



Washington Insider

MAGAZINE



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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.

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Trump calls to scrap Senate supermajority rule

BY JAN FRAZIER



Speaking in the Cabinet Room during a bilateral meeting and lunch with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has spent years undermining his nation's democratic safeguards to make it almost impossible for his Fidesz to lose power, Trump was deep in a meandering soliloquy about how Democratic victories in Tuesday's off-year elections were the consequence of "lying" about his record on "affordability" when he was asked how to put an end to what is currently the longest

government shutdown in American history.

In response, he informed the gathered media that Senate Republicans should use the so-called "nuclear option" to abandon the upper chamber's filibuster rule as the "way to do it."

"I am totally in favor of terminating the filibuster, and we would be back to work within 10 minutes after that vote took place, and lots of other good

things would happen. And it doesn't make any sense that a Republican would not want to do that," he said.

Then, after the Senate removed the minority party's ability to block legislation, he rattled off a list of partisan proposals he would push for Congress to pass. These included a national voter identification mandate and a ban on postal balloting, which he has falsely claimed is "corrupt" and

rife with "fraud."

Trump claimed that if those laws were sent to his desk, Republicans "would never lose" the next midterm elections. According to current polling, his party is certain to lose both the House majority and the Senate.

Without a filibuster rule in place, he added, Republicans would "never lose the general election" because they would "have produced so many different things for our people."

"If we terminate the filibuster, the country will be open within 10 minutes after that termination, because we'll take a second vote, which is the opening of the country, and the Republicans will vote to open the country,"

he said.

He later added that bipartisanship "didn't work" and warned that keeping the Senate's supermajority requirement would keep the GOP "in a slog with the Democrats" during which "very little for either party will be done."

Due to a centuries-old quirk in parliamentary procedure that permits the minority party to prevent up-or-down votes on bills that can't garner support from at least 60 senators, the filibuster rule, which dates back to a revision of the chamber's standing rules under then-vice president Aaron Burr in 1806, has frustrated presidents and congressional majorities from both parties.

When progressive Democrats held unified control of Washington from 2021 to 2023, they attempted to outlaw the practice, but the entire Republican minority in the House and a number of Democratic senators voted against it.

Days after his party suffered crushing defeats in the New Jersey and Virginia gubernatorial elections at the hands of voters incensed over his administration's inability to address rising prices contributing to an ever-increasing cost of living in the United States, the president demanded to dismantle one of the few remaining safeguards against unbridled GOP power in Washington.

citing the laser-focused campaigns of Virginia Governor-elect Abigail Spanberger and New Jersey Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill, who concentrated on "affordability" Trump claimed that the Democrats' emphasis on "affordability" was "a con job," just one year after voters in the 2024 presidential election cited rising costs as the reason for his reelection.

"Prices are down under the Trump administration, and they're down substantially ... gasoline is way down, and the other big thing is ... inflation is way down ... we did a great job on groceries and affordability. The only problem is the fake news. You people don't want to report it,"

he said.

"The reason I don't want to talk about affordability is because everybody knows that it's far less expensive under Trump than it was under sleepy Joe Biden and the prices are way down."

How would eliminating the supermajority affect filibuster use in the Senate?

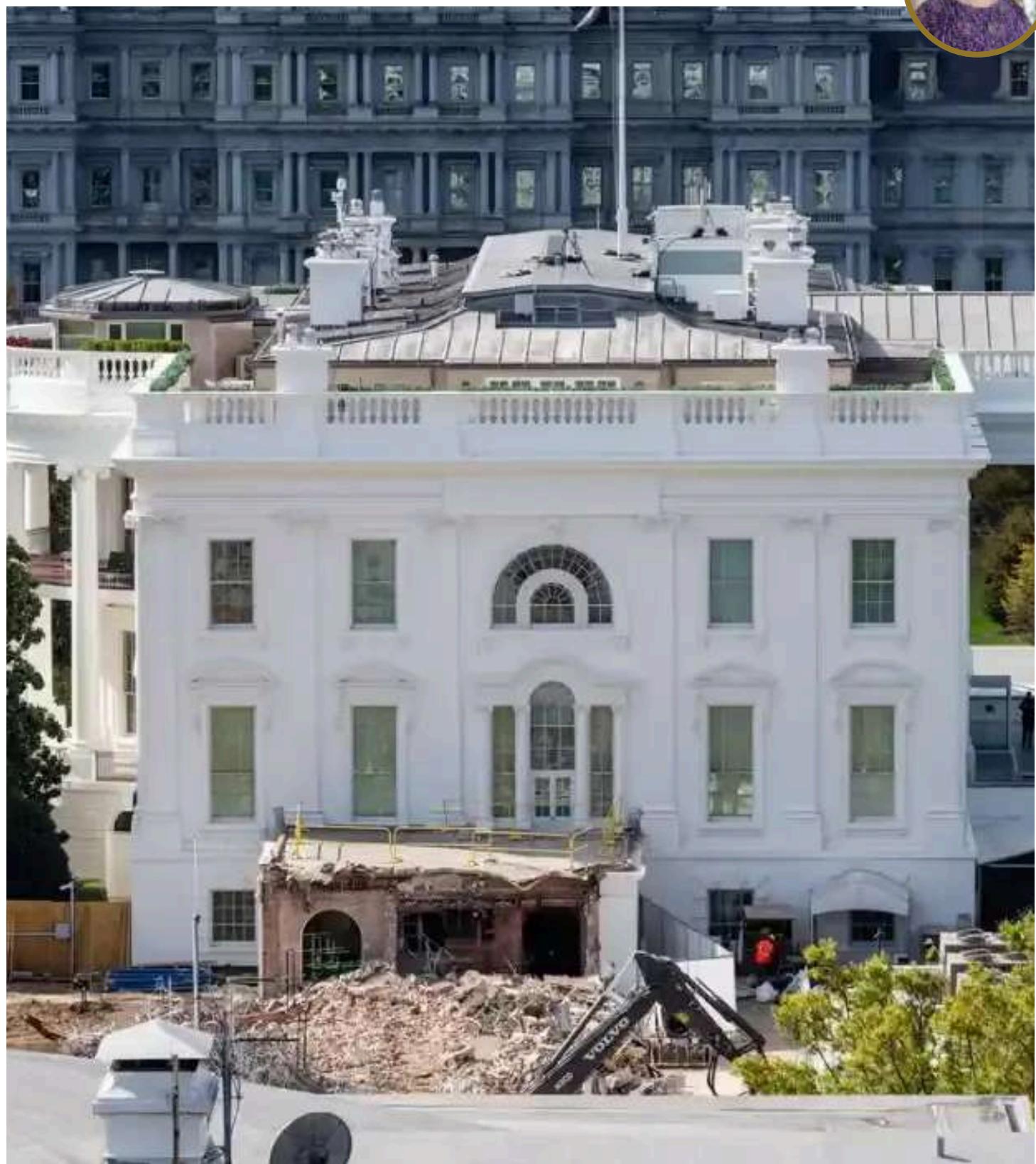
Without the filibuster, legislation could be passed with a simple majority 51 votes rather than the current 60 making it easier for the majority party to legislate its legislative docket fleetly.

