutiny

While the Trump administration has emphasized its “America First” doctrine, concerns have emerged in the region about the depth of Washington's commitment to traditional allies. Hegseth's trip is being seen as a reassurance of that commitment and a continuation of a U.S. pivot to the Indo-Pacific.



Still, Beijing has remained firm in its rhetoric, cautioning Washington against “interfering” in what it terms a regional dispute. Chinese officials have repeatedly warned that U.S. involvement only inflames tensions and undermines peace and stability in Asia.

## Regional Implications

Hegseth's Manila visit will likely influence broader regional dynamics. The Philippines is a critical player in the U.S. strategy to counter China's growing naval footprint in the South China Sea. The visit also comes as several Southeast Asian nations ramp up military modernization programs and seek closer ties with external powers like the U.S., Japan, and Australia.

With growing friction over contested islands, resource exploitation, and freedom of navigation, Hegseth's trip marks a pivotal moment in U.S.-Philippine relations—and sets the tone for America's broader strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific.

# U.S. and Japan Reinforce Military Alliance to Deter China, Says Defense Secretary Hegseth

By John Ruehl

US (Washington Insider Magazine) – U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth underscored the deepening military partnership between the United States and Japan during a high-profile visit to Tokyo on Sunday, declaring both countries share a “warrior ethos” essential in countering Chinese aggression, particularly around the Taiwan Strait.

Meeting with Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani, Hegseth described Japan as an “indispensable partner” in confronting what he called communist Chinese military expansionism. “America is committed to sustaining robust, ready and credible deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, including across the Taiwan Strait,” Hegseth said during the joint briefing.

## Heightened Tensions Over Taiwan

China has significantly increased military activity near Taiwan over the past few years, including frequent air incursions and naval exercises. Beijing claims the self-governed island as part of its territory and has not ruled out using force to achieve unification.

In response, the U.S. has sought to reassure allies in the region of its security commitments, despite former President Donald Trump’s continued focus on an “America First” agenda. Japan remains one of the U.S.’s closest

allies, hosting approximately 50,000 American troops and advanced fighter squadrons, primarily based in Okinawa.

## Concerns Over U.S. Commitment

Although the U.S. and Japan agreed under Biden’s administration to restructure military cooperation, framing China as their “greatest strategic challenge,” Trump’s renewed criticisms of the alliance have sparked anxiety in Tokyo. Earlier this month, Trump questioned the fairness of the U.S.-Japan defense pact, saying, “Who makes these deals?”—a comment that raised doubts about the alliance’s future.

Nevertheless, Hegseth sought to reassure Japanese leaders, stating that his mission is to build an alliance “so robust that both the reality and the perception of deterrence is real and ongoing.”

## Missile Cooperation and Defense Spending

In concrete terms, Hegseth and Nakatani announced plans to accelerate joint production of advanced missile systems. These include beyond-visual-range AMRAAM air-to-air missiles and the possible co-production of SM-6 surface-to-air missiles, which could help alleviate the current munitions shortage affecting both nations.

“Washington is confident that



Japan will make the right decision on what capabilities are needed in our alliance,” Hegseth said, alluding to expectations that Tokyo will expand its defense investments.

This comes at a sensitive time, as the Trump administration has also moved forward with a 25 percent tariff on Japanese auto imports, set to take effect on April 3—a move that has economic implications for U.S.-Japan relations even as defense cooperation intensifies.

## Strategic Shift in Asia

Hegseth’s visit signals a strong U.S. pivot toward consolidating regional partnerships in the face of a more assertive China. With tensions simmering not only over Taiwan but also in the broader Indo-Pacific, both Washington and Tokyo are pushing for increased defense readiness and interoperability.

Despite uncertainties surrounding the long-term direction of U.S. foreign policy under Trump’s second term, the Pentagon’s top official made clear that security coordination with Japan remains a top priority in Washington’s Indo-Pacific strategy.

# Zelensky Responds with Humor to Truce Reports from Macron and Starmer

BY JAN FRAZIER

US (Washington Insider Magazine) – During a press event following a European summit in London on 3 March 2025, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky offered a lighthearted response to a question about reported truce discussions. BBC’s Laura Kuenssberg asked Zelensky whether he was aware of a proposed alternative ceasefire suggested by UK Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron. Zelensky, before boarding a flight out of the UK, smiled and replied, “I’m aware of everything.” His brief but pointed response captured the attention of reporters, highlighting his cautious but composed stance on diplomatic developments surrounding the war in Ukraine.

## Macron and Starmer Suggest Alternative Month-Long Truce

French newspaper Le Figaro reported earlier that President Macron had shared details of a proposed month-long truce supported by himself and Sir Keir Starmer. According to the report, the two leaders are skeptical of the current ceasefire agreement supposedly backed by the US and Russia. Instead, they are believed to have put forward an alternative temporary peace plan, distinct from the broader ceasefire proposals circulated by Washington and Moscow.



Macron was quoted as expressing distrust in the feasibility of a deal brokered by the US and Russia, suggesting that a more neutral, European-led approach might offer a better path toward de-escalation — albeit temporarily.

## Zelensky’s Stance: Subtle, Strategic, and Alert

While President Zelensky did not confirm or deny knowledge of the specific proposal, his response implies a desire to remain flexible and cautious amidst multiple competing diplomatic efforts. Ukraine, at the center of these negotiations, continues to navigate the challenges of aligning with Western allies while protecting its national interests on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. His brief comment may be interpreted as a diplomatic signal — aware but noncommittal — suggesting Ukraine is monitoring all potential deals while

maintaining autonomy in its decision-making.

## A Divided Front on Ceasefire Strategy?

The apparent divergence between the US-Russia-backed ceasefire and the Franco-British proposal underscores growing tensions among Western powers regarding how best to bring temporary peace to Ukraine. Macron and Starmer’s alternative plan has not yet been detailed publicly, but the fact that it bypasses American coordination could mark a subtle shift in European foreign policy independence.

Whether Zelensky will endorse such a proposal remains unclear. However, as the war grinds on and political dynamics evolve, Ukraine is likely to face increasing pressure to consider ceasefire measures — especially those that come with strong European backing.

# China Warns It Is Ready for “Any Type of War” Amid Rising Tensions with US

By Mandilee Hecht



US (Washington Insider Magazine) – China has issued one of its sternest warnings to date, declaring readiness for “any type of war” in response to the escalating trade conflict with the United States under President Donald Trump. The warning follows Trump’s decision to impose sweeping tariffs on all Chinese goods, reigniting fears of a broader economic and geopolitical confrontation between the two superpowers.

China swiftly responded with 10–15% tariffs on American agricultural products, escalating the tension between the world’s two largest economies. The Chinese embassy in Washington reposted a striking message on X (formerly Twitter), echoing a government statement:

“If war is what the US wants, be it a tariff war, a trade war or any other type of war, we’re ready to fight till the end.”

This message coincided with the opening of China’s annual

National People’s Congress (NPC) in Beijing, where military spending and economic resilience dominated the agenda.

