



# Washington Insider

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# OUR TEAM



Danielle Campbell



Athena Nagel



Henry Nicholas



Kathy Malouf



Mandilee Hecht



Seb Jenkins



ZACH SCHRADER



ERIC GAHAGAN



Christina Levandowski



TRENT R. NELSON



## 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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TRUMP URGES SUPREME COURT TO LIFT HOLD ON TRANSGENDER MILITARY BAN AS LEGAL FIGHT INTENSIFIES



US POULTRY WORKERS FEAR INJURY FROM FASTER PRODUCTION LINES

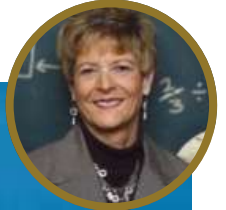


POPE FRANCIS (1936–2025), FIRST LATIN AMERICAN PONTIFF, DIES AT 88



# Donald Trump's order to loosen fishing rules raises risks

BY JAN FRAZIER



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Experts warn that President Trump's decision to relax fishing rules in the Pacific Islands could harm marine life and lead to illegal fishing.

As reported by The Guardian, conservationists are raising concerns over Donald Trump's recent move to reverse fishing regulations in the Pacific Islands Heritage National Monument, an area covering nearly 500,000 square miles.

Trump's recent decision to allow commercial fishing in one of the world's most pristine marine environments has raised alarms about potential long-term environmental harm.

**How Trump's fishing policy threatens marine ecosystems & species?**

The Pacific Islands Heritage Monument, created by George W. Bush in 2009 and expanded by Barack Obama in 2014, includes seven protected islands, atolls, and 165 biodiversity-rich seamounts.

The monument hosts numerous endangered species, including 22 types of seabirds, green and hawksbill turtles, giant clams, bumphead parrotfish, dolphins, and whales. It also protects fragile ecosystems surrounding some of the oldest coral colonies in the world.

Kingman Reef, the most undisturbed coral reef in the US, is home to a unique population of apex predators. UNESCO has recognized the reef for having the

highest concentration of these predators in any studied coral ecosystem. The reef backs various shark species, including grey reef sharks, oceanic white tips, hammerheads, and silky sharks.

**Trump's fishing proclamation sparks environmental concerns**

President Trump's new proclamation, strongly backed by American Samoan tuna lobbyists, allows US-flagged vessels to fish commercially within 50 to 200 nautical miles of the monument. This move coincides with a record-breaking coral bleaching event that has devastated over 80% of global reefs. He also directed Commerce Secretary

Howard Lutnick to remove or amend regulations restricting fishing activities.

In his push to establish the US as the “dominant seafood nation,” Trump criticized the fishing regulations, calling them “so horrible and so stupid.” He argued that American fishers “must travel four to seven days” just to fish in less abundant waters.

### **What did David Henkin say about Trump’s fishing claims?**

David Henkin, a lawyer from the environmental group Earthjustice, criticized Trump’s claim that regulations are hurting American fishers.

He added, “When he is saying that fisher folks from Hawaii or American Samoa need to travel for days to go fish. Well, you need to travel for days to get to these remote Pacific islands. They’re some of the most remote places on Earth ... and they’re certainly not right next to Hawaii.”

### **What did David McGuire say about Trump’s fishing decision?**

David McGuire, the founder of the shark conservation group Shark Stewards, stated, “It’s grandstanding ... These fishermen don’t travel 2,000 or 3,000 miles ... They’re already out there, four or five hundred miles. There is no incentive for them to go to the more central islands.”

He added, “You will no longer have staff, you won’t have the

science and you won’t have the management biologists in Washington or elsewhere at universities that are funded by National Fisheries or NOAA.”

### **What did Arlo Hemphill say about legal fishing and illegal practices?**

Arlo Hemphill, the U.S. project lead for Greenpeace’s ocean sanctuaries, stated, “Having a legal commercial fishery provides cover for illegal fishing. If you just see a fishing boat going through waters, you are not there watching what they’re catching.”

### **What did McCauley say about the impact of Trump’s proclamation on shark conservation?**

Douglas McCauley, a marine biology professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, warned that the proclamation could affect shark conservation. He said, “You can catch a lot of the tuna that you want, but you also catch and kill many sharks.”

Mr McCauley added, “If you open up a section of ocean that has all of these very long-lived, slow-growing sharks, you can decimate 100 years of conservation in almost 15 minutes of fishing because it takes so long for those sharks to rebound and regrow their populations.”

According to him, President Trump’s proclamation poses risks in several ways, “Either they take a hook and bite onto it or drown because they cannot come up to

breathe in a longline fishery, or they are scooped up and drown in the course of purse-seine fishing.

### **What did Solomon Kaho’ohalahala say about the interconnectedness of the Pacific Islands?**

Solomon Kaho’ohalahala, a prominent Hawaiian leader, pointed out that the islands are linked to the wider ocean, making their preservation as a whole essential.

He said, “It’s an integrated kind of ecosystem that isn’t isolated by just the islands themselves ... It’s difficult to think that we can divide them into separate areas and then be successful in preserving all of them. It doesn’t work that way.”

Mr Kaho’ohalahala added, “Opening this sacred place for exploitation is short-sighted and does not consider current or future generations of Pacific People who rely on a healthy ocean, and know this special ocean space as our ancestral home.”

### **US-flagged fishing efforts in the Pacific Islands**

A recent study from 2023 reveals that over the past five years, the US-flagged purse-seine fleet focused only 0.52% of its fishing efforts on the two designated areas in the Pacific Islands area where commercial fishing is permitted.



# Trump & Zelensky hold high-stakes vatican meeting amid stalled Ukraine Peace talks

BY ATHENA NAGEL



Rome (Washington Insider Magazine) – US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky held off-the-cuff talks in St Peter Basilica to discuss the ways to resume the process of the Ukrainian conflict's settlement. It was the first time they spoke in person since a much more hostile encounter in the White House's Oval Office in February, which took only 15 minutes. Zelensky called the talks "very productive" and hinted at a

potential breakthrough, stating on Telegram: "This meeting could become historic if we achieve joint results."

A White House spokesperson echoed the sentiment, praising the "substantive" dialogue.

## What Did Trump Say About Putin After the Meeting?

As Air Force One departed Rome, Trump took to Truth Social with

uncharacteristically sharp criticism of Russian President Vladimir Putin, referencing a recent missile strike that killed 12 civilians in Kyiv:

"There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas... Maybe he doesn't want to stop the war. Too many people are dying!!!"

He floated escalating economic pressure, suggesting "Banking or

Secondary Sanctions” if Russia refuses to de-escalate.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham swiftly backed Trump’s shift, announcing bipartisan Senate readiness to impose trade sanctions on nations buying Russian oil and gas unless Moscow pursues “an honourable, just, and enduring peace

### **Diverging Red Lines: Crimea and Ceasefire Demands**

Behind the scenes, tensions persist. Documents obtained by Reuters reveal a gap between Trump’s proposals and Ukraine’s non-negotiables:

- The US has pushed for legal recognition of Crimea as Russian territory—a move Kyiv and European allies reject.
- Zelensky reiterated demands for a “complete and unconditional ceasefire” and guarantees against future Russian aggression.

### **World Leaders React: Symbolism and Skepticism**

The meeting’s imagery—leaders huddled in the basilica’s grandeur—drew global attention. In one photo, Trump and Zelensky leaned in intently with no aides present. Another showed British PM Keir Starmer and France’s Emmanuel Macron joining them, Macron’s hand resting on Zelensky’s shoulder in a gesture of solidarity.

Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, delivering the pope’s funeral

homily, underscored the urgency: “War always leaves the world worse than it was before.” Pope Francis had long pleaded for Ukrainian peace, a legacy Trump invoked by holding the talks in the Vatican.

Trump has warned he may withdraw mediation efforts if progress stalls. With Ukraine’s counteroffensive struggling and US elections looming, the basilica meeting may mark a pivotal moment—or merely another pause in a protracted war.

### **Diverging Positions on Crimea and Ceasefire**

The optimistic tone notwithstanding, many differences still exist between the US and Ukraine regarding the current condition of the conflict and the possibility of a ceasefire agreement. New diplomatic documents released to Reuters include recent meetings that suggest that the Trump administration has been keen on legally accepting Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

This has drawn strong opposition from Kyiv and other European partners, who see it as a loss of principles.

At the same time, Zelensky re-emphasized the Ukrainian government’s core conditions: the withdrawal of Russian troops, punishment for war criminals, and assurances against further aggression.

The Ukrainian president has pointedly refused any deal that would require Ukraine give up sovereign territory in exchange for a ceasefire.

### **A Moment of Symbolism Amid Global Mourning**

The conversation between Trump and Zelensky occurred in the strict framework of the Pope Francis funeral, which had leaders from all over the world attending. During the papacy of the previous pontiff, the issue of peace in Ukraine was reiterated time and time again in his speeches, as well as in today’s homily held by the Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re.

“War always leaves the world worse than it was before: it is always a painful and tragic defeat for everyone,

the cardinal said, urging reconciliation.

Photographs leaked from the meeting are as follows: President Trump met with Mr. Zelensky on the occasion, and photographs taken in the White House revealed that the two presidents were alone, sitting only at a distance of two feet from each other.

One of them showed them together with the UK’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the other one together with French President Emmanuel Macron, who put a calming hand on Zelensky’s shoulder.

# Trump Floats Tax Hike on Wealthy to Fund Policy Plans in Time Interview

BY HENRY NICHOLAS



with new benefits he campaigned for.

“It doesn’t make that much difference, and yet, I could just see somebody trying to bring that up as a subject, and, you know, say, ‘Oh, he raised taxes.’ Well, I wouldn’t be, really, you know, in the true sense, I wouldn’t. I’d be raising them on wealthy to take care of middle class,”

Trump told Time.

However, the president quickly tempered his enthusiasm with political realism.

“And that’s — I love, that. I actually love the concept, but I don’t want it to be used against me politically, because I’ve seen people lose elections for less, especially with the fake news,”

He added.

The comments came just days after Trump privately warned advisors that such a tax increase could be “disruptive,” revealing his conflicting impulses between policy preferences and political survival.

## The GOP’s Fiscal Dilemma

The expensive proposals of Trump that eliminate taxes on

tipped wages, overtime pay and social security benefits face resistance from Republican lawmakers who seek methods to fund them. Some Republican members now express interest in a tax policy that would enforce a 40 % tax on earnings above \$1 million despite moving away from standard GOP monetary guidelines.

The proposed rate would reach almost the same level as the pre-2017 rates (39.6 %), which will become permanent if Congress fails to extend the cuts from Trump’s first term. American households subject to the highest income tax rate must earn more than \$609,351 annually, and they will pay 37 % of their income to the government. The proposed taxation framework shows how much politics can change by making a drastic departure from the decades-long Republican mandate for lowering taxes.

Through these remarks, the president demonstrated his ability to court working-class voters without disrupting contributions from traditional GOP financial backers:

“We’re out of easy options. Either we raise taxes on someone, or we explode the debt.”

Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – During his interview with Time magazine, President Donald Trump revealed his willingness to tax wealthy Americans to support his middle-class tax cut initiative but warned that this strategy would be risky.

The recent Friday disclosures from Trump reveal his dilemma regarding Republican efforts to finance his ambitious economic agenda without causing deficits to grow out of control.

## A Surprising Shift in Tax Policy

The interview on Tuesday addressed Trump’s reaction to Republican proposals to raise taxes on millionaires to fund his 2017 tax cut extensions along



# Trump urges Supreme court to lift hold on transgender Military ban as legal fight intensifies

By Eric Gahagan



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – The Supreme Court faces a request from the Trump administration to implement its transgender military service member exclusion policy as various legal challenges remain unresolved.

## What's at Stake?

The Department of Defense made its request following the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals choosing not to remove a nationwide injunction against its

policy banning individuals with gender dysphoria or those who have transitioned. According to the administration the broad injunction stops the necessary

**Trump's Policy: A Return to First-Term Stance**

President Trump brought back the ban in January 2025 because it ended the transgender service policy implemented by President Biden when he was in office. His executive order states that “high standards for troop readiness, lethality, and integrity” are incompatible with gender dysphoria treatments, asserting that gender transition conflicts with military values of “humility, truthfulness, and discipline.”

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced implementing guidelines in February which mandated military departments to start identifying transgender personnel for discharge unless authorities granted waivers. On March 26 the policy would begin yet courts issued instructions for its suspension.

### **The Human Impact of Military Ban**

- An estimated 4,200 active-duty troops have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria (as of December 2024)
- 1,892 service members received gender-affirming care through the military between 2016-2021
- The Pentagon spent \$52 million on such care from 2015-2024

### **Legal Showdown of Transgender Ban lifting**

A Washington state lawsuit filed by seven transgender service

members together with an aspiring recruit and Lambda Legal serves as the foundation for this case. The Plaintiffs contend that the ban infringes their rights for equal treatment under the law and freedom of expression.