Rescinding this rule would reduce the power of the nonge and could lead to more prejudiced, nippy policy changes, especially on contentious issues. Still, numerous legislators, including significant numbers within both parties, have expressed enterprises that barring the filibuster could lead to increased polarization and undermine the Senate's part as a chamber of extended deliberation and agreement.

The move would be seen as a major procedural shift, frequently appertained to as the "nuclear option," and could unnaturally alter the legislative process, with both short- term advantages for the majority and long- term pitfalls of legislative insecurity and prejudiced corrosion.

Donor secrecy shrouds Trump's White House Ballroom project

BY ATHENA NAGEL



The government has defended the demolition of the historic East Wing to create space for Trump's pet project, partly because taxpayer money is not being used for it.

The New York Times claims that over three dozen contributions and the identities of the people and businesses supporting the initiative were left off of a White House contributor list.

The publication got a copy of a pledge form that Trump's staff has been circulating to solicit money for the ballroom, offering donors the option to keep their identity.

The newspaper claims that the White House has not revealed the identities of two healthcare corporations that are "looking to preserve or increase Medicare reimbursement for their products."

Vantive, a kidney care company, admitted to the Times that its CEO, Chris Toth, went to a donor dinner, but it did not reveal how much it gave to the ballroom. According to the publication,



Extremity Care, which has previously contributed to Trump's super PAC, gave \$2.5 million to the ballroom fund. Other donors who have not yet been identified include the financial behemoth BlackRock, which Trump reportedly backed in May when it bought a share in the firm that runs ports close to the Panama Canal.

According to the Times, billionaire TikTok investor Jeff Yass was not included on the list either. He stands to gain from a Trump-backed agreement that would maintain the social media platform's operations in the United States.

The names of donors "who wish to be named publicly" were made public, according to a White House official who told the Times that they "also have the option to remain anonymous and we will honor that if that's what they choose." The pledge form that the Times was able to obtain states that the project is called "The President Donald J. Trump Ballroom."

Trump earlier said that he had "no plan" to call the ballroom after himself and that the rumors that he was doing so were "fake news."

Which undisclosed donors have ties to industries regulated by the White House?

Two healthcare enterprises giving to the design reportedly aim to cover or expand Medicare payment for their products. One, Extremity Care, has preliminarily bestowed to Trump's super PAC and contributed \$2.5 million to the chamber fund. Another is Vantive, an order care company whose CEO attended a patron regale.

BlackRock, a major fiscal investment establishment, is an undisclosed patron. It has significant investments and interests affected by government regulation, similar as in anchorages near the Panama Canal. Big tech companies similar as Google, Amazon, Microsoft, and Palantir, numerous listed benefactors but some backing remains undisclosed have entered economic civil contracts and nonsupervisory favors.

Benefactors include heavy machinery maker Caterpillar, defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton, Lockheed Martin, and renewable mileage NextEra Energy, all crucial stakeholders in government policy and contracts.

White House bypasses COP30 and boosts fossil energy

BY HENRY NICHOLAS



Trump was not anticipated to attend a leaders' gathering prior to the annual UN climate conference in Belem, where he withdrew from the Paris climate deal for the second time after returning to the White House in January.

However, it now seems that he will not send any of the best negotiators to the negotiations, which are scheduled for November 10-21.