## China Boosts Defense Budget Amid Global Shifts

Premier Li Qiang announced that China will increase its defense budget by 7.2% this year, matching the previous year’s growth. Speaking to thousands of delegates at the NPC, Li stated:

“Changes unseen in a century are unfolding across the world at a faster pace.”

The boost in military expenditure is seen by many as a signal that China is not only preparing to weather economic challenges but also reinforcing its defense posture amid rising global instability.

Beijing continues to position itself as a force for stability and peace in contrast to what it portrays as US military

entanglements in the Middle East and Ukraine. Nevertheless, the rhetoric from China this week suggests a growing willingness to confront US pressures more directly – both economically and strategically.

## Economic Resilience and Strategic Messaging

Despite internal challenges, including low consumer demand, a struggling property sector, and rising youth unemployment, China’s leadership is aiming to project strength and resilience. Officials emphasized their intention to attract foreign investment and maintain steady economic growth, targeting a 5% increase in GDP despite the tariffs.

President Xi Jinping has in recent months called for increased military preparedness, particularly amid tensions around Taiwan. While Beijing distinguishes between “readiness” and actual

engagement in war, the repeated emphasis on military drills and defense buildup suggests a significant strategic shift

### **Tariffs and the Fentanyl Factor**

China has also accused the US of using the opioid crisis as a pretext to increase tariffs. A spokesperson from China's foreign ministry criticized American claims that Beijing is responsible for fentanyl flows, calling it a "flimsy excuse."

"Intimidation does not scare us. Bullying does not work on us," the statement read. "Pressuring, coercion or threats are not the right way of dealing with China." These words mark a notable hardening of China's public diplomacy and are likely to fuel anti-China sentiment within Trump's cabinet, particularly among so-called "China hawks."

### **Diplomatic Setbacks and Missed Talks**

Earlier in Trump's second term, there was hope that relations between Washington and Beijing might stabilize. Trump even invited President Xi to his inauguration and touted a "great phone call" between the two leaders. However, a rumored follow-up conversation last month never took place, and recent actions suggest the relationship is once again on a sharp downward trajectory.

While China's military budget — the world's second largest — remains far below the US in absolute terms, analysts warn that official figures likely

understate the true scale of China's defense activities. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Beijing spends 1.6% of its GDP on defense — less than the US or Russia — but growing concerns remain about transparency and rapid militarization.

#### **Global Implications**

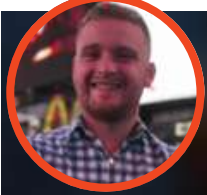
China's latest warning, broadcast globally through official channels and social

media, is more than a reaction to tariffs. It represents a broader geopolitical warning: Beijing is ready to confront Washington not only economically but also strategically if pushed further. As tensions rise and new flashpoints emerge, the world will be watching closely to see whether this war of words evolves into something more destabilizing.



# Seven Takeaways from Donald Trump's 2025 Speech to Congress

By Liam Flynn



US (Washington Insider Magazine) – On March 4, 2025, President Donald Trump delivered a sweeping and provocative address to a joint session of the US Congress, declaring his new term as the start of the “most successful era in the history of our country.” In the 43 days since returning to office, Trump claimed his administration had accomplished more than previous presidents did in entire terms.

His speech, greeted with roaring support from Republicans and visible protest from Democrats, painted a picture of aggressive policy changes, fierce nationalism, and political defiance. Here are the seven biggest takeaways from Trump's latest address:

## 1. Declaring War on the Federal Workforce

Trump proudly promoted the work of the Department of

Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, to root out government “waste and fraud.” He cited dubious statistics to portray bloated diversity programs and foreign aid as key issues, while leaving military and immigration enforcement spending untouched.

Although critics argue many of these claims have been debunked, Trump's rhetoric signals his determination to reshape the federal bureaucracy to align with his political ideology.

## 2. Renewed Attacks on Immigration

Doubling down on his long-standing anti-immigration stance, Trump pushed for a large spending package to facilitate mass deportations. He described undocumented immigrants as threats to public safety, citing emotional testimonies from families of victims of crimes committed by

immigrants.

However, research consistently shows that undocumented immigrants commit crimes at lower rates than native-born citizens. Still, Trump's rhetoric resonated with supporters and was central to his political platform.

## 3. Brief Mentions of Ukraine and Gaza

Foreign policy received relatively brief attention. Trump claimed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had sent him a peace-seeking letter following their tense meeting.

On Gaza, Trump praised the Abraham Accords and claimed credit for securing the release of American hostages, though he notably failed to mention the ongoing humanitarian crisis affecting millions of Palestinians displaced by Israeli airstrikes.

## 4. A Tepid Democratic Response

Democratic opposition struggled to respond cohesively. Some members displayed protest signs or wore symbolic attire — like Representative Jill Tokuda's jacket featuring lines from the US Constitution — but many remained silent or seated throughout the speech.

Commentators noted the Democrats' lack of a unified strategy, highlighting the lingering fallout from their 2024 election loss.



### 5. Tariffs and Trade Wars Are Back

Reasserting his passion for trade protectionism, Trump called tariffs “the most beautiful word in the English language.” He announced sweeping tariffs on imports from China, Canada, and Mexico, triggering retaliatory moves from all three countries. He argued that tariffs would bring jobs back to the US and push countries to bend to American demands. Despite warnings about inflation and supply chain disruption, Trump insisted any “disturbance” would be minimal and worth it.

### 6. Tackling Inflation... With Eggs

Trump promised to rein in inflation by overhauling the federal government. He focused on egg prices, blaming President Biden for letting them spiral. He pledged \$1 billion toward lowering egg costs through farmer subsidies and imports, though experts say rising prices are largely driven by avian flu outbreaks and continued mass culling of poultry. As of February 2025, egg prices had doubled from the previous year.

### 7. Capture of Kabul Bombing Mastermind

In one of the few moments of bipartisan applause, Trump announced the capture of Muhammed Sharifullah, whom he identified as the “top terrorist” responsible for the 2021 Kabul airport bombing that killed 13 US troops. Trump declared the suspect was en route to the US to “face the swift sword of American justice,” though details of the operation and extradition were limited.

### Final Thoughts

Trump’s 2025 speech to Congress was a fiery mix of nationalism, grievance politics, and hardline policy announcements. From tariffs and immigration to government downsizing and populist symbolism, the speech made clear that Trump intends to govern boldly — and divisively. As the US grapples with deepening political rifts and an increasingly unstable global environment, Trump’s remarks laid out a vision of confrontation over compromise, with little space for middle ground.



# Trump Grants One-Month Tariff Reprieve to Canada and Mexico

US (Washington Insider Magazine) – In a significant move to calm intensifying trade tensions, President Donald Trump has announced a one-month suspension of 25-percent tariffs on selected goods from Canada and Mexico covered under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). The pause, effective until April 2, comes just days after the initial implementation of the levies, which had provoked stern responses from North American allies and added to growing global economic uncertainty. Canada has confirmed that it will keep its retaliatory tariffs in place for now, although a second round of levies has been temporarily delayed. Mexico has yet to make a formal announcement regarding its response to the reprieve.