The decision to block the transgender service ban came from U.S. District Judge Benjamin Settle who is both an Army veteran and George W. Bush appointee since March of this year. The judge found that the administration lacked evidence to show transgender service degraded military effectiveness. The military demonstrated success through inclusive service policies during a period of four years.

“The government’s reliance on military deference is unjustified when the same military recently found no issue with transgender service,”

Settle wrote in his 45-page opinion.

### **Administration’s Argument on the Ban**

Solicitor General D. John Sauer contends courts must show “substantial deference” to military judgments, warning the injunction forces the Pentagon to maintain a policy it believes threatens national security.

“The Constitution entrusts troop composition decisions to political branches, not courts,” Sauer wrote in the emergency

filing. The policy draws a medical-based classification that ignores gender identity, so it should receive only low-level judicial review.

Supporters applaud the administration’s stance:

- “This is about combat effectiveness, not discrimination,” said retired Marine Lt. Col. James Higgins
- “The military isn’t a social experiment,” added Family Research Council president Tony Perkins

Critics call it cruel and counterproductive:

- “They’re firing trained patriots during a recruitment crisis,” said SPARTA director Blake Dignan
- “This will cost millions more to replace experienced personnel,” noted a Pentagon budget analyst

### **What’s Next?**

Plaintiffs have up to May 1 to file their responses according to Supreme Court orders. A comparable ruling from 2019 serves as a possible precedent as the Supreme Court demands May 1 responses from the plaintiffs.

None of the foreign-born transgender military personnel faces certain fates at this point in time. “I’ve served two combat tours,” said an Army captain facing discharge. “Now I’m told I’m unfit because of who I am. This isn’t just policy – it’s personal.”



# Trump blasts Zelenskyy over crimea 'Our Land' war stance

By Adriana Montes





Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Donald Trump has attacked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his decision not to give Russian-held territories back to Russia like Crimea because it prolongs the ongoing violence.

### **Trump's Blunt Assessment: "Get It Done"**

In a fiery Truth Social post that reverberated across diplomatic circles, Trump dismissed Zelenskyy's defiant rhetoric as counterproductive to peace efforts.

"This statement is very harmful to the Peace Negotiations with Russia,"

Trump wrote, referencing Zelenskyy's recent declaration that "It is our land" ahead of critical talks in London.

Trump's post took a historical swipe at the Obama administration, arguing Crimea's annexation in 2014 was a settled matter.

"Crimea was lost years ago under President Barack Hussein Obama and is not even a point of discussion," he wrote. "Nobody is asking Zelenskyy to recognize Crimea as Russian Territory—but why didn't they fight for it 11 years ago when it was handed over without a shot fired?"

The former president warned that Zelenskyy's stance risks catastrophic consequences:

"He can have Peace, or he can fight for another three years before losing the whole Country."

Trump concluded with a stark ultimatum:

"We are very close to a Deal, but the man with 'no cards to play' should now, finally, GET IT DONE."

### **Zelenskyy's Defiance and Western Divisions**

Zelenskyy said no ground would be negotiated when he spoke with allies in London about territorial concessions during the war.

"There is nothing to talk about—it is our land, the land of the Ukrainian people,"

he insisted. According to private

U.S. official reports, Zelenskyy continues to resist because they propose Russia could keep the occupied territories if both sides stop fighting.

The proposal grants Russian administration authority over every area that Moscow currently occupies, including Donbas and southern Ukraine.

JD Vance, who is Vice President, stated to reporters in India that this policy stands as Ukraine's final possible avenue for success.:

"We've issued a very explicit proposal... It's time for them to say 'yes' or for the U.S. to walk away."

### **What Comes Next?**

Ukraine's counteroffensive has stopped while U.S. military support faces obstacles during congressional approval, forcing Zelenskyy to make unbearable decisions. Experts indicate that Ukrainian diplomatic influence will weaken if Western nations end their continuous backing. A NATO official warned that time does not favour the Ukrainian side. "The question is whether they can negotiate from strength—or desperation."

The worldwide conversation about Trump's remarks could determine how this conflict develops while resolving the challenge between Ukraine's moral stance and essential concessions.



# Trump Stands Firmly Behind Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth Amid Growing Signal App Controversy

By Danielle Campbell



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has earned the White House’s complete backing even after reports exposed him sharing classified military information through Signal chats with his family members.

The renewed debate about national security procedures in the Trump administration prompts concerns about reckless actions from opposition supporters who are dismissed by supporters as politically generated noise.

## White House Rallies Behind Hegseth

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt delivered a forceful defence of Hegseth on Tuesday, telling reporters that President Donald Trump

“strongly stands behind” his Defense Secretary.

“Secretary Hegseth is doing a tremendous job, and he is bringing monumental change to the Pentagon,”

Leavitt said.

“There’s a lot of people in this city who reject monumental change, and I think, frankly, that’s why we’ve seen a smear campaign against him.”

NBC News conducted an investigative report that uncovered how Hegseth transmitted US military plans he received via secure government channels to a 13-person signal message group containing his sibling and spouse. The transmission of the documents took place only 10 minutes after

Hegseth’s receipt on March 15.

The White House states that no classified material was transmitted, although the nature of the shared information remains sensitive.

“The discussions were unclassified and informal,”

a senior administration official said.

“This is being blown out of proportion by those who oppose the president’s agenda.”

Hegseth Fires Back: “Leakers and the Hoax Press” Hegseth, who served as a commentator on Fox News and demonstrates strong support for Trump, blatantly dismissed the

scandal during his appearance on Fox & Friends on Tuesday. Hegseth pointed at former Pentagon officials for revealing the story while criticizing media reports that he felt overstated the significance of the information.

“Once a leaker, always a leaker—often a leaker,” Hegseth said. “I don’t have time for leakers, and I don’t have time for the hoax press that peddles old stories from disgruntled employees.”

He defended his use of Signal, a secure messaging app popular among government officials, insisting that the communications were harmless. “What was shared—however you characterize it—was informal, unclassified coordination for media and other purposes,” he said.

### A Pattern of Controversial Communications

Hegseth has previously drawn public attention through his controversial messaging behaviour. Hegseth revealed to the public that he accidentally shared a Signal thread with The Atlantic editor Jeffrey Goldberg about pending US military strikes in Yemen last month. The Washington Post first revealed the incident, which threatened operational security through Hegseth’s mistake, but his team classified it as a simple error.

Security experts working in national defence categories state that any unclassified

military-related discussion releases useful details to opposition forces.

“The issue isn’t just about classification levels—it’s about discipline,”

said retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey.

“When high-level officials treat sensitive information casually, it creates vulnerabilities.”

### Congressional Democrats Accountability

Democratic lawmakers issued strong criticism following these recent revelations because they believe these actions show Trump administration officials ignore important security protocols.

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called the reports “deeply troubling.” This is a reckless pattern,” Reed said in a statement. “Discussing military operations on unsecured platforms, regardless of classification, undermines long-standing security measures and risks exposing critical information.”

Some Republicans, meanwhile, have been more measured in their response. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) told reporters that while he supports Hegseth, “everyone in national security

should be mindful of how they handle sensitive discussions.”

### Will Hegseth Keep His Job?

The public attention has not caused Hegseth to face any danger of losing his position as Defense Secretary. President Trump himself praised the Defense Secretary on Monday, telling reporters, “Pete is doing a great job.”

A senior White House official operating undercover denied claims that the administration has started looking for a new Defense Secretary choice. “The president values leaders who shake things up,” the official said. “Secretary Hegseth isn’t going anywhere.”

### What Happens Next?

The Signal scandal faces an uncertain future because Congress plans to elevate investigations into the matter. The recent history of Trump’s support for staff members throughout major scandals suggests that Hegseth will retain his position in the near term.

Military morale, together with US relationships with allies, serve as the ultimate yardstick according to analysts who assess this situation.

“If foreign governments start questioning whether sensitive discussions are being handled carefully, that could have long-term consequences,”



# DOGE's AI surveillance of federal workers raises concerns

By Jan Frazier



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Elon Musk's Doge team uses AI to track female workers' communities for anti-Trump sentiment, raising concerns about privacy violations.

As reported by Reuters, Trump administration officials have informed U.S. government workers that Elon Musk's DOGE team is using artificial intelligence to surveil communications within

a federal agency.

The surveillance focuses on identifying anti-Trump sentiment and opposition to his political agenda.

Despite the secrecy surrounding Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, the use of technology to track signs of disloyalty is a move. It comes

amidst a workforce already disrupted by widespread firings and severe budget cuts

**What AI tools is Elon Musk's DOGE team using?**

According to a source with direct knowledge of the matter, the DOGE team is using the Signal app for communication. This could potentially violate federal record-

keeping rules, as messages are designed to disappear after a set time.

The source revealed that the DOGE team has heavily relied on Musk's Grok AI chatbot, a competitor to ChatGPT, to reduce the size of federal workers.

### **What did Kathleen Clark say about DOGE's use of Signal and AI?**

AI and Signal's use by DOGE has raised fears among cybersecurity experts and government ethicists regarding the team's limited transparency. They warn that data collected could be used by Musk or the Trump administration to pursue their interests or target political rivals.

According to Kathleen Clark, a government ethics expert at Washington University, DOGE's use of Signal has fueled concerns over data security. This follows backlash against Trump administration officials for mistakenly including a journalist in a group chat about military operations in Yemen. She stated,

"If they're using Signal and not backing up every message to federal files, then they are acting unlawfully."

Ms Clark added,

"It sounds like an abuse of government power to suppress or deter speech that the president of the United States doesn't like."

### **How is Elon Musk's AI surveillance impacting workers at the EPA?**

Insiders say that Trump appointees at the Environmental Protection Agency informed some managers that Musk's team is deploying AI to monitor workers. The system is designed to flag any language in communications that could be considered hostile toward Trump or Musk.

The EPA, responsible for enforcing laws like the Clean Air Act, has come under significant scrutiny from the Trump administration. Nearly 600 workers have been placed on leave since January. It has also announced plans to reduce its budget by 65%.

An EPA source said, "We have been told they are looking for anti-Trump or anti-Musk language."

A manager stated, according to the source,

"Be careful what you say, what you type and what you do."

The EPA confirmed that it is "looking at AI to better optimize agency functions and administrative efficiencies."

However, it made clear that AI is not being utilized "as it makes personnel decisions in concert with DOGE."

### **What did Musk say about using AI to replace government workers?**

According to a person familiar with Musk's remarks, he stated last year that AI could be used to replace government workers. The source said,

"The concept was that through taking the government data, they could build the most dynamic AI system ever."

Under ethics law, as a government employee, Musk is not allowed to engage in government activities that benefit him or his firms.

### **DOGE staffers bypassing official document**

A source said DOGE staffers are bypassing document vetting by editing in Google Docs instead of circulating drafts. He added,

"There are multiple people in one Google Doc editing things simultaneously."

### **How has Musk's team affected access to sensitive data at OPM?**

Musk's team, which took control of the Office of Personnel Management in January, cut off access for OPM employees to a database containing sensitive information, as reported by court filings.

Over 100 tech workers at OPM have had access to the cloud, where essential applications are stored. Only Greg Hogan, OPM's CIO with AI startup experience, has access to the cloud.



# US poultry workers fear injury from faster production lines

By Henry Nicholas



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Poultry workers raise concerns over faster production lines causing more injuries as the USDA halts safety data reports following increased line speeds.

As reported by The Guardian, the Trump administration has revealed plans to speed up production lines in poultry and pork plants. They also stop the requirement for safety reports, a move critics say will increase injuries.

**What did the USDA say about speeding up production lines and safety reports?**

The USDA confirmed its intention to permanently extend waivers for speeding up production lines in poultry and pork plants, applying the changes universally across all such facilities.

The department also plans to stop collecting worker safety data, claiming it is “redundant,” and referencing research that denies a direct link between processing speeds and workplace injuries.

**What did the USDA report reveal about line speeds and worker injuries?**

According to a USDA study from January, injuries were not mainly caused by faster line speeds, but by a higher “piece rate,” which correlated with more injuries.

The report highlighted that injury rates among poultry workers remain high at 140 and 175 birds per minute. It showed 81% of workers at high risk for musculoskeletal disorders, revealing that current efforts to mitigate risks are insufficient. The report revealed that 70% of workers experienced “moderate

to severe work-related pain” within the first three months of their employment.

### **What did Michael and Maria Payan say about injuries and speed in poultry processing?**

The director of operations at the Sussex Health and Environmental Network (Shen), an organization based in Delaware and Maryland, Michael Payan, stated,

“There’s injuries occurring on a regular basis, and it’s most definitely associated with the speeds that people are moving,” Maria Payan from Shen said increasing production inputs leads to higher injury rates.

She inquired,

“Why, at the same time you’re increasing line speeds, would you eliminate collecting worker safety data?”

asking,

“If they don’t think it’s going to affect the workers, then why would they stop collecting the data?”

Maria Payan stated,

“We have a lot of workers who are not being trained properly in their language,”

adding,

“If you understand this industry, these are very, very, very

dangerous jobs.”