"The US is not sending any high level representatives to COP30," a White House official said on condition of anonymity.

="The president is directly engaging with leaders around the world on energy issues, which you can

see from the historic trade deals and peace deals that all have a significant focus on energy partnerships."

Less than 60 world leaders have confirmed their attendance at the climate conference, which is being held separately this year to relieve accommodation pressures, Brazil said Friday.

According to confirmation from their governments to AFP, the leaders of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Colombia, Chile, Cape Verde, and Liberia will be there.

President Xi Jinping will be represented by Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang, according to China.

How will skipping COP30 affect U.S. climate diplomacy?

Undermining the U.S.'s part as a global leader in climate accommodations at a critical time when the world marks the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement. Losing the occasion to shape crucial opinions on climate finance, streamlined emigration reduction commitments (NDCs), and collaborative action fabrics.

Eroding credibility and influence, ceding ground to other countries and blocs that remain engaged in advancing global climate pretensions. Raising enterprises among transnational mates and vulnerable nations about the U.S.'s commitment to addressing climate change, potentially weakening multinational trust.

Limiting direct political engagement and collaboration with other major emitters on strategies to limit temperature rise and acclimatize to climate impacts. transferring an emblematic communication that aligns with President Trump's administration's programs prioritizing reactionary energy products over transnational climate cooperation.

Trump hints at meeting NYC Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani

By Eric Gahagan



In an interview with NBC last week, Mamdani stated that he intended to get in touch with the White House as he gets ready to take office "because this is a relationship that will be critical to the success of the city."

However, Mamdani's representatives did not comment on Trump's remarks on Monday morning.

"I will be proactive in the work that I do" Mamdani said.

"And I think that is because of the responsibility that I hold to eight and a half million people of being their mayor, it is important that you are open to working with anyone, no matter what disagreements you may have."

Asked what he would tell Trump, Mamdani said he would say:

"I'm here to work for the benefit of everyone that calls this city home, and wherever there is a possibility for working together towards that end,

I'm ready, and if it's to the expense of those New Yorkers, I will fight it."

Trump called Mamdani a "communist lunatic," threatened to withhold federal funding from the city if he won, and even hinted at the possibility of stripping Mamdani who was

born in Uganda during his campaign. This is why there may be a meeting between Trump and Mamdani.

Additionally, Trump supported Andrew Cuomo, the former governor of New York who ran an independent mayoral candidacy after losing the Democratic primary to Mamdani.

Mamdani vehemently denounced Trump and his policies, notably his administration's immigration crackdown, during the campaign. However, Mamdani has stated time and time again that he would cooperate with the president if it meant "delivering on lowering the cost of living for New Yorkers."

In his victory speech, Mamdani said that "if anyone can show a nation betrayed by Donald Trump how to defeat him, it is the city that gave rise to him", adding that

"if there is any way to terrify a despot, it is by dismantling the very conditions that allowed him to accumulate power."

"This is not only how we stop Trump; it's how we stop the next one" he added. "So, Donald Trump, since I know you're watching, I have four words for you: Turn the volume up."

Later in the speech, he said: "So hear me, President Trump,

when I say this: to get to any of us, you will have to get through all of us." On January 1st, Mamdani will take the oath of office as the 111th mayor of New York City.

How could a Trump Mamdani meeting affect federal funding for NYC?

A meeting between Donald Trump and New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani could have significant counteraccusations for civil backing to NYC. Trump has preliminarily hovered to withhold civil finances from New York City if Mamdani, whom he labeled a "socialist," were to apply programs he opposes.

Still, it could ease these pressures and potentially secure continued civil backing or find negotiations on civil support for social programs like SNAP and casing. If the meeting leads to a working relationship or collective understanding.

This dynamic is shaped both by the political differences between Trump and Mamdani and by indigenous limits. Congress controls civil spending, so the chairman's capability to unilaterally cut back is limited but political pressure to impact Congress could increase. Overall, the meeting signals an implicit thaw or realistic engagement but does not guarantee resolution of backing controversies.

Trump criticised for 'Great Gatsby' Party amid SNAP cuts

By Adriana Montes



The White House stated that the theme of the Friday night party at Mar-a-Lago was "A little party nowadays killed nothing," which is a quotation from the song used in the 2013 film adaption of the book written by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Among the guests dressed up in 1920s apparel were Ivanka and Tiffany Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Tiffany Trump's hubby, Michael Boulos, while the hosts also dressed up as flappers in chatting with the guests.

For many years, literary historians have praised Fitzgerald's 1925 novel for its portrayal of the nation's affluence and class inequalities throughout the 1920s.

A number of Democrats pointed out the symbolic significance



and chastised the president for hosting the celebration at a time when the government is still closed.

"Last night, Trump made it even clearer that he doesn't give a damn about anyone but himself and his wealthy friends,"

he said in a statement.

Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy reshared a photo from the party on his social media and commented,

"The way he rubs his inhumanity in Americans' face never ceases to stun me."

White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly dismissed the critics, arguing in a statement Saturday, "These Democrats are full of it." "President Trump has consistently called on them to do the right thing and reopen the government, which they could do at any time,"

she added.