## Economic Fallout and Market Instability

The announcement did little to reverse investor anxiety. On Thursday, the benchmark S&P 500 index dropped 1.78 percent, deepening losses since Trump's return to office in January. The Nasdaq has declined by over 7 percent, and the US dollar has slipped to a four-month low, reflecting heightened concerns over domestic economic stability and the unpredictable nature of the administration's trade policies. Alongside tariff shifts, the Trump administration is also reportedly preparing to impose additional

## China Responds to Fentanyl Tariffs

China, which remains under 10-percent tariffs imposed this week due to alleged failures to curtail fentanyl exports, responded firmly. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that Beijing would "resolutely counter" US pressure, warning that such unilateral measures could severely damage bilateral ties. While acknowledging areas for cooperation, Wang criticized the US for "repaying kindness with grievances."

## Legal Pushback Over Federal Layoffs

Beyond trade, the Trump administration is now facing legal action from 20 Democrat-led states over mass federal layoffs. The lawsuit, filed in a Maryland federal court, accuses the administration of violating labor laws by abruptly terminating tens of thousands of federal employees without proper notice or justification. New York Attorney General Letitia James condemned the move as an "illegal and callous" dismantling of the federal workforce, further intensifying partisan tensions in Washington.

## US-Ukraine Diplomacy on Ice

The White House also confirmed that a rare diplomatic meeting between US and Ukrainian officials is set to take place in Saudi Arabia next week. This

By Jan Frazier



follows a controversial Oval Office confrontation between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which rattled European allies and fueled concerns about US commitment to Eastern Europe.

## Trump Faces Reproach Over Congressional Disruption

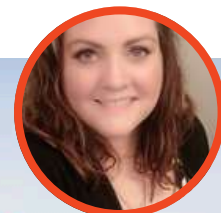
Meanwhile, the US House of Representatives approved a formal rebuke of Democratic Representative Al Green, who disrupted Trump's earlier speech to Congress. The rare disciplinary action underscores the deepening partisan divide on Capitol Hill.

## Europe Watches Warily

European officials have expressed growing alarm over what some analysts describe as the collapse of transatlantic relations. Financial Times editor Ed Luce argued that the US now sees Europe as politically aligned with domestic Democratic rivals and thus increasingly adversarial. "America sees the world as a jungle," he said, warning of a geopolitical "power vacuum" that could destabilize alliances and global order.

# 5 Things to Know for March 10, 2025

BY MANDILEE HECHT



US (Washington Insider Magazine)

ongoing reshaping of the federal bureaucracy.

immigration.

## 1. US Government Shutdown Looms as Trump Backs Funding Bill

House Speaker Mike Johnson has introduced a stopgap funding bill to keep the US government running until September 30, attempting to avert a potential shutdown. The bill proposes an increase of \$6 billion in defense spending while cutting domestic funding by \$13 billion.

While President Trump supports the measure, Democrats have voiced strong opposition, setting the stage for a high-stakes political clash this week. The outcome could significantly shape Trump's legislative momentum and influence his

## 2. Mark Carney Elected as Canada's New Liberal Leader

Mark Carney has officially succeeded Justin Trudeau as leader of Canada's Liberal Party. Trudeau will remain prime minister during an unspecified transition period.

Carney now faces the challenge of preparing the Liberals for upcoming elections against a surging Conservative Party. He has vowed to respond firmly to US pressure, promising to maintain retaliatory tariffs and forge new international trade relationships, particularly in response to Trump's threats over Canadian imports and

## 3. Missing US Student in Punta Cana Raises Alarms

Sudiksha Konanki, a 20-year-old University of Pittsburgh student, went missing in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. She was last seen entering a beach with a group around 4:15 a.m. Thursday, according to Dominican authorities.

Local police have interviewed a man who was with Konanki shortly before her disappearance and are continuing investigations. Her father described her as an ambitious student preparing for a pre-med program, adding emotional weight to the unfolding search.

#### 4. Brutal Violence Resurfaces in Syria

Syria is once again gripped by chaos as armed loyalists to the former Assad regime conduct field executions and instigate sectarian killings in Alawite regions. Over 640 people have reportedly died in the latest outbreak of violence.

Syria's interim president, Ahmad al-Sharaa, blames remnants of Assad's forces and has vowed legal accountability. The violence marks one of the bloodiest chapters since Bashar al-Assad's fall last year, raising concerns of a renewed civil war.

#### 5. Plane Crash in Pennsylvania Retirement Community

A Beechcraft Bonanza aircraft crashed into a parking lot at the Brethren Village retirement community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, injuring five people onboard and damaging several cars.

Though the building itself was unharmed, chilling footage showed the wreckage engulfed in flames. The FAA and NTSB are investigating. The pilot had reported an "open door" just before the crash. This incident adds to recent aviation safety concerns following a spate of US plane crashes this year.

#### In Brief: Other Headlines to Watch

- at 13 airports staged a one-day "warning strike," halting air travel nationwide amid wage negotiations.
- US Dollar Drops: The dollar hit a four-month low as investor uncertainty grows amid Trump's fluctuating trade and spending policies.
- Palestinian Activist Arrested: US immigration authorities detained Mahmoud Khalil, a vocal critic of the Gaza war, drawing accusations of free speech suppression.
- Wildfire in South Carolina: Over 2,000 acres near Myrtle Beach burned after a woman's yard fire got out of control. She faces jail time and fines.
- Germany Air Strike: Workers



# Trump Signs Executive Order to Begin Dismantling US Education Department

BY LIAM FLYNN

US (Washington Insider Magazine) – In a bold move that escalates his administration’s campaign against federal oversight in education, President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Thursday directing Education Secretary Linda McMahon to initiate the dismantling of the US Department of Education. The move is part of Trump’s wider agenda to “return education to the states” and bypass Congress in the process of downsizing federal power.

Speaking at a signing ceremony at the White House flanked by schoolchildren and state flags, Trump reiterated his claim that the Department is inefficient and unnecessary. “My administration will take all lawful steps to shut down the department. We’re going to shut it down and shut it down as quickly as possible. It’s doing us no good,” Trump declared. McMahon, seated in the front row, nodded and smiled.

## A Controversial Directive

While Trump hinted that the administration may still seek congressional support to officially terminate the department, the executive order instructs McMahon to begin eliminating key departmental functions immediately. The order aligns with long-standing conservative goals and appears to draw heavily from Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation’s

conservative blueprint for federal restructuring.

However, the department’s major functions — including the \$18.4 billion Title I program for high-poverty K-12 schools, the \$15.5 billion IDEA program for special education, and the \$1.6 trillion federal student loan system — are not directly impacted by the order. The White House has stated these programs will continue, though questions remain about how the agency’s budget can be slashed without affecting them.

## Historical Context and Recent Layoffs

Efforts to shut down the Department of Education have been floated by Republicans since the Reagan era, but Trump’s latest action marks the most aggressive attempt in recent memory. In recent weeks, the

administration has already implemented deep staff cuts and cancelled numerous grants, laying the groundwork for the agency’s destabilization.

The executive order also follows other education-related actions from the Trump administration this year, including promoting school choice, removing federal funding from schools accused of “radical indoctrination,” and reestablishing the controversial “1776 Commission” to push a “patriotic education” narrative.