### **How will the new USDA line speed rules affect workers?**

With the new regulations, workers can process up to 175 birds per minute, a rise from the 140-bird limit before 2020. However, unlike 2020, when meatpacking workers faced high illness and death rates from COVID-19, there are no current meat shortages.

The USDA stated in a statement that the measure will

“reduce burdens on the US pork and poultry industries ... ensuring they can meet demand without excessive government interference.”

### **Oxfam’s 2015 report about line speeds and injuries in poultry processing**

The 2015 Oxfam report highlighted rising line speeds as a major factor in injuries in the poultry industry.

The report suggests that injuries in poultry processing might be lower than expected, as poultry processors often provide on-site medical care, which helps avoid referrals to external medical professionals.

The Oxfam report stated, “If companies can avoid doing more than this, they don’t have to record the incident, or report to the US government’s Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).”

### **What happened to the young worker who fell at a chicken plant?**

A young man had worked at the chicken processing plant for only two weeks, struggling to adjust to the job and meet the heavy workload.

Following an injury at work, he continued his duties until he fell from a 13ft ladder, resulting in a broken back.

He said,

“I could’ve been paralyzed for the rest of my life,” the man said. Now, he’s “living with remorse and regret.”

### **What did a worker say about his 15 years on the processing line?**

A man spent 15 years working on the processing lines. He spent “15 years doing the same thing five days a week, eight to 10 hours a day.” After eight years, he started experiencing pain but continued working.

He underwent surgery for repetitive stress injuries and was fired during recovery.

### **How did a new worker end up with chemical burns on his first day?**

A man’s first day in the sanitation department led to burns when chemicals seeped into his sleeves, causing severe irritation.

The man stated,

“There was no proper training at all.”

# Virginia to test Democrats' response to Musk's influence

By Irene Taschek

Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Democrats in Virginia are preparing for the November election, hoping to turn the race into a referendum on Elon Musk's influence.

As reported by The Guardian, with a seven-figure investment in Virginia, Democrats are setting the stage for a major electoral push. The party plans to turn the election into a referendum on Musk's influence over local politics.

## How are Democrats targeting Virginia to challenge Trump and Musk's impact?

Following a tough year since Donald Trump's election, the party made a strong comeback last year. They secured a decisive victory in Wisconsin's Supreme Court race and achieved impressive results in two Florida congressional races. Voters in November will select candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and the House of Delegates.

The upcoming election will serve as an essential indicator not only for Trump's presidency but also for tech billionaire Musk's unofficial "department of government efficiency," or Doge. This has affected Virginia due to its proximity to Washington, D.C. Last month, an NBC poll found

that only 27% of registered voters hold positive views of the Democratic Party, marking the lowest approval since 1990.

## What did Heather Williams say about Musk's impact in the upcoming election?

Heather Williams, the president of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC), which works to strengthen state-level power, stated,

"It is his work and efforts that are going to be litigated in this election. We see the Doge's efforts take on a local spin, meaning they're not just talking about the machete that he wielded without any care or concern, but the very real local impact and how it is affecting individuals."

He said,

"Democrats have been winning elections again. Voters made it clear in 2024 that their issues were around the economy and affordability, and economic opportunity, and they asked their elected officials to pay attention to that."

Mr William added,

"What we are seeing in these election results is an understanding that Republicans are unfocused and harming communities when they need



support and government to work on their behalf. Voters are not standing for it."The DLCC president said,

"You've got Democrats in the legislature or candidates who are putting forth agendas around the economy and affordability and trying to address the very real, honest issues that Americans are dealing with."

He observed,

"Government is very present in Virginia, and it has served them historically well. You've got hard workers doing good things, protecting our country, and they're being tossed around as if nothing matters, and that is going



to have a big impact.”

### **How does the DLCC plan to build momentum with a roadmap to victory in Virginia?**

The DLCC plans to release a “Roadmap to Victory in Virginia” memo on Monday, which highlights critical target races for November and features a continued seven-figure investment in the House of Delegates, where Democrats hold a slim 51-49 majority.

For the first time, the DLCC is adding the high-stakes lieutenant governor’s race to its target list, seeking to secure tie-breaking votes in the state senate, where Democrats hold a slim one-seat majority.

According to the memo, legislative Democrats in Virginia are on the frontlines, taking action against the chaos stirred by Trump. Meanwhile, Republicans, such as Governor Glenn Youngkin, have shown support for Doge cuts. State Republicans also voted unanimously against a constitutional amendment to protect abortion access and mostly opposed a ban on assault weapons.

Since Virginia limits governors from seeking consecutive terms, Youngkin will not be running in November. Instead, Winsome Earle-Sears, the lieutenant governor, will run as the Republican candidate, while Abigail Spanberger is expected to be the Democratic nominee.

### **What did Williams say about Republicans’ role in Virginia’s election after last week’s results?**

The election results last week posed a warning for Virginia Republicans, a state that Kamala Harris won by six points. Trump’s efforts to slash the federal government, impose chaotic tariffs, and threaten social security are likely to rally Democrats and push away independents and moderate Republicans.

Mr Williams commented,

“Yes, Trump is responsible for this, Elon Musk is responsible for this, but local Republicans are also complicit. They are falling in line with a reckless approach to government and a reckless political party with Donald Trump at the helm. They don’t get off the hook.”

### **What did Don Scott say about Musk’s influence on Virginia Republicans?**

Don Scott, Virginia’s first House speaker, says Musk’s influence will cast a long shadow.

He said,

“I think Republicans are begging him to come to Virginia because they have not gotten the memo from Wisconsin and Florida and Pennsylvania that voters don’t like the policies,” adding, “Because they haven’t gotten the memo yet, they continue to

embrace him and they will not tell him to go away because he’s out of touch. They’re going to find out, I believe, in November how out of touch they are in Virginia.”

Mr Scott highlighted that while Democrats in Washington face a lack of power, their Virginia counterparts in the House of Delegates passed resolutions in January to protect abortion, voting, and marriage rights. The speaker stated,

“We’ve got to stop whining. There’s no whining in this state. There’s no need to do any handwringing. You don’t get to have a pity party. If you believe that this is an existential threat, do the work. We have to continue to show folks how we deliver, what values we stand for. Our values are not losing.”

He said,

“That’s why I’m tired of people talking about the message. We don’t need a hero. We don’t need someone to come in with a cape. Get over Michelle Obama and Barack Obama. We need everyday normal Americans to come to the forefront.”

Mr Scott continued,

“Virginians know exactly who Donald Trump is, and we’ll have the opportunity to be the canary in the coal mine for the rest of the country here in November. We’ll be sending a message of hope to the rest of the country that we haven’t been snowed by this guy.

# Doge's cuts to social security create massive issues

By Athena Nagel



trillion and representing 22% of the federal budget.

Despite financial strain and an aging population, Social Security remains widely popular among Americans. The mogul, being the so-called “Department of Government Efficiency,” has referred to the agency as a “Ponzi scheme” while slashing its budgets and staff.

What did an SSA employee say about the agency’s current plans? A longtime SSA worker and military veteran, who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, stated,

“They have these ‘concepts of plans’ they hope will work, but in reality, they are damaging to the American people.”

He added,  
“No one knows what’s going on. They’re just coming up with ideas at the top of their head.”

## SSA’s staff reductions and data migration services

Several crashes on the SSA website have been reported this month. Wired reports that Doge staff plan to migrate all social security data and rewrite the code within months, raising worries over system failures and more outages.

The SSA intends to reduce its

staff by 7,000 workers through voluntary buyouts, resignations, and firings. The union representatives warn of even deeper cuts, potentially reducing the workforce to 50,000.

## How is Acting Commissioner Dudek responding to Doge’s influence at SSA?

Leland Dudek, the acting commissioner of the Social Security Administration, stated that Doge is behind the major decisions at the agency. High-profile figures such as Elon Musk and Donald Trump are among those who have publicly stated that these changes are part of an initiative to address widespread fraud at the SSA.

Mr Dudek was appointed as acting commissioner of SSA and reportedly shared information with Doge staff. Concerning a court order preventing Doge from accessing the data, he has warned of shutting down the agency.

## What did Dudek say about SSA’s updated policy?

Mr Dudek said,  
“We have listened to our customers, Congress, advocates, and others, and we are updating our policy to provide better customer service to the country’s most vulnerable populations.”  
The SSA’s acting commissioner

Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Elon Musk’s cuts to social security, led by his “Doge” department, are causing severe disruption, with staff warning that the agency is in a “death spiral.”

As reported by The Guardian, workers at the Social Security Administration have revealed that office closures, staffing reductions, and policy changes are leading to “complete chaos.”

The SSA oversees the U.S.’s largest government program, handling retirement, disability, and survivor benefits.

## How many Americans will rely on Social Security in 2025 amid budget cuts?

Social Security will provide benefits to almost 69 million Americans monthly in 2025, with the total payout reaching \$1.6

added, "In addition to extending the policy's effective date by two weeks to ensure our employees have the training they need to help customers, Medicare, Disability, and SSI applications will be exempt from in-person identity proofing because multiple opportunities exist during the decision process to verify a person's identity."

### **Why did Rich Couture question Doge's 7,000 job cuts at SSA?**

Rich Couture, representing the American Federation of Government Employees' Social Security Administration general committee, expressed concerns over Doge's job cut targets, describing them as nonsensical. He inquired, Why are they cutting 7,000 jobs? Adding,

"It has never been explained with any degree of clarity how they came up with that figure. What's being served by that, by a loss of 7,000 jobs? How does any of that supposedly make this operation more efficient? How does it improve service? How does it improve productivity? Our position is that losing 7,000 people doesn't do any of those things."

Mr Couture stated, "I don't think they're going to stop at 7,000 people lost. If they lose 10,000 or 12,000, they're running up their high score. They're able to brag about it."

He said,

"There is no safe office in this country,"

Adding, "It's a concerted attack on the legitimacy of social security itself. The promise that this country has made to the public for income security is being broken." Mr Couture highlighted that SSA's operating costs have decreased by 20% over the past decade, now standing at less than 1%, arguing that the agency is already efficient despite its fiscal constraints.

He continued, "You're going to see a wholesale collapse in the agency's service structure. Call wait times will skyrocket, wait times for appointments, processing times, all of it is going to skyrocket because there won't be enough people to do the jobs, which opens the door to privatization."

### **What did John Oertel say about fraud at SSA?**

John Oertel, who retired after 32 years with SSA in Redding, California, commented, "Fraud cases were rare during my time there."

He stated, "Because the agency is so understaffed that people who report their income, that's not getting reported into the system. Musk and his group are saying Look at all these people who are being overpaid, they must be committing fraud. They're not committing fraud. They're doing

what they're supposed to be doing, but because there are so few employees, none of that information is getting into the system."

Mr Oertel also refuted the accusations from Trump and Musk, clarifying that deceased individuals are not receiving social security benefits.

He said, "They don't understand or they don't care. Those people aren't collecting benefits, but the numbers are still technically active, because you can't just erase social security numbers," Adding,

"President Trump, Elon Musk, and whoever the next commissioner is going to be, I think their ultimate goal is just to destroy social security."

What did the SSA spokesperson say about claims of waste, fraud, and abuse?

An SSA representative said, "The agency will continue to monitor and, if necessary, make adjustments to ensure it pays the right person the right amount at the right time while safeguarding the benefits and programs it administers."

### **The rate of Social Security direct deposit fraud in 2024**

Social Security direct deposit fraud in 2024 stood at 0.00635%, and fewer than 1% of social security payments were found to be inaccurate.



# Trump's budget cuts impact maternal and child health

By Danielle Campbell



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Donald Trump's cuts to maternal and child health programs and massive layoffs at the Department of Health are raising concerns among public health experts. As the cuts continue, the lack of clarity from federal health officials is causing concern, with only broad outlines of the changes disclosed, leaving the full scope of program reductions unclear.

## What did Dr Sue Kressly say about the risk to children's health?

Dr Sue Kressly, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, stated, "Pediatricians, myself included,

are losing sleep at night – worried about the health of the nation's children."

Ms Kressly added, "The one that stands out to me is the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. There is no way to make our country healthier by eliminating expertise where it all starts, and it all starts at maternal and child health."

She stated, "These cuts are significant," adding,

"And the policy and program changes that are made because the cuts impact real people in real communities, and I'm not just talking about the people who lost their jobs."

## What did Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announce about HHS job cuts and restructuring?

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. revealed that the Department of Health and Human Services would eliminate 10,000 positions as part of a major restructuring effort. With additional reductions already implemented by Elon Musk's unofficial "government efficiency department," HHS is on track to lose 20,000 employees, or roughly a quarter of its entire workforce.

Mr Kennedy stated, "We aren't just reducing bureaucratic sprawl," adding,

“We are realigning the organization with its core mission and our new priorities in reversing the chronic disease epidemic.”

He said, “We’re going to do 80% cuts, but 20% of those are going to have to be reinstalled, because we’ll make mistakes.”