Following a lawsuit by many states, a federal judge in Rhode Island temporarily ordered the Trump administration to continue providing SNAP payments on Friday. While declaring that the Trump administration's move to halt SNAP financing is "unlawful," another Boston court chose not to immediately mandate that the program get funding.

On Friday, Trump declared that

he has sought information from the courts after two recent rulings in a state of uncertainty, as the attorneys for his administration do not know whether they have the legal authority to provide funding for SNAP during the shutdown.

How many SNAP recipients were affected when benefits lapsed?

Nearly 42 million Americans were affected when Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits lapsed at the launch of November 2025 due to the government shutdown. This represents about one in eight U.S. homes who calculate on SNAP for food backing each month. The interruption meant these millions faced query about how they would get food until partial backing was ordered by the courts later.

Most donor sources are low-income families, kids (around 39 of SNAP participants), seniors, and people with disabilities. The states with the highest number of applicants include California, Texas, and New York. The average benefit per year is around \$187 because it is an important supplement to primary nutrition.

Following the lapse, numerous food banks and hunger relief associations reported a swell in demand, as families plodded to fill the gap left by halted SNAP benefits.

Trump weighs major F-35 jet deal with Saudi Arabia

By Jan Frazier



Following talks with Saudi officials, Trump stated he was examining the request.

"I'm looking at that. They've asked me to look at it. They want to buy a lot of '35' but they want to buy actually more than that, fighter jets."

The possible sale occurs as Trump gets ready to welcome Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, to the White House the following week.

During the visit, they are anticipated to sign defense and economic deals.

Trump told reporters that the discussions were "more than meeting, we're honoring" Saudi Arabia when asked about them.

Additionally, he expressed his desire that the kingdom would ratify the Abraham Accords, which have improved ties between Israel and nations with a majority of Muslims.

Global outrage over the war, which UN experts and rights groups have considered a genocide, has affected those discussions.

Normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia is now viewed in the region as a distant prospect.

How would an F-35 sale affect Israel Saudi regional balance?

The trade of F- 35 spurs to Saudi Arabia would significantly affect the indigenous balance of power and Israel's qualitative

military edge in the Middle East. Presently, Israel is the only country in the region operating F- 35 covert fighters, which give advanced capabilities that maintain its military superiority.

Israeli officers have indicated they do n't oppose the trade outright but contend it be conditioned on Saudi Arabia completely normalizing relations with Israel, immaculately through joining the Abraham Accords.

Israel's main concern is that Saudi Arabia's closer geographic proximity to Israel makes the deployment of similar spurs potentially hanging . There are requests that any F- 35s Saudi Arabia acquires not be posted in bases near to Israel, especially west of the country.

Syria and US coalition document expected on November 10

By Henry Nicholas



The gathering will be the first time the White House has ever hosted a Syrian head of state. It will also highlight Sharaa's remarkable transformation from a fervent jihadist who wanted to murder American soldiers in Iraq to a polished politician courting world leaders.

After exiting the conference stage, Barrack informed a group of reporters that the Syrian president will be joining 88 other nations that are partners in the coalition that was formed in 2014 when ISIS marched through Syria and Iraq and created its deadly "caliphate."

"We are trying to get everybody to be a partner in this alliance, which is huge for them,"

Barrack said.

In 2019, coalition forces and their closest ground abettors, the Kurdish-led Syrian Popular Forces (SDF), eventually

overthrew the jihadis' quasi-state.

Top Western and indigenous leaders, including spymasters and foreign ministers, attended the conference, which was hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and Barrack was one of the prominent speakers. Among those in attendance was US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard.

In many respects, Sharaa views joining the US-led coalition against ISIS as a formality.

For nearly ten years, Sharaa has been secretly working with the US to combat the jihadis, exchanging intelligence on the locations of important ISIS and al-Qaeda figures in and around the northern Idlib province.

Before capturing Damascus, Sharaa and Hayat Tahrir al-

Sham, two of Syria's most hardline radical Islamist groups, controlled Idlib. Until recently, Western nations, including the United States, classified them as terrorists.

How might this affect US relations with Turkey and Gulf states?

Relations may ameliorate due to increased cooperation on Syria. Turkey played a crucial part in the defeat of Assad and supports the interim Syrian government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, aligning with Washington's current strategy.

This trilateral cooperation can strengthen Turkey's indigenous influence and its cooperation with the U.S. Turkey benefits from the stabilization efforts and may coordinate reconstruction plans and counterterrorism operations with the U.S. and Syria. Still, long-standing pressures over Kurdish groups and indigenous intentions remain an underpinning challenge.

Gulf countries similar as Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been recalibrating ties with Turkey, moving toward détente amid indigenous battles. The U.S. is keen on stabilizing the Middle East and encouraging reduced conflict between crucial players.

Trump officials fear Gaza peace plan may collapse

By Athena Nagel



The U.S. military's recently established Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC) in Kiryat Gat hosted a meeting last month in Israel with over 400 officials and members of the business sector. The materials were developed by U.S. security agencies and independent advisors. The discussion was arranged by Lt. Gen. Michael Fenzel, the U.S. security coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

A slide featuring a question mark between "Phase 1" and "Phase 2" of the Trump plan was included in a 67-slide unclassified presentation, according to Politico. This is a visual representation of ambiguity about how the next phases will be implemented.