## Opposition and Legal Questions

Democrats in Congress quickly condemned the executive order. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries warned that the move threatens funding for millions of students, especially those from marginalized communities.

“Shutting down the Department of Education will harm millions of children in our nation’s public





schools, their families and hardworking teachers,” Jeffries said. “Class sizes will soar, educators will be fired, special education programs will be cut and college will get even more expensive.”

Representative Maxwell Frost criticized the executive action as an unconstitutional attempt to implement Trump’s political agenda without legislative consent. “The Trump administration does not have

the constitutional power to eliminate the Department of Education without the approval of Congress,” he stated, warning that destabilizing the agency would “manufacture chaos.”

#### Future of Federal Education Policy

Without full congressional backing, Trump’s administration is likely to continue pursuing

alternative strategies to reduce federal influence. This could include transforming federal education funding into unrestricted block grants for states, expanding school voucher programs, and eliminating programs that don’t directly impact students — such as those for teacher training or diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Department of Education, under Trump, has already taken steps in that direction. Investigations into book banning have been dropped, the coordinator role for book ban cases was eliminated, and

officials affiliated with conservative think tanks have filled key positions.

Critics argue that such moves not only weaken federal oversight but also endanger educational access for vulnerable populations.

#### Looking Ahead

The next steps remain uncertain, especially as legal and political battles loom over the executive order. While the administration appears determined to sideline the Department of Education, any full closure still requires congressional approval — a hurdle that previous Republican efforts have failed to clear.

Meanwhile, educators, families, and advocacy groups across the country are bracing for the ripple effects of this unprecedented federal shift in education policy.

# US-Mexico Water Dispute Deepens as Tijuana Request Is Denied

By Paul M. Joyal



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— The United States has turned down a formal request by Mexico for emergency water aid to the drought-stricken city of Tijuana, marking the first such refusal under a decades-old water-sharing agreement. The decision, announced by the State Department on Thursday, reflects the Trump administration's increasingly hardline stance on regional cooperation with Latin American countries. The move adds a new dimension to an already tense US-Mexico relationship, as President Donald Trump ramps up economic and migration-related pressure on America's southern neighbor. The State Department's Bureau of Western

Hemisphere Affairs stated on X (formerly Twitter) that "Mexico's continued shortfalls in its water deliveries under the 1944 water-sharing treaty are decimating American agriculture — particularly farmers in the Rio Grande valley."

## Treaty Under Strain

The 1944 treaty, which governs binational sharing of water from the Colorado and Rio Grande rivers, has long served as a crucial framework for distributing increasingly scarce water in the drought-prone regions of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. The treaty is structured around five-year cycles, with the current cycle due to end in

October 2025.

Under the agreement, Mexico sends water from the Rio Grande to the US, while the US sends water from the Colorado River to Mexico. However, prolonged drought and population growth have significantly increased strain on both sides. The US claims that Mexico is behind on its treaty obligations, a situation exacerbated by extreme drought in northern Mexico.

The request for emergency water to Tijuana — a city that relies on the Colorado River for nearly 90% of its water supply — was rejected on the grounds that Mexico has failed to meet its obligations under the treaty.

## Agricultural Pressures

US farmers, particularly in southern Texas, have become increasingly vocal about the shortfalls. Cotton and citrus growers in the Rio Grande valley have reported reduced yields, and a major sugar mill in the region closed last year, citing water shortages. This week, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins announced \$280 million in emergency aid for affected farmers.

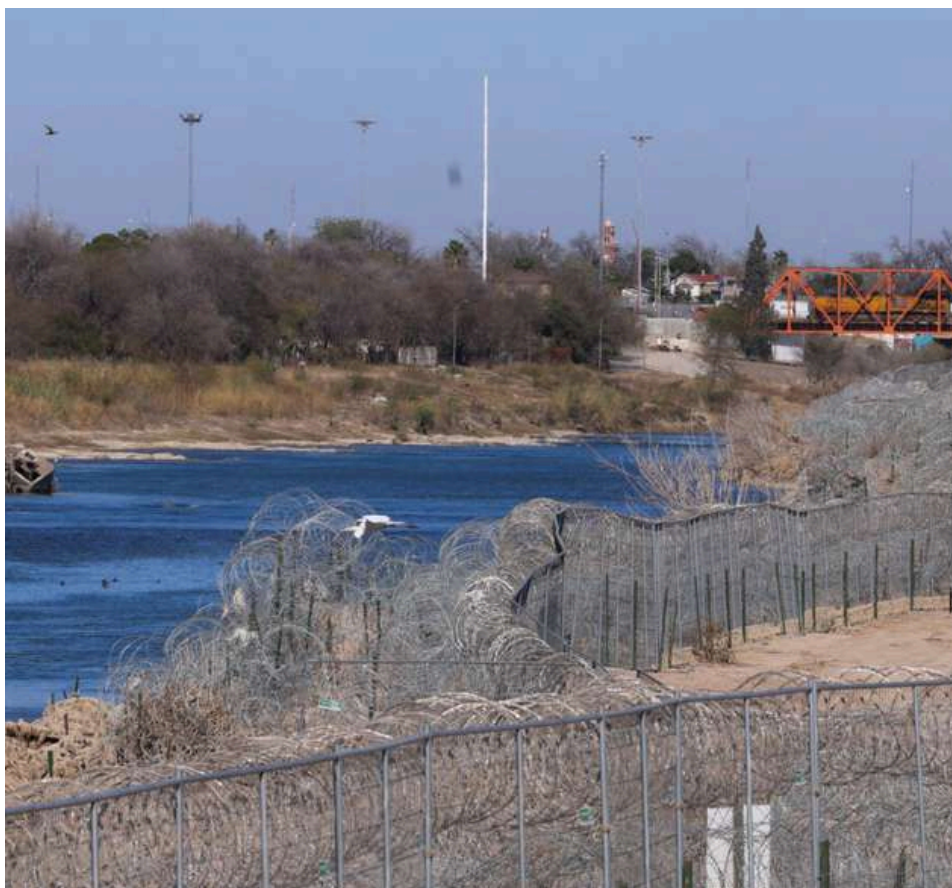
Texas Senator Ted Cruz praised the Biden administration's stance on the treaty, saying, "Texas farmers are in crisis because of Mexico's noncompliance. I will work with the Trump administration to pressure Mexico into complying and to get water to Texas farmers."

## Political Ramifications

The decision to deny water to Mexico comes just months after both nations had agreed — shortly after Trump's election — to improve delivery schedules. That agreement, initially hailed as a breakthrough by the outgoing Biden administration, included provisions for more

predictable water transfers and earlier deliveries in each cycle. However, the new Trump administration appears to be backing away from the cooperative tone set in late 2024.

President Claudia Sheinbaum of



Mexico downplayed the rejection in a press conference on Thursday. "There's been less water. That's part of the problem," she said, adding that the issue was still being addressed through bilateral channels like the International Boundary and Water Commission.

Meanwhile, infrastructure issues in Tijuana have compounded the water crisis. The city's aging water systems lead to considerable losses through leakage and inefficient distribution, worsening the effects of drought.