### **How are HHS cuts impacting maternal health programs?**

Due to a lack of clear updates from the health department, people are sharing bits and pieces of information that suggest maternal health programs could be cut, with no details on whether they will be reassigned or stopped entirely. Following the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, conservative voices have increasingly blamed the public health agencies, especially the CDC.

The Republican Party continues to be shaped by pandemic policies, with many supporters questioning the value of federal public health programs after vaccine mandates.

The cuts to maternal health programs could be serving a broader agenda for Republicans. Conservative states have increasingly scrutinized maternal health programs, especially as experts look into deaths linked to abortion services, which are now either banned or heavily restricted in several states.

### **What did Trump’s administration argue about the HHS cuts?**

The administration defended the “centralization” plan, stating it would enhance the coordination of healthcare resources for low-income Americans, with a focus on primary care, maternal and child health, mental health, environmental health, HIV/AIDS, and workforce growth.

At the same time, experts in HIV/AIDS, worker health and safety, care for society’s vulnerable populations, and maternal and child health have received ‘reduction in force’ notices, commonly known as layoffs, or have been temporarily placed on administrative leave with future elimination expected.

### **How did Sean Tipton react to HHS cuts on women’s health?**

Sean Tipton, chief policy officer at the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, referring to the cuts, stated, “It certainly appears there was a particular focus on parts of HHS that dealt with women’s or reproductive health.”

He added, “How in the world you can justify the CDC eliminating the division of maternal mortality is beyond me.”

### **What did Dr. Amanda Williams say about HHS cuts to maternal health?**

Dr Amanda Williams, the interim

chief medical Officer at the March of Dimes, said,

“As an OB-GYN and public health leader, I can’t overstate the value these resources and programs – and our partners across CDC, HRSA, and NIH – have brought to families and frontline providers.” She added,

“We rely on the data, research, clinical tools and partnerships built by the Division of Reproductive Health (DRH) and HRSA to protect maternal and infant health – especially in communities hit hardest.”

### **Barbara Collura’s views on the CDC’s cuts to infertility and IVF expertise**

Barbara Collura, president of Resolve: The National Infertility Association, stated, “I’m astounded, sad, perplexed,” adding,

“Infertility impacts one in six people globally, and now we don’t have anybody at the CDC who knows anything about infertility and IVF?”

### **Dr. Jeanne Marrazzo and Dr. Diana Bianchi on leave**

Amid the HHS cuts, Dr. Jeanne Marrazzo, known for her expertise in sexually transmitted infections and women’s reproductive health, was put on leave, along with Dr. Diana Bianchi, head of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

# Trade war under Trump causes \$5tn stock plunge

By Kathy Malouf



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Donald Trump’s trade war begins with 10% tariffs on 57 countries, causing a \$5 trillion loss in stock market value and shaking global markets.

As reported by GB News, the 10% baseline tariff, part of Trump’s trade war, took effect on Saturday, impacting countries and shifting global trade dynamics.

Following a \$5 trillion market drop, higher tariffs on goods from 57 major trading partners will be implemented next week.

The US officially imposed a 10% tariff at ports, airports, and customs warehouses, marking a historic departure from long-held global trade agreement

## What did Kelly Ann Shaw say about Trump’s tariff move?

Kelly Ann Shaw, a trade expert and former White House adviser under Trump’s first term, described the move as “the single biggest trade action of our lifetime.”

During a Brookings Institution talk on Thursday, Shaw observed that the tariff rules may shift as nations bargain for lower duties. She stated, “But this is huge,” adding,

“This is a pretty seismic and significant shift in the way that we trade with every country on Earth.”

## Countries hit by Trump’s new 10% tariffs

Global stock markets were shaken by Trump’s tariff announcement, causing a \$5 trillion loss in the S&P 500 by Friday’s close. Commodity and oil prices fell sharply as investors turned to government bonds for safety.

Australia, the UK, Colombia, Argentina, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia were among the initial countries affected by the 10% tariffs.

A 20% tariff will be imposed on the European Union, while imports from China will be taxed at 34%, bringing Trump’s total



tariffs on China to 54%.

The new tariffs exclude Canada and Mexico, but countries still face a 25% duty on goods that don't comply with the US-Mexico-Canada trade rules, linked to the fentanyl crisis.

Trump's higher "reciprocal" tariffs, between 11% and 50%, will take effect on Wednesday.

### **Did US customs offer a grace period for tariff-free goods?**

According to US Customs, cargoes on the water at midnight Saturday will not receive any grace period. A 51-day grace period has been provided for goods in transit to the US before 12:01 am ET Saturday, allowing shipments to reach the US by May 27 without the 10% tariff.

### **Industries excluded from Trump's new tariffs**

Exclusions from Trump's tariffs include steel, aluminum, cars, trucks, and auto parts, along with more than 1,000 product categories valued at \$645 billion, including crude oil, pharmaceuticals, and semiconductors.

The administration is examining several sectors for possible new tariffs tied to national security concern

### **What did the UK Prime Minister discuss with foreign counterparts on tariffs?**

British Prime Minister plans to

consult with foreign leaders over the weekend. This follows discussions with Australian and Italian Prime Ministers, agreeing that a full-scale trade war would be "extremely damaging."

Downing Street revealed that the Labour leader had conversations with Australian PM Albanese and Italian PM Meloni. He highlighted that the UK's response will prioritize national interests.

A PM's spokesman stated the Prime Minister

"has been clear the UK's response will be guided by the national interest"

and officials will

"calmly continue with our preparatory work, rather than rush to retaliate".

The spokesman added, "He discussed this approach with both leaders, acknowledging that while the global economic landscape has shifted this week, it has been clear for a long time that like-minded countries must maintain strong relationships and dialogue to ensure our mutual security and maintain economic stability."

### **How did Nigel Farage respond to Trump's tariffs?**

Reform UK leader said, "Ten per cent tariffs from the USA are bad news, but better than 20 per cent for EU members. If the Tory Government had delivered quickly on Brexit we would have

had a free trade deal years ago. This deal is still achievable."

Mr Farage stated,

"They didn't want to leave the European Union. It was all a game about who would lead the Conservative Party"

### **What did China say about Donald Trump's tariffs?**

In response to Trump's tariffs, China declared "the market has spoken" and urged Washington for "equal-footed consultation" after the global market's sharp response."

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun stated, "Now is the time for the US to stop doing the wrong things and resolve the differences with trading partners through equal-footed consultation."

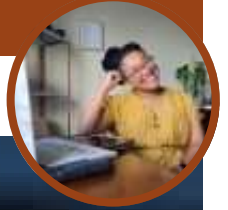
### **What did Adam Sopher say about US tariffs and their impact on his business?**

Adam Sopher, co-founder and chief executive of popcorn brand Joe & Seth's, said that the US was meant to be their focus market this year, but the threat of price hikes from tariffs raised concerns about losing customers.

He said, "We've got an immediate challenge around what our American sales look like this year. But we're lucky in that it's a relatively small part of our business. We'll hopefully try and increase our sales elsewhere."

# Markets in Turmoil as Trump Escalates Fed Feud, Calls Powell “a Major Loser”

By Danielle Moore



New York (Washington Insider Magazine) – President Donald Trump’s latest criticism of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell triggered a stock

market collapse and dollar devaluation on Monday because he demanded urgent interest rate reductions for battling economic recession pressure stemming

from White House trade policies.

In a fiery social media post, Trump blasted Powell as “Mr. Too

Late, a major loser,” urging him to slash rates “pre-emptively” to stimulate the economy. “There can be a slowing of the economy unless [Powell] lowers interest rates, NOW,” Trump wrote.

The outburst from Trump intensified market concerns stemming from his trade war policies, which forced the S&P 500 index to decline 3% and the Nasdaq to collapse 3.4% beyond year-to-date losses of 12% and 18%. The dollar reached its lowest position in two years and Treasury yields increased steeply as investors protested through safer financial instruments.

### **Market Reaction to Trump's Comments**

The year-to-date market performance reached approximately 10% losses after the Dow Jones Industrial Average recorded a 2.9% decline. The S&P 500 dropped by 3% as its annual decline reached 12%. The Nasdaq Composite experienced its worst decline of the week after dropping 3.4%, which resulted in 18% depreciation from January.

The Cboe Volatility Index (VIX), often referred to as Wall Street's “fear gauge,” surged near 35, reflecting heightened investor anxiety.

The dollar index reached its most minimized value since 2022 while tracking major currencies. The Treasury yield increased due to falling bond prices, which showed that investors wanted better

returns because of rising market risk.

### **Trump's Longstanding Feud with the Fed**

Trump has persistently expressed negative comments about Powell in the past. The president denounced the Federal Reserve chair throughout his initial term for his policy, which Trump believed delayed economic expansion.

Public reports indicated that Trump engaged in serious discussions to oust Powell from Fed chairmanship, although such steps would represent an unprecedented action with major legal implications.

To maintain integrity in monetary policy decisions, the Federal Reserve operates independently from politics, thus using economic data instead of short-term political motives. Recent Presidential statements about firing Powell, along with this demand for Powell's dismissal, have reintroduced worries about weakening independent Federal Reserve operations.

### **Economic Warnings and Recession Fears**

The Federal Reserve chair Powell warned about Trump's elevated tariffs causing both increased consumer prices and reduced economic expansion. During his most recent appearance, the Fed chair stated that the central bank would continue making decisions

based on data points rather than succumbing to political influence.

Several economic indicators signal that warning signals have emerged. During this year, there have been repeated yield curve inversions where short-term bond yields outpace long-term ones, which serves as a key recession warning indicator. Industrial production shows stagnation, while business analysts expect downturns to primarily affect companies operating in trade-sensitive areas.

### **Corporate Fallout and Investor Sentiment**

The market sell-off affected multiple prominent companies in the market. Tesla's stock value declined by 7.3% before releasing its earnings report as Sweetgreen salad chain shares dropped 11% when its COO left the company. Both retailers and automakers faced more challenges because investors reconsidered their predictions for business expansion while they managed higher product costs brought about by trade tariffs.

All major banking institutions, including JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs and Bank of America, experienced substantial share value decreases. Financial institutions face extreme sensitivity to interest rates due to Trump's fast-paced requests for interest rate reductions that cause additional uncertainty for their financial future.



# Trump Tariff policy stalls economy as prices soar, Fed warns

By Richmond Wilhelm

Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – A Federal Reserve report from Wednesday indicates that economic stagnation coupled with rising prices has become the primary economic trend during recent weeks because of President Donald Trump's unpredictable trade policy approach.

The March issues in employment and growth based on the Beige Book observations from the Fed stood unchanged, although businessmen and household members expressed growing worry about escalating trade tensions.

## Tariff Chaos Rattles Economy

Trump's aggressive trade policy enforcement has resulted in a policy dilemma for the Federal Reserve System, as explained by Fed Chair Jerome Powell. The central bank indicates that rising tariffs create separate challenges of rising inflation and growth slowdown that cannot be regulated by current Federal Reserve interest rate policies at the same time.

"Every business owner I talk to is paralyzed,"

said Atlanta Fed President Raphael Bostic, echoing



concerns in the report about frozen investment decisions.

"When you don't know what the trade rules will be next month, how can you plan expansion?"

- Supply chains "seizing up" in manufacturing districts
- Retailers reporting customers "pulling back on discretionary spending"

## Fed in Holding Pattern

Trump continues to criticize Federal Reserve Chairman Powell through public attacks yet the Fed has decided to remain steadfast in their position. Chicago Fed Economic President Austan Goolsbee pointed out that both the solid 4.2% unemployment figure and 2.3% March inflation level near the Fed's target make it safe to delay rate changes.

- Various warning signs become visible throughout this report.
- Consumer and business confidence plunging
- Short-term inflation expectations rising sharply

## Market Jitters Grow

Financial markets predict Federal Reserve interest rate reduction by June but the officials unanimously agreed to keep rates steady at 4.25%-4.50% during their May 6-7 session.

Federal official Julia Coronado maintains that

"The president wants rate cuts to juice the economy" despite the fact that "his own tariffs are what's threatening growth." One requests the fire brigade to extinguish a fire that you remain purposefully stoking.

# Treasury yields drop as Fed's Hammack fuels June rate cut speculation

By Kathy Malouf

Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Treasury yields fell sharply Thursday after Cleveland Fed President Beth Hammack suggested the central bank could consider rate cuts as early as June, sparking a rally in short-term bonds while leaving May's meeting unchanged.

## Market Reaction: Short-End Leads Rally

The Treasury market staged a notable rally Thursday, with short-dated bonds leading the charge as traders recalibrated expectations for Federal Reserve rate cuts.

The yield on two-year notes—particularly sensitive to shifts in monetary policy—fell as much as 8 basis points to dip below 3.79%, though it remained within Wednesday's trading range. The move reflected growing, if cautious, optimism that the Fed could begin easing as early as June, with interest rate swaps now pricing in 15 basis points of cuts for the June 17-18 meeting—equivalent to a 60% chance of a quarter-point reduction and up slightly from 13 basis points the previous day.