The presentation featured discussion accoutrements from the Blair Institute, which was created by former British high minister Tony Blair and has been involved in agreement attempts, as well as U.S. government "situation reports" on conditions in Gaza.

The documents emphasize that the United States is still committed to the agreement, but they also punctuate how the public sanguinity raised by Trump and his administration is at odds with the challenges of stabilizing the Gaza Strip and reaching a long-term peace between Israel and Hamas.

Important elements are yet

unknown, but the proposal calls for an international stability force to oversee the demilitarization of Gaza and monitor a truce.

There are still concerns regarding the force's composition, deployment site, rules of engagement, legal mandate, and oversight, one presentation suggested that the US would be in charge of the force. The article claims that there is opposition to the Palestinian Authority's engagement in Gaza and that Israel is hesitant to leave the area while Hamas is still armed.

The effort is "a full-time job," according to David Schenker, who was Trump's assistant secretary of state for the Middle East during his first term. He told Politico that the administration's small diplomatic corps might not be adequate for the amount of work needed.

"Divorced from the peace deal is a plan of how to actually implement this peace deal," said one of the participants of the symposium.

"Everyone is floating around at 40,000 feet and nobody is talking operations or tactics."

"Hamas is buying time for eventual reassertion of control," according to another confidential document referenced in the presentation.

"Every delay works in their

favor," the statement says, pointing to risks to security and humanitarian efforts in parts of Gaza that are not controlled by Hamas.

What are the main implementation obstacles cited in Politico's report?

Challenges implementing the multinational stabilization force in Gaza to preserve peace and security, which threatens implementation of the plan. Conflicts over governance, especially regarding the possible inclusion of Palestinian technocrats who will oversee the interim administration, with Hamas apprehensive about completely giving up political and military authority.

Failure to obtain disarmament of Hamas, or guarantees that Hamas will demilitarize sufficiently to satisfy the former by Israel. Difficulties in implementing the ceasefire framework and security arrangements outlined in the ceasefire while regional backers such as Turkey and the UAE are ambivalent. The intricacy of interests in balancing political and security interests in the plan among Israel, Hamas, Palestinian groups, and external actors.

Threat of collapse of the plan if elements of the framework are not realised, resulting in instability or a de facto partition of Gaza instead of peace. circumstances.

US imposes sanctions over Iran missile and drone support

By Danielle Campbell



The Treasury Department said in a statement that Wednesday's designations target 32 people and organizations that run various procurement networks and are located in Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, China, Hong Kong, India, Germany, and Ukraine.

"These networks pose a threat to US and allied personnel in the Middle East and to commercial shipping in the Red Sea,"

the department said in a statement.

Tehran has been accused by the United States, its European allies, and Israel of using its nuclear program as a cover for attempts to gain the capacity to create bombs. Iran claims that its nuclear program is solely intended for peaceful uses. The amount of highly enriched

uranium Iran has produced and stored is "a matter of serious concern," according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog, which urged Iran to permit IAEA officials to assess nuclear installations.

"It is critical that the Agency is able to verify the inventories of previously declared nuclear material in Iran as soon as possible in order to allay its concerns ... regarding the possible diversion of declared nuclear material from peaceful use,"

it added.

Western nations claim that Iran's high degree of enrichment has no civil rationale.

Iran possessed 440.9 kg of uranium enriched to up to 60% in uranium hexafluoride form

prior to the strikes, according to IAEA estimates. This uranium can readily be further enriched.

According to an IAEA standard, that is sufficient for ten nuclear bombs if it is further enriched.

How will these sanctions affect Iran's missile and UAV procurement networks?

All property and interests of the designated companies and individualities under U.S. governance are firmed, and U.S. persons are banned from engaging with them. This creates fiscal insulation and compliance pitfalls encyclopedically. The warrants identify and strike frontal companies operating in countries like Hong Kong, China, the UAE, and Turkey, which Iran uses to circumvent being restricted and land military-grade electronic factors, UAV machines, and bullet forces.

By cutting off access to transnational suppliers of binary-use electronics, bullet guidance technology, radars, UAV factors, and fuel constituents, the warrants hamper Iran's capability to sustain and expand its ballistic bullet and UAV capabilities.

These measures impel global fiscal institutions, businesses, and governments to be watchful against inadvertently supporting Iran's procurement networks, reducing Iran's options for sourcing sensitive accoutrements.



White House plans grand welcome for Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

By Kathy Malouf





According to a senior White House official, the crown prince's day at the White House will start on Tuesday with an entrance ceremony on the expansive South Lawn and a greeting on the South Portico.

The official, who was allowed obscurity to bandy the administration's plans, stated that after a bilateral discussion with Trump in the Oval Office, there will be a signing and lunch in the Cabinet Room where the United States and Saudi Arabia would confirm several defense and marketable deals. First lady Melania Trump will host and organize an East Room dinner at the White House later this evening.

According to the official, Prince Mohammed is not officially a head of state, thus his visit is described as an official business visit.

Dozens of CEOs are anticipated to attend a U.S.-Saudi Business Council meeting on Wednesday at the Kennedy Center, a fine arts establishment currently run by Trump supporters. The senior

White House official stated that the U.S. president is likely to attend the business gathering even though his presence has not yet been confirmed.