## Broader Context: Migration and Trade Tensions

The water dispute is unfolding as President Trump intensifies

his broader confrontation with Latin America. In addition to a renewed crackdown on immigration — including deploying troops to the southern border — the White House has also floated sweeping tariffs on Mexican imports. Though implementation of the tariffs has been delayed until April 2, the threat underscores a more confrontational US posture.

Trump has framed the date as "Liberation Day," hinting at further measures to curb migration and reinforce US sovereignty. Many observers worry that this renewed nationalism could undermine long-standing cross-border cooperation on issues ranging from water management to trade and public health.

# Trump's 34% Tariffs Ignite Trade War Tensions as China Pledges Retaliation

By Conor La Rouché



## China Responds Swiftly

Beijing's response was swift and stern. In a statement issued by the Ministry of Commerce, China labeled the move "an act of bullying" and promised to "take all necessary countermeasures to safeguard national interests and the global trading system."

"The US action grossly violates WTO rules and the spirit of fair trade," said the statement. "We urge the United States to correct its mistakes immediately. Otherwise, it will bear all the consequences."

Though specific countermeasures have not been formally announced, analysts expect retaliatory tariffs on key US exports to China, including agricultural products, semiconductors, and energy supplies.

## Global Shockwaves

The "Liberation Day" tariffs come after months of threats from Trump, who repeatedly said the US was being "robbed blind" by countries with higher import taxes. The announcement triggered waves of panic in financial markets and concern among US businesses, particularly those reliant on global supply chains.

Economists warn that such reciprocal tariffs — if widely adopted — could disrupt trade routes, raise consumer prices, and undermine the fragile post-

US (Washington Insider Magazine)— A dramatic escalation in global trade tensions unfolded on Wednesday as US President Donald Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs of 34% on a wide range of imports. China immediately condemned the move as "an act of bullying" and vowed to retaliate in defense of its national interests. The measures are part of what Trump has dubbed the "Liberation Day" package, meant to reset decades of what he calls "unfair trade" practices.

## 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

dossier labeled "Foreign Trade Barriers," Trump stated, "We are done letting countries rip us off. Starting today, tariffs will match those imposed on us — no exceptions."

Under the new policy, goods from countries that impose higher duties on American exports will face the same rates when entering the US. That includes China, European nations, and even some traditional allies. While the base rate starts at 10%, the average impact on Chinese goods amounts to a 34% hike — an unprecedented blow to the world's second-largest economy.

The announcement has already triggered sharp selloffs in global stock markets and raised fears of a renewed global trade war, similar to the one seen during Trump's first term in office.

pandemic recovery.

In New York, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell over 600 points following the announcement. European and Asian markets also dipped, reflecting investor anxiety over a prolonged trade conflict.

### Allies and Critics React

European officials have expressed dismay at being targeted by the reciprocal tariff regime despite longstanding security and economic ties with the US. A senior EU diplomat called the policy “blunt-force economics” and warned it could fracture transatlantic unity.

Meanwhile, business leaders in the US have sounded alarms over the long-term consequences. The US Chamber of Commerce criticized the administration for “inviting retaliation and damaging American competitiveness.”

Despite the criticism, Trump’s move was met with enthusiastic support from his political base and some key lawmakers. Senator Josh Hawley praised the decision as a “bold step to restore American sovereignty over trade,” while House Speaker Mike Johnson called it “a reset that puts American workers first.”

### A Return to Economic Nationalism

Trump’s tariffs are a clear revival of his “America First” economic agenda. In his first term, the

Trump administration launched an aggressive tariff campaign against China, resulting in billions of dollars in levies and a temporary Phase One deal in 2020. However, many of the structural trade issues remained unresolved.

Now, with Trump back in office, it appears the US is once again heading into turbulent trade waters. The shift could strain international cooperation on everything from supply chains to climate and security policies.

### What Comes Next?

Analysts say the biggest unknown is how China will retaliate and how far the tit-for-

tat conflict will spiral. In past disputes, Beijing has strategically targeted US swing states with retaliatory tariffs aimed at politically sensitive industries like soybeans, pork, and liquefied natural gas.

Meanwhile, other countries caught in the tariff crossfire may seek alternate trade alliances or file complaints with the World Trade Organization, although enforcement mechanisms have weakened in recent years.

As the dust settles on “Liberation Day,” the world is bracing for further disruptions — not only to global trade flows but also to the delicate balance of international diplomacy.



# US Official Denies Role in Imran Khan's Ouster, Labels Cypher Allegation a Falsehood

By Henry Nicholas



proves foreign interference, a stance dismissed by US and Pakistani officials alike.

## Official Rebuttals and Legal Fallout

Donald Lu clarified to lawmakers that the cable has been “inaccurately reported” in Pakistani media and that it never accused the US or himself of attempting to oust Khan. He further noted that Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan testified to his own government, stating there was no evidence of a US-backed conspiracy.

After Khan’s removal, the National Security Committee (NSC) of Pakistan under the new government, led by Shehbaz Sharif, reviewed the cypher and concluded it did not reflect a US conspiracy. Nonetheless, the initial NSC meeting under Khan’s leadership had issued a diplomatic demarche to the US. Khan is currently serving a 10-year prison sentence for revealing the classified contents of the cable—charges he and his supporters say are politically motivated.

## Rising Political Tensions

Lu’s remarks before Congress come at a time of heightened political turmoil in Pakistan, following controversial elections on February 8, 2024. The election was marred by violence, widespread

US (Washington Insider Magazine)—In a strongly worded denial, a top US official has dismissed allegations that the United States played any part in the 2022 ouster of former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. Testifying before the House Foreign Relations Committee on March 20, 2024, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu flatly rejected the claim as a “complete falsehood.”

“This conspiracy theory is a lie,” said Lu, responding to Republican Chairman Representative Joe Wilson of South Carolina. The statement marks the first public denial by Lu, who has been at the center of the controversy, which continues to dominate political discourse in Pakistan.

## Background: The Cypher Controversy

The theory stems from a diplomatic cable (or cypher)

sent by then-Pakistani ambassador to the US, Asad Majeed Khan, following a meeting with Lu on March 7, 2022. The document, later leaked by The Intercept, allegedly suggested that the United States was displeased with Imran Khan’s visit to Moscow on the very day of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and hinted at improved relations if Khan were removed from power.

Quoting Lu, the cypher states: “If the no-confidence vote against the Prime Minister succeeds, all will be forgiven in Washington... Otherwise, it will be tough going ahead.”

This narrative became the foundation of Khan’s claim that the US, in collusion with Pakistan’s military and political opposition, orchestrated his downfall.

Khan was ousted in April 2022 via a parliamentary no-confidence vote. He has since maintained that the cypher

censorship, mobile network shutdowns, and major delays in vote counting.

Despite candidates backed by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) winning the most seats as independents, Shehbaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) formed a coalition government. PTI was barred from contesting under its unified party symbol.

### US Position on 2024 Elections

Several members of Congress expressed concern about the fairness of Pakistan's elections. A bipartisan group of 31 lawmakers sent a letter to President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken urging that the US not recognize the new Pakistani government until a full investigation of alleged election interference was conducted.