The market's outlook for cumulative easing also firmed, with swaps anticipating 54 basis points of cuts by September (a 4

basis-point increase from Wednesday) and about 85 basis points by year-end, suggesting traders expect at least three quarter-point reductions in 2025. The rally in short-term yields notably outpaced that of longer-dated Treasuries, underscoring how Fed policy expectations rather than growth fears drove the day's action.

## Fed's Hammack: June Cut Possible With "Clear Data"

Speaking on CNBC, Hammack said:

"If we have clear and convincing data by June and know which way to move, we could act."

But she ruled out changes at the May 6-7 meeting, calling it "too soon."

## Divergent Views on Timing

Tom di Galoma, Mischler Financial MD:

"The Fed will likely cut in June, especially if ongoing trade tariffs slow the US economy further. Rates are too high given tariff uncertainty."

The market rally for Treasury bonds led to a lower yield when the \$44 billion seven-year note auction occurred. The notes



received a 4.123% note award matching the level of their briefly time-adjusted yield until 1 p.m. The yields reached their September lows during the New York time deadline for bidding. Primary dealers bought 15.3% of the issued notes, which marked a nine-month high since the last time they achieved this level.

The degree of anticipation regarding Federal Reserve rate decreases throughout 2025 has been on an upward and downward trajectory since December when the central bank completed its three cumulative 100 basis point cuts that established its overnight lending rate band at 4.25%-5%.

Multiple Wall Street economists expected new rate cuts to start in June 2025 when the year began, but some believed the Fed would abstain from action throughout the entire year. Market bets for at least two annual Federal Reserve rate cuts rose because personal spending weakened and inflation slowed, yet strategists still hesitated before fully predicting July's action.

# Judge blasts Trump administration for deporting 2-year-old U.S. citizen to Honduras

BY ALICIA POZSONY





Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – The Trump administration has deported a 2-year-old U.S. citizen to Honduras alongside her Honduran-born mother and sister, sparking outrage from immigration advocates and a federal judge who warned the action was carried out “with no meaningful process.”

The deportation was excused by the administration for the reason of the mother of the child wished to take her away with her. However, legal documents show that the father petitioned against the deportation, saying that his daughter, who was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was unlawfully arrested and deported from the US.

In his second term, Trump has increased the immigration crime level, particularly by deportations and strict immigration measures at the border. In the beginning, he gained the support of the people; however, recent polls indicate an opposite trend, with an AP-NORC poll revealing that a majority of Americans are annoyed with his management of immigration policy at 53%.

This case shows how the administration escalated its actions and raised constitutional issues regarding the rights of children born in the United

States and the processes of mixed-status families.

### The Deportation and Its Immediate Aftermath

The case centres around a toddler identified in court documents as “V.M.L.,” born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in January 2023. She was accompanied to the agency’s New Orleans office for a check-in on Tuesday, along with her Honduran-born mother and her sister.

Even though the father, a U.S. resident, tried to explain to the judge that his daughter is an American citizen and tried to file an emergency custody petition, the family was deported to Honduras on Friday.

The Trump administration sought to defend the deportation by producing a scrawl in Spanish from the mother stating that she wanted to take the daughter with her. However, Judge Doughty questioned the process on Friday, saying this in an order:

“There is a strong suspicion that the Government just deported a U.S. citizen with no meaningful

vprocess.” He emphasized, “It is illegal and unconstitutional to deport, detain for deportation, or recommend deportation of a U.S.

citizen.”

A senior Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official told Newsweek:

“The parent made the decision to take the child with them to Honduras. It is common that parents want to be removed with their children. Parents are asked if they want to be removed with their children or ICE will place the children with someone the parent designates. In this case, the parent stated they wanted to be removed with the children.”

They added:

“We take our responsibility to protect children seriously and will continue to work with federal law enforcement to ensure that children are safe and protected.” Teresa Reyes-Flores, Southeast Dignity not Detention Coalition:

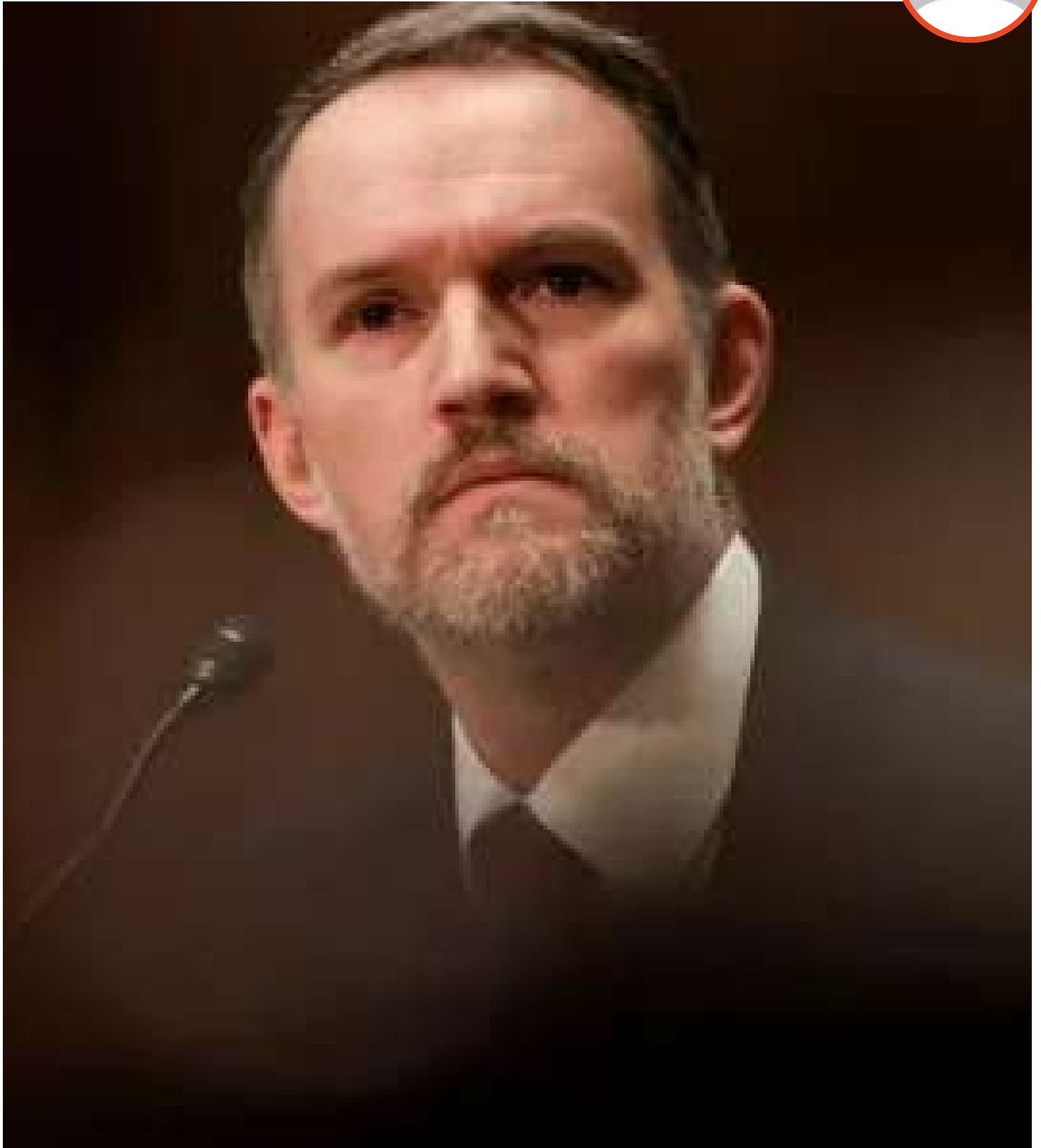
“ICE’s actions show a blatant violation of due process and basic human rights. The families were disappeared, cut off from their lawyers and loved ones, and rushed to be deported, stripping their parents of the chance to protect their U.S. citizen children.” Alanah Odoms, Executive Director of the ACLU of Louisiana:

“Once again, the government has used deceptive tactics to deny people their rights. These outrageous actions must be condemned. We as a nation are better than this. These families deserve better. They must be returned.”



# U.S. & South Korea Push for “Reciprocal and Balanced” Trade Amid Technical Talks

BY IRENE TASCHEK



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – The two trade representatives, U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and South Korea’s Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy Ahn Dukgeun, met on Friday to express mutual agreement about accelerating their trade relationship balance, according to Greer’s office statement.

The discussions, described as “productive,” set the stage for technical-level negotiations next week, signaling a potential shift in trade terms between the two allies.

The United States and South Korea established through Washington trade negotiations on Thursday that they would build trade package negotiations to eliminate prospects of a 25% U.S. tariff increase against Seoul. The duties charged by the United States to South Korea amount to 10% because partnership status exists between the two nations.

On April 8, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a 90-day pause on what he called “reciprocal” tariffs, which would end in early July.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said both countries had a “very successful” meeting.

“We may be moving faster than I thought, and we will be talking technical terms as early as next week,”

He told reporters.

The talks between Bessent and Jamieson Greer from U.S. Trade

Representative brought together South Korean Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok and Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun.

The statement from South Korea disclosed its request for complete exemptions from American tariffs while proposing bilateral agreements in shipbuilding and energy fields alongside efforts to reduce the trade deficit.

### What’s in the ‘July Package’?

Minister Ahn described a “broad agreement” on negotiation frameworks, with working-level talks set for next week. The scheduled date for finalizing the deal stands at July 8.

“The scope and structure will be clarified soon,”

He said.

South Korea became the second trading partner of the United States to start these negotiations following Japan, thanks to its strategic diplomatic position. Professor Ramon Pacheco Pardo at King’s College London recognized the meaningful gesture of South Korea for its participation while holding interim leadership.

“This also underscores the centrality of South Korea to the global economy and international security matters, particularly in the context of Sino-American competition,”

Pardo said.

### Leverage and Stakes of this Trade Talk

South Korean investments in the United States reached a record high of US\$21.5 billion in 2019 because the country aimed to invest outside China while avoiding the effects of US-China trade tensions. The technological sector of South Korea operates as a global leadership force that includes semiconductor manufacturing and electric vehicle production. The United States, alongside Seoul has increased collaboration between their respective forces in fields like battery science and electric transportation systems and nuclear power systems.

Statistics from the Office of US Trade Representative show two-way trade reached US\$197.1 billion during last year as the United States experienced a US\$66 billion deficit. South Korea seems to be acting cautiously regarding its negotiations to trade with the United States.

According to him:

“Seoul recognizes its strategic alliance with Washington while Washington remains the strongest partner so Seoul will take all necessary steps to protect this partnership.”

According to international politics professor Mason Richey from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, the South Korean government follows Japan’s trade negotiation strategy against the United States.

# Federal Judge blocks Trump's proof-of-citizenship voter registration rule

By Henry Nicholas

Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – US President Donald Trump suffered a major defeat last week as District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly invalidated components from his initiative to maintain stringent citizenship documentation requirements for federal voting registration because the executive action transcended presidential boundaries.

## Voting Rights Advocates Warned of Widespread Disenfranchisement

Democratic legislators, along with civil rights organizations, expressed concern the order had negative effects on minority groups, low-income Americans and naturalized citizens. The 2024 survey data showed that about one in ten eligible voters did not possess either a US passport or birth certificate despite needing these documents under Trump's proposed policy.

Danielle Lang, a voting rights attorney at the Campaign Legal Center, celebrated the court's decision, stating,

"No president has the authority to dictate our election systems and processes. The Constitution gives the states and Congress



the express power to regulate our elections. We are happy to see that the Constitution's core principle of separation of powers has been upheld in this instance, and we look forward to continuing our challenge so everyday Americans can make their voices heard without unnecessary barriers."

## Judge Rules President Lacks Authority to Impose Voter Registration Requirements

US district judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly at the federal district court in Washington supported this argument through the decision on Thursday.

"Our Constitution entrusts Congress and the States – not the President – with the authority to regulate federal elections,"

she wrote in a 120-page opinion. "No statutory delegation of authority to the Executive

Branch permits the President to short-circuit Congress's deliberative process by executive order."

## Executive Order Leaving Door Open for Future Challenges

Trump's controversial order components encountered judicial rejection despite the judge permitting specific provisions to stay active temporarily. The Department of Homeland Security keeps its obligation to share citizenship data with states while the administration can pursue non-citizen voter roll removal efforts.

The judge allowed part of the presidential order regarding late mail-in ballots for states to stand because plaintiffs failed to establish significant legal damage at this time. The judge allowed for future court challenges to potential disputes while concluding her ruling.

# Senator Dick Durbin announces retirement, setting stage for fierce battle

BY LIAM FLYNN



Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) startled

political observers by declaring his retirement from office on Wednesday, which sets the stage

for an expected intense Democratic primary in Illinois's blue district.