In his second term, Trump has made his relations with the Gulf countries one of his top foreign policy priorities. Trump was greeted with a very uncommon Air Force One escort by royal Saudi Air Force F-15s and a state supper at a UNESCO heritage site during his first significant international tour of the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

"I really believe we like each other a lot,"

Trump said as he met with Prince Mohammed in the royal palace in Riyadh. Later, Trump described Prince Mohammed as an "incredible man" and "my friend."

Additionally, it is the crown prince's first visit to the US since Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi was killed in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in

2018 during Trump's first term. According to U.S. intelligence services, Prince Mohammed most certainly ordered the murder, which led to penalties on a number of Saudi officials. Since then, both the Trump and Biden administrations have attempted to restore relations with Saudi Arabia, despite his denial of any role.

How might the visit affect pending US Saudi defense agreements?

The visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the White House is anticipated to significantly advance pending U.S.- Saudi defense agreements. Conversations are ongoing to finalize a comprehensive defense pact modeled after other strong U.S. security commitments, similar as the convention with Japan.

The conventional honors punctuate the strategic significance of Saudi Arabia to the United States and the close particular relationship between President Donald Trump and MBS, indeed though the visit is officially designated as a working visit rather than a state visit.

The sanctioned visit therefore provides an important political platform where accelerated accommodations and conceivably formal signing of the defense pact could do, solidifying the U.S.- Saudi alliance and enhancing indigenous security cooperation.

France Launches Updated Voluntary Military Service Under Macron

By Mandilee Hecht



President Emmanuel Macron announced a new voluntary military service programme on 27 November 2025 at Varces military base, targeting 18-19-year-olds for 10-month terms starting summer 2026 with 3,000 initial recruits scaling to 50,000 by 2036. The €2 billion initiative responds to accelerating geopolitical threats, offering paid service on French territory only, without reinstating conscription.

French President Emmanuel Macron unveiled plans for a new voluntary military service during a speech to the 27th Mountain Infantry Brigade at Varces-Allières-et-Risset base on 27 November 2025, amid heightened concerns over Russian threats to Europe. As

reported by Reuters, Macron stated, "This voluntary program will cater to individuals aged 18 and 19, offering compensation and lasting for a duration of 10 months," describing it as "a significant and necessary effort" with an estimated budget of 2 billion euros (\$2.32 billion).

The *Guardian's* Europe correspondent noted Macron's emphasis that "France cannot remain passive," highlighting young citizens' "desire for involvement" and readiness to defend the country, with service restricted to national territory. Euronews detailed the programme's structure: one month of initial training in basic military skills and weapons handling, followed by nine

months in military units, including participation in Operation Sentinelle.

Le Monde reported Macron ruling out conscription's return, suspended in 1996 and ended in 2001, stating it would require recruiting 600,000-800,000 annually, while this hybrid model integrates youth, reservists, and active personnel.

Programme Structure and Timeline

As per Reuters, the plan aims to recruit 3,000 participants in 2026, increasing to 10,000 by 2030 and 50,000 by 2036—"My goal for France is to reach 50,000 young individuals by 2036, subject to the evolving threats we face,"

Macron articulated.

The *Guardian* specified volunteers, both men and women aged predominantly 18-19 (up to 25 for specialised skills like engineering or medicine), will earn a minimum monthly wage of €800 (£700), with food, housing, and 75% train fare reductions provided.

Euronews confirmed selection via a “day of mobilisation” based on motivation and armed forces needs, with deployment only on mainland and overseas territories, not abroad.

ABC News reported Macron stating, “A national service be introduced gradually starting summer,” clarifying service exclusively “on national soil.” *Le Monde* added it starts September 2026 for the first 3,000, freeing professional soldiers for frontline missions.

Strategic Rationale and Context

France24 coverage linked the announcement to bolstering defences amid Russia's war in Ukraine putting Europe at “great risk.” Macron stressed, “We need mobilisation,” for France to “be ready and be respected” against “acceleration of crises,” without naming specific enemies.

The New York Times noted it followed Army Chief General Fabien Mandon's controversial 18 November statement that France must “accept losing its children” in potential war, which

Macron's plan addressed reassuringly as voluntary and territory-bound.

NBC News highlighted European nations bolstering forces against Russian threats beyond Ukraine, with Macron aligning France with nearly a dozen others like Germany and Denmark.

BBC quoted Macron: “The only way to avoid danger is to prepare for it,” amid 200,000 active personnel and 47,000 reservists, targeting 210,000 and 80,000 by 2030.

Replacement of Universal National Service

Euronews stated the initiative ends Macron's previously championed Universal National Service (SNU), a civic scheme for all youth piloted since 2019.

Le Monde's politics article described it as part of a “new hybrid army model,” with Macron avoiding alarming language during the Varces unveiling before reassuring families of voluntary, 10-month national service.

Post-Service Options and Incentives

Reuters detailed post-service paths: civilian life, reserves, or military careers. The *Guardian* echoed this flexibility.

Recent polling per Macron's office shows strong support

among 18-25-year-olds, per BBC.

Historical Background

Conscription ended under Jacques Chirac in 1996-2001. Macron affirmed, “We cannot return to the era of conscription... This hybrid military model is suitable,” per Reuters.