In response, Lu told the committee:

"We do not go around recognizing or withholding recognition. We decide whether we are going to engage with the government."

Still, the Biden administration appears to have moved forward with diplomatic engagement. Blinken congratulated Sharif on his election, and US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome has met with Pakistan's top leadership.

Lu reiterated the US position:

"We respect the sovereignty of Pakistan. We respect the principle that Pakistani people should be the only ones



choosing their own leaders through a democratic process."

### Safety Concerns and Audience Disruptions

The hearing was not without drama. Lu revealed that he and his family have received death threats due to the unfounded allegations surrounding Khan's ouster. Proceedings were interrupted multiple times by

disruptive audience members, some of whom were removed by Capitol Police after calling Lu a liar.

Despite the disruptions, Lu reaffirmed that Washington is urging a transparent investigation into the 2024 election irregularities and continues to push for accountability for those involved in any interference.

# Australia Moves to Offset US Aid Freeze in Pacific Amid Warnings of Irreversible Damage

By Eric Gahagan

US (Washington Insider Magazine)— Australia is urgently consulting with Pacific nations and US officials following the Trump administration’s controversial decision to pause all foreign aid, with fears mounting that the 90-day freeze could trigger catastrophic setbacks in public health and development across the region.

In a letter to Liberal MP Warren Entsch, Foreign Minister Penny Wong confirmed that Australian diplomats are in talks with both regional governments and the United States to assess the full fallout of the decision.

“We are working with our country, regional, and global partners to understand the potential impact of the US administration’s decision to pause its foreign aid,” Wong wrote, adding that the government is exploring ways to help neighbouring nations manage the consequences.

## Tuberculosis Programs Already Hit

Wong’s comments came in response to concerns raised by Entsch, who warned that the freeze is already disrupting global efforts to combat tuberculosis. He highlighted that critical services like active case detection, contact tracing, and treatment support have been suspended in many high-burden countries.

“Organizations are already laying off hundreds of trained, dedicated staff members



because they are unable to make payroll this month without US funding,” Entsch said, adding that the damage to TB programs could become “irreversible.”

Entsch, co-chair of the Australian Tuberculosis Caucus, urged the government to demonstrate to US counterparts that investing in global health aligns with American strategic goals.

## Australia Weighs Budget Response

With the federal budget due next week, Australia is now considering whether it can increase its own foreign aid commitments to prevent further harm. Foreign Minister Wong said being a “partner of choice” to Pacific neighbours is essential to ensuring regional prosperity and security.

Her remarks were echoed by Opposition Leader Peter Dutton, who criticized the Trump administration’s aid

freeze as “detrimental to collective interests in the region”. Dutton called for a diplomatic solution and greater coordination between the Australian and US governments.

## China Ready to Step In

Australia’s concern isn’t just humanitarian — it’s geopolitical. A 2024 report from the Lowy Institute noted a renewed push by China to court Pacific nations with politically targeted aid and infrastructure programs. After a pandemic-era slowdown, Beijing appears to be stepping up its efforts to expand influence across the region.

This trend has alarmed Australian policymakers and NGOs alike. Tim Costello, CEO of development advocacy group Micah Australia, warned of a strategic “disaster” if China steps into the vacuum created by the US aid pause.

“We have a knee-jerk reaction to increase defense spending when



China sends warships down our coast, but it's just as scary to say, 'Let's let China fill the US aid vacuum,'" he said.

### Aid as Strategic Investment

According to Micah Australia, a modest increase in aid—from 0.68% to 1% of Australia's federal budget—could significantly improve lives in the Pacific. The group estimates such a boost could fund:

- Immunisations for 6.6 million people
- School enrolment for 164,100 children

- Micah's Matt Darvas argued that aid should not be viewed as a luxury but as a strategic investment in stability and

security—values that align directly with Australia's national interest.

"In a time of rising defense spending, a stronger aid program is not a luxury—it's a smart, strategic investment."

### Political Will and Budget Priorities

While the Morrison-era Coalition governments made

significant cuts to Australia's aid programs, senior ANU researcher Cameron Hill notes that Pacific nations and Timor-Leste have been exceptions.

"There's not much left to cut beyond our immediate neighborhood," Hill said. "I can't see either major party cutting aid to these countries any time soon given the anxieties about China."

As Canberra prepares its budget, all eyes will be on how much financial and diplomatic capital it is willing to spend to stabilize the Pacific — a region increasingly seen as the front line in global geopolitical competition.

# US Expels South African Ambassador Amid Strained Relations

By Christina Levandowski

US (Washington Insider Magazine)— In a rare and escalating diplomatic move, the United States has expelled South Africa's ambassador to Washington, Ebrahim Rasool, citing tensions between the two nations. The announcement was made by US Senator Marco Rubio, who branded Rasool a "race-baiting politician," accusing him of harboring a deep disdain for the US and its former President Donald Trump. "Rasool is no longer welcome in our great country," Rubio said in a statement on social media, where he also linked to a Breitbart article that criticized Rasool's comments regarding Trump and US politics.

## Controversial Remarks Spark Expulsion

The trigger for the expulsion was Rasool's comments during an online lecture, where he suggested that Trump was fueling white supremacist rhetoric to rally support. Rasool described Trump's rhetoric as a "mobilisation of supremacism," which he claimed was a response to demographic changes in the US, particularly the projected decline in the white population. "We see it in the domestic politics of the USA... a response not simply to a supremacist instinct, but to very clear data that shows great demographic shifts," Rasool said in his lecture, further remarking that South Africa stood as an antidote to such ideologies.

These statements, particularly his criticism of the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, led Rubio to declare Rasool "persona non grata," a diplomatic term for someone deemed unwelcome in a foreign country.

## Diplomatic Relations Between the US and South Africa

Relations between the US and South Africa have been deteriorating since Trump's tenure. Last month, the US government froze aid to South Africa in response to claims of racial discrimination against white Afrikaners, descendants of Dutch settlers. The US pointed to South Africa's Expropriation Act, which it claims disproportionately targets Afrikaner landowners by enabling the government to seize land without compensation.

The South African government has denied these allegations, asserting that no land is being seized without proper compensation except in exceptional cases for public use.

## South Africa Responds

In response to the expulsion, South Africa's government called the decision "regrettable," emphasizing its commitment to maintaining a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States.

Despite this, South African



officials accused the US of waging a "misinformation campaign" to misrepresent the nation's actions, particularly with respect to land reform policies. The government also rejected claims that it was engaging in racial discrimination, asserting that all land expropriation measures were being carried out within the bounds of the law.

## Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool's Background

Rasool, who previously served as South Africa's ambassador to the US from 2010 to 2015, was appointed to the role again in 2024. His first tenure as ambassador was marked by efforts to strengthen ties between the two countries, and he had hoped his previous experience would enable him to manage challenges under the Trump administration.

Rasool's personal history also contributes to his controversial political stance. As a child, he was forcibly removed from his home in Cape Town's District Six, which was declared a white area under apartheid. He has often spoken of the trauma from that experience, describing it as a formative moment that shaped his lifelong advocacy for social justice.