The 80-year-old senator's decision to step aside after nearly 30 years in office comes as Democrats grapple with an internal generational divide, with younger progressive voices increasingly challenging the party's establishment leadership ahead of crucial midterm elections that will determine control of Congress.

### A Political Era Ends

"After nearly three decades representing the people of Illinois, I've decided not to seek reelection,"

Durbin wrote in an emotional social media post.

"This job has been the honor of my lifetime, but it's time to pass the torch to a new generation of leadership."

Durbin's retirement creates more unease among Democrats who worry about keeping their control of the Senate. The Democrats struggle to maintain control of their seats because Minnesota, New Hampshire, Michigan, and Georgia, will present Democrats with challenging election battles in which first-term Senator Jon Ossoff fights for his reelection. The Republican Party must protect just three Maine, North Carolina and Ohio seats in their upcoming elections.

### The Math of Majority Control

The Senate remains controlled by Republican representatives

who hold 53 seats to 47 seats controlled by Democrats, which makes it challenging for Democrats to take back control. The chamber would achieve a balanced 50-50 split if Democrats win all seven competitive races, even though Vice President JD Vance would then gain the deciding vote to break ties.

President Donald Trump's political standing became complicated by his recent Reuters/Ipsos polling, which showed him below 42% approval, although it has dropped from January. The history indicates the presidential party encounters more midterm election losses for congressional seats.

### Durbin's Enduring Legacy

The Senate's second-ranking Democrat leaves behind a substantial legacy, particularly on immigration reform, where he championed protections for "Dreamers" – undocumented immigrants brought to America as children. However, with President Trump's hardline immigration policies, Durbin's dream of citizenship for these individuals remains unfulfilled.

Durbin headed the Judiciary Committee under President Biden, and he successfully validated 235 federal judges, which included Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. The number of judges confirmed during President Biden's tenure

slightly exceeded Trump's original judicial appointees and exceeded historical totals for racial diversity in courtrooms.

"Senator Durbin's commitment to justice and his tireless advocacy have left an indelible mark on both our institution and our nation,"

said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who once shared a Capitol Hill apartment with the Illinois senator.

### The Road Ahead

Former senator Dick Durbin's retirement creates conditions where two factions might engage in a political struggle to define Illinois Democratic Party values. The Democratic establishment has shown its support for either Stratton or Krishnamoorthi, while progressive voters appear dedicated to Underwood or another candidate of liberal orientation.

The vacancy in this seat functions as a special opportunity for Republicans who must simultaneously attract many Democratic voters and exploit any errors made by the Democrats.

As one senior Democratic strategist put it:

"This isn't just about filling Dick's seat – it's about whether we can hold the line in the Senate while navigating our party's future. The stakes couldn't be higher."

## 3 Federal Prosecutors resign over DOJ's dropped case against NYC mayor Eric Adams

BY KATHY MALOUF





New York (Washington Insider Magazine) – Three federal prosecutors quit their posts at the Southern District of New York U.S. Attorney’s Office after the Department of Justice made the decision to dismiss its corruption charges against Mayor Eric Adams (D) of New York City.

Celia Cohen, along with Andrew Rohrbach and Derek Wikstrom, resigned through a scathing letter sent to Todd Blanche at the DOJ, who pressured them into admitting wrongdoings after their refusal to dismiss the case.

### Why did the prosecutors resign?

The three attorneys, placed on administrative leave for their opposition to dropping the charges, rejected a DOJ offer to return to work if they expressed regret.

“We will not confess wrongdoing when there was none,” they wrote.

The prosecutors emphasized their nonpartisan service under multiple administrations, arguing that their duty was to uphold the law—not political directives.

“Now, the Department has decided that obedience

supersedes all else, requiring us to abdicate our legal and ethical obligations in favor of directions from Washington,” they stated. “That is wrong.”

### What was the case against Mayor Adams?

Before and during his time as mayor, the dismissed bribery and wire fraud case alleged Adams received benefits from businessmen and a Turkish official. The charges were denied by Adams, who argued that the Biden administration used the investigation to punish him for his political disagreements.

The DOJ presented a motion for case dismissal to the court, which was filed by the new prosecutor because acting U.S. Attorney Danielle Sassoon and other officials had left their posts in February. Interference with the administration of crime and immigration matters was the stated reason. The judge accepted the release of charges this month with evident reservations.

### How have other prosecutors reacted?

DOJ management mistakes continue to trigger more

departures from its ranks.

Sassoon previously alleged a “quid pro quo” between Adams and the Trump administration, though the motion avoided addressing the case’s merits.

Cohen, Rohrbach, and Wikstrom echoed their predecessors’ defiance:

“There is no greater privilege than to work for an institution whose mandate is to do the right thing, the right way, for the right reasons,” they wrote.

“We will not abandon this principle to keep our jobs. We resign.”

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for SDNY declined to comment. The DOJ has not responded to inquiries.

### What does this mean for public trust in justice?

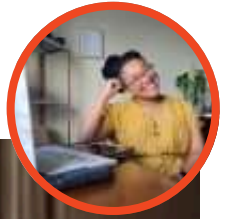
Legal specialists demonstrate that the current situation threatens public faith in independent prosecutorial actions. Their duty lay with the public rather than political views, and this belief was stated in the resignation statement.

“Prosecutors don’t set policy but must follow the Constitution and the country’s laws.”

The DOJ now faced office-wide opposition after Adams received his court approval, while the contradiction between following legal rules and serving political interests proves worse in important cases.

# Diaspora Igbo Groups Lobby U.S. Congress for Nnamdi Kanu's Release

BY DANIELLE MOORE



Washington, D.C. (Washington

Insider Magazine) – The American

Veterans of Igbo Descent (AVID),



together with Rising Sun & Ambassadors for Self-Defense (RSASD), visited U.S. lawmakers at Capitol Hill this week to urge Nnamdi Kanu's release as IPOB leader along with revived U.S. sanctions against Nigeria due to active violence.

The organizations advocated for former President Donald Trump to reestablish Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) if he regained the presidency because of the uncontrolled killings committed by armed bandits and Fulani herders. Nigeria previously received CPC classification from Trump before the Biden administration ended this designation in 2021.

### Why Are Diaspora Groups Pressuring the U.S.?

In a statement, Dr. Sylvester Onyia, AVID president, accused the Nigerian government of enabling "ethnic cleansing and religious atrocities" through its failure to protect civilians, particularly Christians in the Igbo-dominated southeast. Dr. Sylvester Onyia mentioned 2017 when Nigerian security forces murdered 27 unarmed people who supported Biafra during celebrations for Trump's presidential oath-taking.

The delegation also condemned Kanu's "extraordinary rendition" from Kenya in 2021, alleging violations of international law. Rev. Father Augustine Odinmegwa, a delegation member, criticized Britain for its

silence on Kanu's detention despite his British citizenship, asking, "Why has the UK abandoned its own?"

### "Nigeria is a Failed State" – Security Collapse Sparks Alarm

The security crisis in Nigeria places direct danger to U.S. interests because bandits have started targeting oil regions across the southeast, according to the groups. Rev. Odinmegwa blasted a recent statement by Nigeria's Director General of State Security, who advised citizens to "defend themselves" against bandits, calling it proof of state failure.

"What we're seeing is genocide disguised as herder-farmer clashes,"\* Odinmegwa said. "Armed militants are decimating communities while the government turns a blind eye."

### Legal Battle: UN Condemns Kanu's Detention

International lawyer Bruce Fein blamed Nigeria for breaking 16 human rights agreements through three years of isolating Kanu in a single cell. Nigeria denies obeying the United Nations Working Group's order to release Kanu despite their ruling adding to his situation.

"Kanu is a victim of state-sponsored kidnapping and torture,"

Fein said.

"The U.S. must hold Nigeria

accountable."

### U.S. Warned of Looming Refugee Crisis

John Gregg, who served as an activist in southern Nigeria for 20 years, warned that the region was headed for disaster unless America took action, thus causing a massive population movement. "Over 30,000 Christians have been killed or displaced in nine years,"

Gregg said.

"If we don't act, thousands more will flee to America."

### Call to Action: Arm Local Vigilantes

The delegates asked southeast governors to create armed population defence groups because they declared the federal government had forfeited its obligation to protect its residents. Dr. Evans Nwankwo, another delegate, warned that "forces of darkness"—referring to jihadist-linked militants—are destabilizing Nigeria and threatening regional security.

### What's Next?

Ahead of the U.S. elections, the groups will step up their influence activities because they hope President Trump will return to office to restore Nigeria's CPC status. The situation in Nigeria is facing increasing tensions concerning the arrest of Kanu and how it deals with ongoing security issues.

# Israel Warns Against U.S.-Iran Nuclear Deal as Talks Advance in Rome

By Nikos Paraskevopoulos



Jerusalem (Washington Insider Magazine) – The US and Iran announced nuclear agreement progress in Rome, which sent Israeli officials into immediate alarm mode because they feared the proposed deal would fail similarly to the 2015 JCPOA plan while granting Iran a license to become more aggressive.

## Details of the Rome Negotiations

The second set of nuclear talks between the United States and Iran took place in Rome on Saturday under Omani diplomatic mediation. Just like the preceding rounds, the negotiations proceeded through Iranian and American teams speaking in different locations, and Omani mediators transferred dialogue points between both sides.

Iranian state news outlets indicated that discussions moved at a fast pace while announcing upcoming meetings, including a working-level session, followed by an assembly at the high-level in

Oman on Saturday.

The Foreign Ministry of Oman published an official declaration following the agreement between Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani and US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley about advancing diplomatic dialogues. The statement established reaching a “fair, stable, and binding agreement” as the objective to prevent Iran from possessing nuclear weapons yet enable nuclear power for civilian uses.

## Emerging Deal

The reported agreement terms have generated deep worry from Israeli officials because they neglect security threats of vital importance. According to a senior Israeli intelligence official who wished to remain unidentified the draft agreement provides no effective means to stop Iran from making progress in its nuclear program.

The draft proposal lacks adequate mechanisms to block Iran’s non-civilian uranium enrichment activity and stop their ballistic missile program development, according to sources.

## Israeli Concerns Over the

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu assembled a critical security cabinet for Sunday sessions to analyze the developing negotiations. In a statement released afterwards, the Prime Minister’s Office warned that Israel “will not be bound by any agreement that endangers its security” and reiterated its longstanding position that Iran must not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons capabilities under any circumstances.

## US Domestic and International Reactions

Dialogue related to the talks has split key American government agencies apart. The Biden administration views these diplomatic negotiations as essential for stopping nuclear escalation, but Republican leaders, together with some Democratic members, oppose the developing agreement as too concessionary. Secretary of State Antony Blinken defended the diplomatic efforts, stating that “a return to mutual compliance with the JCPOA remains the best way to ensure Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon.”

However, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman

Jim Risch (R-ID) issued a sharp rebuke, calling the negotiations “a dangerous replay of past mistakes.” Risch expressed his position through a statement in which he demanded that all agreements should specifically defend against Iran’s ballistic missile operations and its terrorism support elements along with its nuclear development.

The European countries have demonstrated moderate positions regarding the diplomatic process. A senior French diplomat noted that while France supports diplomatic engagement, “any deal must be comprehensive and verifiable.” The monitoring system for Iranian compliance has received support from both Germany and the United Kingdom.

### Iran’s Strategic Calculations

The negotiation dialogue from Iran’s viewpoint serves as a chance to get relief from sanctions yet maintain important aspects of its nuclear facilities together with its control of the region. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani described the Rome discussions as “productive” and reiterated Tehran’s demand for “guarantees that the U.S. will not unilaterally withdraw from any future agreement.”

The Iranian leadership uses its augmenting alliances with China

and Russia to enhance its bargaining capabilities during diplomatic discussions.

Authentication from the International Crisis Group proved Tehran has stepped up its uranium enrichment activities in recent months, probably through strategic negotiation methods. “Iran is trying to negotiate from a position of strength, but this approach risks further destabilizing the region,” the report warned.

### Regional Implications

The proposed arrangement has sparked intensified disputes across the Middle East region. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates expressed their support to the United States through private conversations to sustain aggressive measures against Iran. According to a Gulf diplomatic source, “Washington’s regional partners would label the lifting of sanctions a betrayal if the agreement did not include concrete missile program and proxy network controls.”

The Iran-backed group Hezbollah, together with other organizations, showed positive support toward the ongoing negotiations. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah recently praised Iran’s “resistance diplomacy,” suggesting that a favourable deal could bolster Tehran’s allies in Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen.

### Next Steps in the Negotiations

The upcoming diplomatic meetings in Oman aim to resolve the persisting discrepancies between US and Iranian positions that have yet to be resolved. Key unresolved issues include:

- Iran wants complete eradication of economic sanctions, but the United States desires to retain some control measures.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports that Iran continues to block full transparency about covert nuclear sites throughout the country.
- The adoption of sunset provisions generates opposition because they create a chance for Iran to restore weapons-grade enrichment in a future timeline.