Le Monde en France recalled Macron's earlier 2025 intent for voluntary youth military options.

Funding and Scale

All sources confirmed €2 billion annual cost, termed “significant and necessary investment” by Macron.

Regional and International Alignment

Deployment covers mainland and overseas territories. Macron clarified Tuesday it's not about “sending our young people to Ukraine,” per Euronews.

Politico Europe and others noted influences from Nordic and German models post-2022 Ukraine invasion.

Broader Military Modernisation

The programme supports reserve expansion and recruitment amid shortfalls, with participants in domestic operations like *Sentinelle* since 2015.

Court Protects \$1 Billion in Maryland Transportation Funds, but More Cuts Could Follow

By Kathy Malouf



Maryland Circuit Court Judge Julie E. Davis ruled on 3 December 2025 to protect \$1 billion in state transportation funding from Governor Wes Moore's proposed budget cuts, citing statutory protections under the Highway User Revenue Act.

The decision halts diversion of vehicle registration fees and fuel taxes but leaves \$800 million in other infrastructure projects vulnerable amid a \$3 billion state deficit.

A Maryland judge issued a preliminary injunction on 3 December 2025 blocking Governor Wes Moore's administration from slashing \$1 billion in transportation funding, preserving critical Highway Trust Fund allocations for roads and transit.

As reported by Baltimore Sun statehouse bureau chief Pamela Wood, Judge Julie E. Davis of Baltimore City Circuit Court ruled that the Highway User Revenue Act (HURA) of 2013 statutorily dedicates fuel taxes, vehicle registration fees, and motor vehicle sales taxes exclusively to transportation, rejecting the administration's reallocation proposal amid a \$3 billion budget shortfall.

The decision responds to a lawsuit filed by Maryland Senate President Bill Ferguson, House Speaker Adrienne Jones, and Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld, who argued HURA

created an inviolable trust. The Washington Post's Maryland reporter Ovetta Wiggins quoted Judge Davis: "The plain language of HURA prohibits diversion of dedicated revenues for non-transportation purposes, regardless of fiscal pressures." The ruling protects \$1.034 billion specifically but permits review of discretionary spending, with \$800 million in Purple Line and other projects still at risk.

Maryland Matters transportation correspondent Len Lazarick noted Moore's team proposed cuts after October revenue forecasts showed a \$61 billion four-year gap, including \$500 million from transportation to balance general funds. Ferguson hailed the decision as "vindication of legislative intent."

Court Ruling Details

Judge Davis granted the preliminary injunction following oral arguments on 2 December, finding plaintiffs demonstrated likelihood of success, irreparable harm, and public interest. As per WBAL-TV legal analyst Bryan Renbaum, the 25-page opinion emphasised HURA's Section 3-804(a): "Revenues from the taxes... shall be used exclusively for transportation purposes." The state conceded HURA's language but argued fiscal emergency warranted flexibility; Davis rejected this, citing no emergency clause.

The injunction halts implementation of Executive Order 01.01.2025.12, which sought to transfer funds for education and public safety. WBAL reported the ruling takes immediate effect pending full trial expected in Q2 2026.

Budget Crisis Context

Governor Moore inherited a \$3 billion FY2026 gap post-2024 elections, exacerbated by overestimated revenues and Medicaid expansion costs. As covered by Maryland Reporter editor Len Lazarick, October consensus revenue estimates slashed projections by \$1.2 billion, prompting 2% across-the-board cuts including \$1 billion transportation diversion proposed 15 November.

Moore's 18 November address outlined balancing via reserves (\$500 million), spending reductions (\$1 billion), and revenue measures. Transportation bore



disproportionate cuts as HURA funds offered "one-time" relief, per budget director Ellie Hoffman.

Protected Funding Sources

Highway Trust Fund Components (per HURA):

- 6% fuel tax: \$450 million annually
- Titling/registration fees: \$350 million
- MVA surcharges: \$150 million
- Rental car taxes: \$84 million

Pamela Wood detailed these generate \$1.9 billion yearly, funding 80% of \$15 billion six-year Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). Diversion would delay 200 bridge projects and I-495 tunnel planning.

Looming Cuts and Impacts

While HURA protected, \$800 million discretionary cuts remain:

- Purple Line light rail: \$435 million deferred
- Frederick I-270 spur: \$150 million
- Baltimore Red Line revival: \$100 million
- 50 local road projects: \$115 million
-

Ovetta Wiggins reported MDOT Secretary Paul Wiedefeld warned of "cascading delays" risking \$2 billion federal match loss by 2027. Senate Minority

Leader Steve Hershey (R) criticised Moore's planning.

Legislative and Executive Reactions

Plaintiffs Celebrated:

Senate President Bill Ferguson: "Today's ruling protects Marylanders' mobility investments from short-term politics."

House Speaker Adrienne Jones: "HURA reflects bipartisan commitment to infrastructure."

Administration Response:

Governor Moore spokesman Andrew Madtes: "We respect the court's decision and will comply while pursuing balanced solutions."

Budget Director Ellie Hoffman indicated appeal consideration but focus on alternatives.

Len Lazarick quoted House Minority Whip Jesse Pippy (R): "Ruling exposes Democratic fiscal mismanagement threatening our roads."