# Starmer Challenges Putin to Prove He Is Serious About Peace

By Jan Frazier



US (Washington Insider Magazine)— In a direct challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has called for Putin to sign up to an unconditional ceasefire in the war against Ukraine to prove his commitment to peace. Starmer's challenge follows a two-hour virtual summit of allied leaders from across Europe, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The meeting, described by Starmer as a gathering of the "coalition of the willing," aimed to strategize ways to increase pressure on Russia to agree to a ceasefire without delay. The UK's continued support for Ukraine, including the potential deployment of a peacekeeping force, was also discussed.

## Ceasefire and Military Support Plans

Starmer emphasized that while Putin has expressed interest in a ceasefire, his "dithering and delay" in agreeing to a US-backed 30-day truce contradicted his claims of desiring peace. Starmer reiterated that the "ball was now in Russia's court," and that Russia must take the next step toward peace by agreeing to a ceasefire on equal terms. As part of the effort, the leaders also discussed future

peacekeeping plans, including the possibility of deploying troops to safeguard peace after a ceasefire. Military planners were scheduled to meet again in the UK to work on these practical arrangements, with Starmer stating that troops could be deployed to ensure Ukraine's security and deter future aggression from Russia. "We are ready to deploy as a 'coalition of the willing' to help secure Ukraine on land, at sea, and in the sky," Starmer said.

## Support for a Ceasefire

Ukraine's President Zelenskyy showed strong support for a ceasefire without conditions, calling for strengthened sanctions on Russia to pressure the Kremlin into compliance. Zelenskyy stated that a ceasefire without killings would provide a window for negotiations, allowing for meaningful peace talks. French President Macron, similarly, expressed concerns about Russia's true intentions regarding peace, suggesting that Putin's actions indicated a lack

of sincerity in pursuing a ceasefire. He emphasized that any peace agreement must be driven by "peace through strength" and called for clearer pressure on Russia to accept the ceasefire proposal.

## Changing Dynamics in the US

One major challenge in this diplomatic process is the changing stance of the United States, particularly after Donald Trump returned to the presidency. While Trump has indicated support for a ceasefire, he has made it clear that US military involvement in peacekeeping missions is not on the table. This shift in US policy has led European leaders, including Starmer, to take a more active role in securing Ukraine's future, especially in terms of security. Starmer remains hopeful, noting that Putin will have to come to the table eventually, despite Russia's battlefield momentum. He urged for a halt to the "barbaric attacks" on Ukraine and for peace negotiations to proceed without further delay.

# US Strikes Yemen's Sanaa: 13 Killed in Response to Houthi Red Sea Threats

BY PAUL M. JOYAL



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — The United States recently launched airstrikes on the Houthi-controlled capital of Yemen, Sanaa, killing at least 13 people and injuring 9 others. This military action comes after escalating tensions in the Red Sea, where Houthi rebels have targeted ships and threatened global shipping routes. The US government has emphasized that the strikes aim to curb the Houthis' piracy and violence against American and allied ships.

US President Donald Trump authorized the strikes, warning the Houthis to cease their disruptive maritime actions or face continued military retaliation. The Houthis have sharply criticized the US action, calling it a "blatant aggression" and accusing the US of supporting Israel's blockade of

Gaza. In retaliation, the Houthis have vowed to continue their attacks on Israeli-linked vessels. As the situation unfolds, analysts warn that the US military campaign could extend for weeks, potentially escalating the conflict further in the region. The US has stated that its goal is to restore freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and protect international shipping lanes, which have been jeopardized by the Houthis' actions.

Tensions between the US and the Houthis have grown significantly since the Houthis' attacks on shipping in the region, which they justify as a response to the blockade of Gaza. While the US has positioned its strikes as a defense of international maritime law, the Houthis maintain that

their actions are an effort to pressure Israel and ensure humanitarian aid reaches Gaza.

The strikes have ignited further debates about the US's role in the

Middle East, with many questioning whether such aggressive military tactics are the right approach to resolving regional instability. Meanwhile, international humanitarian groups have raised concerns about the impact of the ongoing violence on civilians in Yemen, which has already endured years of conflict.

In conclusion, while the US insists on restoring security in the Red Sea, the situation remains fluid and highly volatile, with the potential for more military engagements in the coming weeks.

# Yemen Chat Leak Poses National Security Threat: Consequences for US Pilots Could Have Been Catastrophic

BY JAN FRAZIER

US (Washington Insider Magazine) — A recent report by The Atlantic has revealed a disturbing chat leak involving senior US officials discussing military plans for an attack on the Houthis in Yemen. The incident, which occurred on March 15, highlighted the potential risks posed to US pilots and personnel. The leaked messages included crucial details such as the exact times of the attack, raising concerns that such sensitive information could have fallen into enemy hands, exposing US forces to greater danger.

The leak came to light after President Donald Trump and other top officials denied any classified information was shared. However, The Atlantic published the full text of the chat, including screenshots, which showed specific details that were shared more than two hours before the strike began. The timing of the information, especially the launch schedules for US aircraft, could have compromised the surprise nature of the operation and allowed the Houthis to prepare defenses.

The chat was inadvertently joined by The Atlantic's Editor-in-Chief, Jeffrey Goldberg, and reportedly involved several senior officials, including Vice President JD Vance, Defense Secretary Hegseth, CIA Director John Ratcliffe, and National Security Adviser Mike Waltz. Despite the



US government's claims that no classified data was shared, experts are warning that the use of Signal, a messaging app, for such sensitive discussions posed a direct threat to national security.

The messages revealed precise attack schedules, with F-18 fighter jets scheduled to launch at 12:15 ET and Tomahawk missiles set to be launched shortly afterward. The Atlantic emphasized that if such information had reached hostile forces, the consequences for US military personnel could have been catastrophic.

In the aftermath of the leak,

National Security Council spokesperson Brian Hughes confirmed the authenticity of the messages but downplayed the significance of the information. However, the incident has sparked outrage, with critics calling for resignations, particularly from officials like Hegseth and Waltz, who are at the center of the controversy.

As tensions continue to rise, the leak serves as a stark reminder of the security risks associated with unsecured communication channels and the importance of safeguarding sensitive military operations.

# US Strikes Iran-Backed Houthi Rebels in Yemen Over Attacks on Shipping

BY CONOR LA ROUCHE



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — On March 15, 2025, US President Donald Trump authorized airstrikes on Houthi rebels in Yemen following a series of attacks on military and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. The Houthis had been targeting ships linked to Israel, the US, and the UK, claiming solidarity with Palestinians amid the ongoing Gaza conflict.

The attacks, which started in October 2023, led to significant damage and the loss of lives, including the sinking of two vessels and the death of four sailors. Despite a ceasefire in Gaza in mid-January 2025, the Houthis resumed their attacks,

threatening further disruption in key global shipping routes like the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

In response to these ongoing assaults, Trump ordered airstrikes, emphasizing the protection of American naval, air, and shipping assets, as well as restoring navigational freedom. The USS Harry S. Truman carrier strike group, along with other naval assets, carried out the mission in the Red Sea. The operation specifically targeted Houthi-held areas in Yemen, marking the most recent escalation of the US military's involvement in the region.