Israel, together with its allies, are enhancing their attempts to influence what the final outcomes will be in any ongoing diplomatic process. Mossad director David Barnea is predicted to meet US national security officials and intelligence personnel in Washington this week in order to exchange views. Region-wide security stability depends on the upcoming decisive period to prove whether an agreement can materialize and fulfil the requirements of all parties involved.

# Columbia Activist Mahmoud Khalil faces deportation ruling

By Irene Taschek



New York (Washington Insider Magazine) – The US government continues its attempt to deport Palestinian student Mahmoud Khalil through Secretary Marco Rubio’s memo that claims Khalil’s political activities threaten US foreign policies despite acknowledging no criminal activities exist.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio submitted a two-page memo to the immigration court on Wednesday that supports deporting Khalil because his

activist work during Columbia University Gaza war demonstrations weakens US efforts to address antisemitism. The filing, obtained by The Associated Press, declares his “otherwise lawful” activism justifies expulsion under presidential authority to remove noncitizens deemed harmful to diplomatic interests.

Why is Khalil facing deportation?

The 30-year-old Khalil

underwent arrest on March 8 before his transfer to a detention centre in Louisiana. He holds US residence and studies at Columbia’s School of International Affairs for his master’s degree. Though federal officials initially accused him of activities “aligned to Hamas,” the Rubio memo drops that claim—instead emphasizing his role as a protest spokesperson criticizing Israel’s war in Gaza.

Rubio’s memo states Khalil’s



presence “condones anti-Semitic conduct,” jeopardizing protections for Jewish students. The document fails to demonstrate any violent action or harassment incidents alongside its absence of evidence connecting participants to blacklisted organizations.

### How did Khalil’s legal team respond?

Attorneys Marc Van Der Hout and Johnny Sinodis called the memo a “smoking gun” exposing political targeting:

“After weeks of secrecy, they’ve admitted this is about silencing Palestine advocacy, not safety.” They noted the government withheld a promised “subject profile” on Khalil and redacted details about a second resident facing deportation.

Khalil accused the Trump administration, through his writing from detention, of exploiting immigration laws to eradicate dissent last month. The birth of his American spouse is approaching this month.

Administrators held this decision in line with their broad initiative to suppress campus expressions of dissent.

The government has withdrawn billions in university funding after accusing the institutions of antisemitic actions but required these institutions to sanction their student protesters for

reimbursement of grants. The responses of over 20 international students criticizing Israel led to visa revocation from departments.

DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin declined to confirm if additional evidence exists, stating only that filings are “not public.” The next decision from Judge Jamee Comans will determine whether Khila Khalil faces detention throughout his pending court case.

### Reactions from advocates and critics:

“Khalil’s case tests the limits of executive power over immigration—and whether dissent can be framed as a foreign policy threat. With hearings looming, free speech groups warn the administration is “writing a blank check to ban beliefs it dislikes.”

\_This was reported by Jake Offenhartz in New York.

“After a month of hiding the ball since Mahmoud’s late-night unjust arrest in New York and taking him away to a remote detention center in Louisiana, immigration authorities have finally admitted that they have no case whatsoever against him,” the attorneys, Marc Van Der Hout and Johnny Sinodis, said in a joint statement.

Though Rubio’s memo references additional documents, including a “subject

profile of Mahmoud Khalil” and a letter from the Department of Homeland Security, the government did not submit those documents to the immigration court, according to Khalil’s lawyers. The memo recommends deporting a third lawful permanent resident whose identity remains undisclosed within the filing.

The Trump administration cut billions of government funds from college campuses and hospital systems over recent weeks by claiming to combat campus antisemitism but critics see this as an infringement on free speech. The administration wants universities to respond by taking disciplinary action against protesters and implementing different institutional reforms to regain funding.

International students in the United States face visa revocations when they criticize Israel or charge it with abuse toward Palestinians.

At the time of Khalil’s arrest, a Department of Homeland Security spokesperson accused Khalil of leading activities “aligned to Hamas,” referring to the militant group that attacked Israel on October 7, 2023.

The government has failed to present concrete evidence showing Khalil is involved with Hamas, and the latest court document does not mention the group at all.

# Pope Francis (1936–2025), first Latin American pontiff, dies at 88

By Kathy Malouf



**Key Points:**

- Pope Francis has died at age 88, the Vatican announced on Monday.
- Cardinal Kevin Farrell confirmed he passed at 7:55 a.m. local time in the Vatican.
- Pope Francis was the first Latin American and the first Jesuit to lead the Catholic Church.
- He visited Canada in July 2022, stopping in Alberta, Quebec, and Nunavut.

Pope Francis, first Latin American pontiff, dies at age 88. Pope Francis, the first Latin American and first Jesuit pope in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, has died at the age of 88, the Vatican confirmed on Monday. Cardinal Kevin Farrell announced that the Bishop of Rome passed away at 7:55 a.m. local time. The news marks the end of a historic papacy characterised by efforts toward reform, outreach to the marginalised, and a global focus on compassion and humility. Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Argentina, led the Church from 2013, succeeding Pope Benedict XVI after his resignation — an unusual occurrence in modern Catholic history.

**What were the details surrounding Pope Francis' death?**

According to Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Pope Francis died peacefully in the Vatican early

Monday morning. The official time of death was recorded as 7:55 a.m. local time. Further details about the immediate cause of death have not yet been made public.

**Who was Pope Francis?**

Pope Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on 17 December 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, became the 266th pope of the Roman Catholic Church in March 2013. His election was historic — he was the first pope from Latin America and the first member of the Jesuit order to ascend to the papacy.

Throughout his tenure, Pope Francis became known for his emphasis on humility, inclusiveness, and social justice. He consistently advocated for the poor, spoke out on environmental issues, and urged global cooperation to tackle climate change and inequality.

**What were some of Pope Francis' significant moments?**

One of the notable moments in Pope Francis' papacy was his visit to Canada from 24 to 29 July 2022. During this trip, he visited the provinces of Alberta and Quebec and the territory of Nunavut, focusing particularly on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples over the Catholic Church's role in

Canada's residential school system.

Another defining characteristic

of his leadership was his approachability and modernisation efforts within the Church, including discussions on LGBTQ+ inclusion, interfaith dialogue, and reforms within the Vatican bureaucracy.

**What happens next following Pope Francis' death?**

Following the death of a pope, traditional Vatican procedures will unfold. These include the “novemdiales” — nine days of mourning — and preparations for the conclave, where cardinals will gather to elect the next pope.

The Vatican is expected to release further details about funeral arrangements and ceremonies in the coming hours. Global leaders and millions of Catholics around the world are anticipated to pay their respects and reflect on Pope Francis' legacy.

**How is the world reacting to the death of Pope Francis?**

While official global reactions are still emerging, initial responses reflect deep mourning across the Catholic community and beyond. His emphasis on compassion, dialogue, and humility left an indelible mark not just on the Church, but on international humanitarian discourse.

# US says Israel not required to cooperate with UNRWA

By Eric Gahagan



Netherlands (Washington Insider Magazine) – The U.S. tells the World Court Israel has no legal duty to work with UNRWA, citing concerns over the agency's

staff's alleged involvement with Hamas.

As reported by the AP, the U.S. told the International Court of

Justice that Israel must provide aid to Gaza. However, it is under no obligation to engage with the U.N. agency for Palestinian



refugees.

The International Court of Justice is conducting a week of hearings to clarify Israel's responsibilities in providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. This comes after a U.N. General Assembly request for an advisory opinion.

What did Josh Simmons say about Israel's obligation to work with UNRWA?

According to the U.S., Israel has valid concerns regarding the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, which is the largest aid provider in the Gaza Strip.

Josh Simmons, a legal advisor from the State Department, told The Hague-based court,

"In sum, there is no legal requirement that an occupying power permit a specific third state or international organization to conduct activity in occupied territory that would compromise its security interests."

He stated other groups could carry out the work of UNRWA.

### **What did UNRWA say about firing staff over alleged Hamas Ties?**

UNRWA reported nine workers were fired after an internal U.N. probe revealed potential ties, but the evidence was not verified. Israel claimed that

around 100 Palestinians in Gaza were affiliated with Hamas, but failed to provide proof to the United Nations.

### **Gideon Saar's stance on Israel's right to defend itself**

On 29 April, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar responded to the case,

"I accuse UNRWA, I accuse the U.N., I accuse the secretary-general and I accuse all those that weaponized international law and its institutions in order to deprive the most attacked country in the world, Israel, of its most basic right to defend itself."

### **Maksim Musikhin views on UNRWA's role and Gaza's crisis**

Speaking after the U.S., the Russian Federation stressed the importance of UNRWA's efforts for Palestinians, highlighting broad international support for the agency.

Maksim Musikhin, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informed the court's 15 judges, "The urgency of this matter cannot be overstated. Gaza balances on the brink of famine. Hospitals lie in the ruins. Millions of Palestinians in the (Gaza) strip, as well as in the West Bank and East Jerusalem face existential despair."

He further suggested that UNRWA's work should be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize.

### **Current situation in Gaza regarding humanitarian aid**

The hearings are ongoing as Gaza's humanitarian aid system faces collapse, while ceasefire efforts remain stalled. Israel has restricted the flow of food, medicine, and fuel into the region since March 2.

Israel resumed airstrikes on March 18, breaking the ceasefire and seizing large parts of Gaza. It claimed the objective was to pressure Hamas into releasing more hostages.

Last week, the World Food Program revealed that its food supplies in the Gaza Strip had run out, leaving hundreds of thousands of Palestinians without their primary source of nutrition. As a result, many families are now struggling to provide food for their children.

### **Ammar Hijazi's views on Israel's actions in the occupied territories**

Ammar Hijazi, the Palestinian Ambassador to the Netherlands, claimed that Israel was violating international law in the occupied territories.

He told the court,

"Israel is starving, killing and displacing Palestinians while also targeting and blocking humanitarian organizations trying to save their lives," he told the court."

# US–South Africa feud risks critical mineral access

By Jan Frazier

Washington (Washington Insider Magazine) – Donald Trump’s dispute with South Africa may derail a rare earth project crucial for U.S. tech and defence efforts to counter China’s mineral dominance.

As reported by The Washington Post, Mr Trump’s earlier move to cut off U.S. aid to South Africa is threatening a rare earth mining project. The initiative is seen as important for reducing America’s reliance on Chinese minerals used in smartphones, batteries, and military hardware, according to officials familiar with the matter.



## Donald Trump cut aid to South Africa

The rare earths project is located in Phalaborwa, northeast South Africa. In February, President Trump decided to cut aid, citing the country’s alleged discrimination against its White citizens.

He instructed government agencies to “halt foreign aid or assistance delivered or provided to South Africa,” but his executive order gave agencies the flexibility to proceed with “necessary or appropriate” initiatives.

## How could South Africa’s project challenge China’s monopoly?

China’s near-monopoly on refining critical minerals, especially rare earths, plays an essential role in producing materials that drive the modern economy. The South African project is seen as a potential solution. It aims to overcome the significant challenge of developing rare earth sources outside of China’s control. Rainbow Rare Earths, which holds a majority interest in the project, announced in January 2024 that the site is expected to

yield four essential rare earths.

## Gracelin Baskaran’s views on Phalaborwa’s strategic importance

According to Gracelin Baskaran, Phalaborwa is a key strategic asset for the U.S., as stated by the director of the Critical Minerals Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

A bipartisan group of U.S. congressional staff visited a South African lab where rare earth oxides will be extracted from the site’s gypsum waste.

## DFC's role in the Phalaborwa project

The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation invested \$50 million in the Phalaborwa project. It acquired a stake in TechMet, which is working to develop critical minerals. The DFC invests in private-sector projects globally, aiming to promote U.S. foreign policy goals. It owns part of TechMet, which holds a minority share in Rainbow Rare Earths, which also invested in 2020.

The Phalaborwa project requires \$317 million in funding. DFC officials had anticipated providing further loan support during the Biden administration, according to a former official.

## Phalaborwa's potential to produce rare earth oxides

The 2024 interim assessment by Rainbow Rare Earths revealed that the Phalaborwa project could produce 1,900 tons of magnet rare earth oxides annually.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported that global production of rare earth oxides reached 350,000 tons, with nearly 70% of that coming from China.

## Future U.S. loans for the Phalaborwa Project

According to a former DFC official, the outlook for U.S. loans for the rare earth project is unclear.

The ex-DFC official said, "To me, the question is, will the debt piece come at all to DFC, and will [Phalaborwa] actually be able to advance?"

Adding,

"And if it does advance and it's not with U.S. financing, who would pick that up?"

## George Bennett highlights Phalaborwa's U.S. rare earth potential

George Bennett, CEO of Rainbow Rare Earths, stated that the Phalaborwa project could enable U.S. firms to produce 6,000 tons of rare earth magnets annually for the electronics and defence sectors.

He added,

"Rainbow believes that the lack of realistic near-term alternative sources for critical rare earth supply outside of China will help unlock the investment."

## Trump Administration's dispute with South Africa

According to former ambassador Ebrahim Rasool, the dispute between the Trump administration and South Africa highlights an ideological divide. The administration rejects "woke" left-leaning ideals, while South Africa sees itself as a "historical antidote to supremacism."

South Africa blamed Israel for

'genocidal acts' in Gaza, which the Trump administration criticized as opposing U.S. interests. In February, Secretary Marco Rubio also skipped the G20 summit in Johannesburg, accusing South Africa of promoting diversity and climate change.

The Trump administration criticized South African legislation allowing the seizure of White-owned farmland without compensation, calling it controversial and disputed.

On April 24, South Africa's President Ramaphosa posted on social media that he and Donald Trump agreed to meet soon to review U.S.-South Africa ties.

## Milo McBride highlights onshoring challenges

Milo McBride of the Carnegie Endowment said,

"There is the impulse to onshore as much as possible, but that will be difficult given the limited reserves and facilities for certain strategic metals."

## China limits rare earth exports as trade war grows

According to the International Energy Agency, China produced most of the world's rare earths and refined nearly all.

China's dominance became clear as President Trump escalated the trade war, causing China to limit exports of rare earth minerals and magnets.

# US airstrike in Yemen prison kills 68, say Houthi rebels

By Mandilee Hecht



Yemen (Washington Insider Magazine) – U.S. airstrike on Yemeni prison kills 68, raising questions about military operations as Houthi rebels claim migrant detainees were targeted.

As reported by The Guardian, Houthi forces in Yemen have accused the US military of carrying out an airstrike that

targeted a prison holding African migrants, resulting in the deaths of 68 individuals. The US has yet to respond to the allegations.

## US airstrike in Yemen's Saada have on migrants

An alleged strike in Yemen's Saada governorate, home to Houthi forces, marks the latest

tragedy in the country's ongoing conflict. African migrants from Ethiopia have lost their lives while attempting to cross Yemen in search of employment in Saudi Arabia.

The attack is expected to draw renewed scrutiny from activists toward the US campaign "Operation Rough Rider," which



has targeted Houthi forces. This comes amid ongoing talks between the Trump administration and Iran over the advancing nuclear program.

### **What did US Central Command say about airstrike details amid controversy?**

The US military's Central Command defended its policy of not disclosing specific operational details. The ongoing controversy surrounding the airstrikes intensified due to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's use of the Signal app. He used it to share sensitive information about the attacks.

Central Command stated,

"To preserve operational security, we have intentionally limited disclosing details of our ongoing or future operations. We are very deliberate in our operational approach, but will not reveal specifics about what we've done or what we will do." The overnight statement from Central Command confirmed that Operation Rough Rider had "killed hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders," some of whom were connected to the missile and drone program. The names of the officials were not disclosed.

### **Graphic footage about the deadly explosion at the Houthi detention facility**

The Houthi al-Masirah channel aired disturbing footage

showing what appeared to be the dead and injured at the site. According to the Houthi-run interior ministry, 115 migrants were being held at the location.

Al-Masirah later confirmed that at least 68 individuals had lost their lives, though the death toll has yet to be independently verified. The rebels' civil defence unit stated that 47 others had been injured in the assault.

AP's analysis of footage from the location pointed to an explosion, with debris scattered across the prison's cement walls and the injuries sustained reflecting the force of the blast. The Houthis reported that US airstrikes overnight targeting Yemen's capital killed at least eight people. The US military confirmed conducting over 800 individual strikes during its month-long campaign.

The US is focusing its efforts on the Houthis due to the group's assaults on shipping in the Red Sea, a key global trade route, and their involvement in targeting Israel. The group remains the last in Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" capable of launching consistent strikes on Israel.

### **Migrants risk lives in Yemen amid abuse and conflict**

Migrants from Ethiopia and other African countries have been risking their lives in Yemen for years. They seek to cross

into Saudi Arabia for work. Reports suggest that Houthi rebels make significant sums by smuggling migrants over the border each week.

During the war, Ethiopian migrants have been detained, mistreated, and even killed in Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

According to a letter from the UN to the Kingdom in October 2022, investigators had

"received concerning allegations of cross-border artillery shelling and small arms fire, allegedly by Saudi security forces, causing the deaths of up to 430 and injuring 650 migrants."

### **Strikes on Yemen detention facility kill dozens amid ongoing conflict**

The strike on Monday mirrored a similar attack by the Saudi-led coalition in 2022 on the same compound. That assault resulted in the collapse of the building, killing 66 detainees and injuring 113 others, according to a United Nations report.

The UN said the Houthis killed 16 detainees and injured 50. The Saudi-led coalition defended the strike, but the UN clarified it was a detention centre.

The UN report said, "The coalition should have avoided any attack on that facility."

# South Korea FinMin: US trade talks help ease uncertainty

By Kathy Malouf



South Korea (Washington Insider Magazine) – US-South Korea talks have reduced trade uncertainties, with a focus on reciprocal tariffs and economic cooperation by July 8, 2025.

As reported by ABP Live, South Korea's Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok stated on Sunday that the recent discussions with the U.S. on its broad trade tariffs helped alleviate uncertainties and opened the door for structured talks.

### **What did Choi say about his talks with U.S. officials on trade?**

Mr Choi spoke upon landing at Incheon International Airport after he visited Washington, where he and Industry Minister Ahn Duk-Geun engaged in trade talks with U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

He stated, "We clarified the agenda items and laid the groundwork for future negotiations after reaching a consensus on the discussion schedule. We have reduced uncertainty and opened the door for orderly discussions moving forward."

In the meeting, the U.S. and South Korea agreed to collaborate on a "package" deal covering new U.S. tariffs and economic cooperation, targeting a resolution by July 8, when the 90-day pause on Trump's sweeping tariffs is set

to end.

Mr Choi pointed out that he provided a detailed explanation to the U.S. about South Korea's political timeline and the need for collaboration with the National Assembly on the tariff negotiations.

He highlighted that Seoul and Washington have established direct and regular communication channels between their financial authorities. This enables "constructive discussions" on foreign exchange matters.

### **US views on South Korea trade talks**

The USTR reported that in their discussions in Washington, South Korea and the U.S. agreed to work toward "quick and meaningful" progress in creating a "fair and reciprocal" trade deal.

In its readout, the U.S. Trade Representative described the negotiation between Greer and Duk-Geun as "productive," highlighting South Korea's push for exemptions from Trump's "reciprocal" tariffs.

The office stated,

"During the productive meeting, Ambassador Greer underscored the priorities of President Trump's America First Trade

Policy, and both sides agreed on the importance of achieving expedient and meaningful

progress toward reciprocal and balanced trade between the United States and Korea."

It added,

"The ministers discussed next steps between USTR and MOTIE and instructed their teams to engage in technical discussions next week."

### **US-Iran nuclear talks**

On May 3, the US and Iran will meet for the fourth round of nuclear discussions in Europe. According to an American official, the third round of discussions in Oman was described as "positive and productive," lasting over four hours and involving both direct and indirect participation.

The official said, "There is still much to do, but further progress was made on getting to a deal."

Abbas Araghchi, Iran's Foreign Minister, said the third round was "more serious than before" and that both sides have "slowly begun discussing more technical aspects" regarding nuclear matters.

He stated,

"The ongoing negotiations with Washington have given them hope that progress can be made, adding that Tehran is "hopeful, but extremely cautious."

# Iran and US wrap up third round of indirect negotiations

By John Ruehl





Oman (Washington Insider Magazine) – US-Iran talks in Oman focused on nuclear issues, both sides committed to diplomacy but lacked breakthroughs, signalling ongoing engagement without major progress.

Iranian state media reported that the third round of high-level nuclear discussions between Iran and the U.S. wrapped up in Oman after hours of negotiations.

### **Iranian state media takes on the start of U.S.-Iran talks**

Iranian state television stated, “The two delegations that were holding indirect talks with each other are returning to their capitals for consultations. A third round of negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America started in Muscat.”

### **Experts’ meetings before the U.S.-Iran indirect talks**

Following expert discussions on Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and U.S. Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff began indirect talks in Muscat, facilitated by Omani mediators. This third round came after a positive second session in Rome a week earlier.

Indirect negotiations between experts in Muscat, continuing on Saturday, are aimed at establishing a framework for a potential nuclear deal.

### **What did Esmail Baghaei say about Iran’s stance on sanctions and nuclear program?**

The Islamic Republic has made it clear that it is seeking sanctions relief, as its economy suffers from prolonged hardship, following over a year of military defeats at the hands of Israel.

The foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told reporters in Oman, “Iran remains steadfast in its principled stance on the need to end unjust sanctions and is ready to build confidence about the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.”

He added, “Based on Oman’s suggestion and the agreement of US and Iranian delegations, the technical consultation meeting, in the framework of indirect talks between the two sides, that was supposed to take place on Wednesday... has been moved to Saturday,”

### **What did Trump say about a potential deal with Iran?**

Mr Trump stated that a deal with Iran is likely, yet he emphasized the possibility of military action if negotiations fail.

He warned, “If they don’t make a deal, there will be bombing. It will be bombing the likes of which they have never seen before.” On his flight to Rome for Pope

Francis’ funeral, he expressed measured hope, speaking from Air Force One. President Trump, “The Iran situation is coming out very well. We have had a lot of talks with them, and I think we are going to have a deal. I would much rather have a deal than the other alternative. That would be good for humanity.”

Since February, he revived the “maximum pressure” campaign against Tehran, withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposing severe sanctions on Iran.

### **Iran’s red lines in nuclear talks and its stance on enrichment curbs**

Iran has breached nuclear agreement limits since 2019, increasing enrichment to 60% purity, nearing the 90% level required for weapons-grade uranium, according to the UN watchdog.

Tehran officials have indicated a willingness to discuss some restrictions on their nuclear work for sanction relief. However, it insists that dismantling the enrichment program or giving up its enriched uranium are non-negotiable red lines.

According to U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Iran must be required to cease uranium enrichment and instead import the necessary enriched uranium for its only operational nuclear plant.

# Donald Trump and Zelenskyy met ahead of Pope's funeral

By Athena Nagel



Rome (Washington Insider Magazine) – US President Trump and Ukraine's Zelenskyy held

brief talks in Rome before the Pope's funeral, marking their first meeting after February's

dispute.

As reported by Sky News, Vatican sources confirmed

President Trump met Volodymyr Zelenskyy before the Pope's funeral, marking important diplomatic talks ahead of the event.

A White House official said the US and Ukrainian leaders had a fruitful conversation. They plan to continue discussions after the Pope's funeral service.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron also attended the funeral of Pope Francis.

### **Sir Tony Brenton's views on the diplomatic opportunities at the Pope's Funeral?**

Sir Tony Brenton, the former British ambassador to Russia, said the event offers significant diplomatic prospects, including the "most important meeting" between Trump and Zelenskyy.

He stated it could be "an important advance" in the peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, being their first direct discussion after a public clash at the White House in February.

### **What did Trump's envoy discuss with Putin amid Ukraine peace push?**

The meeting follows discussions between Trump's negotiator, Steve Witkoff, and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov said they focused on

"the possibility of resuming direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine."

Russia and Ukraine have not held direct talks since the conflict began in February 2022. Mr Trump said '

"They are very close to a deal, and the two sides should now meet, at very high levels, to 'finish it off.'"

He has previously warned both sides that his administration would withdraw from peace efforts if a deal isn't reached soon.

### **Trump appeals to Putin about Ukraine**

President Trump made a direct plea to Russia's president on Thursday, demanding an end to the bombing of Ukraine and urging Russia to reach a peace deal after Kyiv endured its deadliest attack in almost a year.

He stated, "Not necessary, and very bad timing. Vladimir, STOP! 5000 soldiers a week are dying. Let's get the Peace Deal DONE!"

Mr Trump expressed growing frustration over the lack of a deal between the two sides on a peace agreement, while also attempting to shift blame in case the negotiations fail, compared to his earlier optimism about his negotiating skills.

When asked about Russia's concessions, President Trump claimed it had agreed to stop its attempts to take the entire country. Meanwhile, Mr Putin's forces have recently failed to make notable territorial progress.

According to Mr Trump, Ukraine's efforts to regain the territory lost during the Russian invasions under Barack Obama and Joe Biden would face significant challenges. He mentioned that Ukraine reclaiming Crimea, annexed by Russia in 2014, would be "a very difficult thing to do."

Despite this, Mr Trump claimed he was applying "a lot of pressure" on both Russia and Ukraine.

### **Mark Rutte's views on his meeting with Trump on Ukraine**

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte met with Mr Trump at the White House on Thursday. They talked about the war in Ukraine and the upcoming NATO summit.

Following the meeting, Mr Rutte described it as "very good." He declined to state that he believed the U.S. would not withdraw from the Russia-Ukraine talks.

He added, "There is something on the table now, I think, where Ukrainians are playing ball, and I think the ball is clearly in the Russian court."



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**NIKKI HALEY DISCUSSES PRESIDENTIAL BID & U.S.  
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