Trump also issued a stern warning to Iran, which has been providing

military support to the Houthis, just as it has with other Middle Eastern proxies like Hamas. The White House stressed that these airstrikes were intended to pressure Tehran and hold it accountable for its role in backing the Houthis' attacks. Additionally, the US State Department reinstated the Houthis as a "foreign terrorist organization," imposing sanctions on those supporting the group.

These strikes reflect the ongoing complexities of the Yemen conflict, as well as the broader geopolitical struggle between the US, Iran, and their respective allies in the region.

# Rubio Arrives in Saudi Arabia for US-Ukraine Peace Talks

BY ERIC GAHAGAN



US (Washington Insider Magazine) — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio landed in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on March 10, 2025, to engage in critical talks with Ukrainian officials as part of efforts to end the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Rubio's visit comes as President Donald Trump pushes for a swift resolution to the conflict and to broker a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

During his stay in Jeddah, Rubio is set to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss ways to advance shared interests and further strengthen U.S.-Saudi relations, as confirmed

by State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce.

Speaking to reporters ahead of his meeting, Rubio expressed his anticipation for the talks, emphasizing that the U.S. aims to listen to Ukrainian officials' positions and compare them with Russia's demands to gauge the potential for peace. He stressed, "We want to see how far they're willing to go and then compare that to what the Russians want."

This visit follows a recent call between Rubio and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, where Rubio reiterated President Trump's determination to end the war as quickly as possible. The

U.S. has consistently urged all parties to take steps toward securing a sustainable peace.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, while not attending the talks in Jeddah, met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh on March 9. A high-level Ukrainian delegation, including Zelenskyy's chief of staff Andriy Yermak, Foreign Minister Sybiha, and Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, will remain in Saudi Arabia to discuss peace efforts with U.S. officials.

The meetings, set to take place on March 11, aim to establish a framework for a peace agreement and an initial ceasefire. U.S. officials believe the Ukrainian delegation's willingness to engage at such a high level indicates their readiness to move forward with peace negotiations.

These talks in Saudi Arabia come three weeks after senior U.S. officials held similar discussions with Russian representatives in Riyadh. Both sides are looking for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict, with Ukraine asserting its commitment to peace and the need for swift action.

Following his time in Saudi Arabia, Rubio will travel to Charlevoix, Canada, for the G7 foreign ministers' meeting, where discussions will center on continued support for Ukraine and ensuring lasting peace in the region.

# Rubio: ‘No Military Solution’ to Ukraine War Ahead of Saudi Peace Talks

BY ADRIANA MONTES

US (Washington Insider Magazine) — US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has emphasized that there is “no military solution” to the ongoing Ukraine conflict, ahead of high-stakes peace talks in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The meeting, set for March 11, 2025, aims to repair strained relations between Ukraine and the US, following a challenging period marked by the fallout from the Trump-Zelenskyy encounter.

Rubio made his remarks en route to the talks, underlining the need for both sides to make difficult concessions for peace. “The Russians can’t conquer all of Ukraine, and it will be difficult for Ukraine to force the Russians back to their pre-2014 borders,” Rubio said. His statement comes amid ongoing Russian missile strikes and territorial advances in Ukraine, while both sides push for a resolution.

The talks in Saudi Arabia mark the first official meeting between the US and Ukraine since the US withheld military aid and intelligence sharing following the strained interaction between then-President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. While Zelenskyy will not attend the talks, his chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, is leading the Ukrainian delegation, which includes top military and diplomatic officials. Ahead of the discussions, Zelenskyy expressed Ukraine’s



commitment to constructive dialogue, hoping for practical solutions to end the war. His government is expected to propose a peace plan involving halting missile and drone strikes and suspending military activities in the Black Sea. However, Russian President Vladimir Putin has shown little interest in such a ceasefire.

As the talks unfold, the US is looking to gauge Ukraine’s willingness to make concessions, with Rubio stressing that both parties must work toward a sustainable peace. He noted that peace efforts are critical, as the war continues to inflict heavy losses on both sides.

With the US withholding

significant support from Ukraine, the outcome of these talks is seen as pivotal for the future of Ukraine’s defense and relations with Washington. In the background, the US administration is reportedly negotiating terms that include a minerals deal, though key details remain unclear. Additionally, US officials hope to revive military aid and intelligence sharing, contingent on Ukraine making concessions, including possible territorial compromises.

The outcome of these discussions may determine the course of the conflict, with both Ukraine and the US seeking a resolution that ensures long-term peace and stability in the region.

# Stocks Slide as Trump Warns of US Economy 'Transition'

BY ALICIA POZSONY

US (Washington Insider Magazine) — The US stock market saw significant losses on Monday, with the S&P 500 falling by approximately 2%, the Dow Jones dropping 0.9%, and the Nasdaq plummeting over 3.5%. The sharp decline in stocks was spurred by mounting concerns about the economic impact of President Donald Trump's ongoing trade war with China, Mexico, and Canada.

Trump's remarks about the "period of transition" in the US economy heightened investor unease. The president avoided directly answering questions about the possibility of a recession or price hikes but reiterated that the current situation was a necessary shift aimed at bringing wealth back to the US.

Despite Trump's optimism, investors are increasingly concerned that the trade war will result in higher prices for goods, ultimately slowing down economic growth. "The level of tariffs that Trump is imposing, I think no doubt, will have to cause inflation somewhere down the line," said Rachel Winter, investment manager at Killik & Co. In the face of rising tariffs, which are taxes on imports, concerns are growing that American consumers and businesses will bear the brunt of higher prices, potentially dampening economic activity. Economist Mohamed El-Erian noted that the market's previous optimism over Trump's

deregulatory agenda and tax cuts has now shifted, as investors recognize the risks associated with the escalating trade tensions.

The ripple effects of Trump's tariffs are being felt globally. European stocks also closed lower on Monday, with major indices such as France's CAC, London's FTSE, and Germany's DAX all seeing declines. Investors are grappling with fears that the US economy could slip into recession due to trade disruptions.

Tech stocks were among the hardest hit, with Tesla dropping 8%, while Nvidia and Meta saw declines of over 4%.

In a Fox News interview, Trump acknowledged the concerns but insisted that the ongoing "transition" would ultimately benefit the US economy, although he stopped short of predicting when the full benefits would materialize. He also continued to defend his aggressive tariff policies, arguing that they were essential for reshaping the US economy and reducing dependence on foreign goods.

Meanwhile, retaliatory tariffs from China and Canada are already making an impact. China has imposed new tariffs on US agricultural products, including chicken, beef, pork, wheat, and soybeans. In response to Trump's tariffs on Canadian goods, Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced a 25% surcharge on



energy exports to the US, threatening to cut off electricity entirely if tensions escalate further.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick tried to reassure the public, stating that while some foreign goods might become more expensive, American goods will become cheaper. However, many remain skeptical about the long-term effects of such a policy.

As the trade war continues, both sides remain entrenched in their positions, with little indication that negotiations will lead to a quick resolution. The US economy faces an uncertain future, as the fallout from the tariff conflict plays out on the global stage.



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