Historical Precedents

HURA passed 2013 under Governor Martin O'Malley (D) after 2012 "rainy day" raid controversy. 2020 upheld HURA constitutionality in Bay Bridge tolls case. Judge Davis referenced both in opinion.

Broader Fiscal Implications

Maryland's \$63 billion FY2026

budget faces progressive cuts: education (-\$400 million), public safety (-\$250 million), health (-\$200 million). Transportation's protection shifts pressure to general fund reserves projected depleted by FY2028.

Moody's affirmed Aa1 rating but warned repeated deficits risk downgrade. Transportation Advocates of Maryland warned HURA intact preserves debt capacity for \$7 billion GARVEE bonds.

Future Legal and Policy Path

Full merits hearing scheduled April 2026. Administration may seek legislative HURA amendment requiring three-fifths vote. Wiedefeld proposed Transportation Trust Fund reforms for flexibility.

Pamela Wood noted 2026 session will debate rainy day fund expansion and gas tax indexing, last increased 2013 at 30 cents/gallon.

Stakeholder Perspectives

AASHTO Maryland Section: President Monte Tunis: "Ruling safeguards 12,000 construction jobs."

Smart Growth America: Executive director Ben Ross: "Opportunity to prioritise transit over highways."

Chamber of Commerce: President Kelly Schulz: "Budget reality demands shared sacrifice across sectors."

Automakers Call on US to Renew North American Trade Pact

By John Ruehl

Major automakers including Toyota, General Motors, Ford, and the Alliance for Automotive Innovation called on the US government on 3 December 2025 to extend the United States-Mexico-Canada

Agreement (USMCA) beyond its 2026 review, citing supply chain stability and competitiveness against Chinese EVs. The joint letter to President Trump and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick emphasises tariff-free regional trade to sustain 1 million US jobs and \$500 billion annual automotive trade flows. Leading North American automakers urged the United States to extend the USMCA free trade agreement during its 2026 review, warning that failure to do so risks disrupting integrated supply chains and escalating costs amid Chinese competition. As reported by Reuters automotive editor Nick Carey, a coalition led by Toyota Motor North America, General Motors, Ford Motor Company, and the Alliance for Automotive Innovation sent a letter to President Donald Trump and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on 3 December 2025, stating, "Extending USMCA is essential to maintaining North America's competitive edge in global automotive markets." The plea highlights the deal's role in



supporting 1 million US jobs and \$500 billion in annual trilateral trade.

The automakers' position counters potential US tariff expansions under Trump's trade agenda, with the letter warning of retaliatory measures from Mexico and Canada that could raise vehicle prices by 10-15%. Bloomberg supply chain correspondent Elizabeth Warren noted the industry's unified front represents 90% of North American production capacity, emphasising rules-of-origin compliance that mandate 75% regional content for tariff-free access.

Wall Street Journal trade reporter Paul Vieira quoted Alliance executive director Matt Blunt: "USMCA expiration would fragment the most efficient automotive supply chain globally, costing consumers \$2,000 per vehicle." The call

aligns with Toyota's recent \$10 billion US investment announcement, tying trade stability to manufacturing commitments.

Coalition and Key Signatories

The letter bore signatures from Toyota's Tetsuo Ogawa, GM's Mary Barra, Ford's Jim Farley, Stellantis' Carlos Tavares, and Honda's Noriya Kaihara. As per Automotive News editor Lindsay Brooke, the Alliance for Automotive Innovation coordinated the effort, representing firms producing 95% of US vehicles. Additional supporters included Volkswagen Group of America and Nissan North America.

Toyota Pressroom confirmed alignment with its 13 November 2025 announcement of up to \$10 billion additional US investment, stating the trade extension supports "best-company-in-town" localisation.

USMCA Background and Review Timeline

Enacted in 2020 replacing NAFTA, USMCA's core provisions expire after six years unless renewed. Nikkei Asia business editor Hiroki Nakajima reported the mandatory review occurs in 2026, with opt-out clauses possible by July 2025. Automakers seek indefinite extension of tariff-free quotas and labour-value content rules. The deal requires 75% North American content, 40-45% high-wage labour, and steel-aluminium sourcing, boosting USMCA vehicle exports 25% since implementation per Commerce Department data.

Economic Stakes

The industry employs 1.1 million in the US, with \$280 billion annual output. CNBC markets correspondent Phil LeBeau cited Cox Automotive forecasts: non-extension could add \$1,500-3,000 per vehicle via tariffs, reducing sales 500,000 units annually.

Mexico supplies 40% of US imports, Canada 15%. Disruption risks mirror 2018-2019 renegotiation volatility when stocks fell 5%.

China Competition Concerns

Chinese EV makers like BYD and Nio eye North American expansion. The letter warns Beijing's subsidies enable dumping, with USMCA's

safeguards preventing transshipment via Mexico. Reuters quoted GM's Barra: "Without USMCA renewal, Chinese EVs flood via loopholes, undercutting American workers." Trump's 100% China tariffs amplify the need for regional fortress.

Specific Policy Requests

Permanent Extension
Indefinite tariff-free access for compliant vehicles and parts.

Digital Trade Update
Modernise e-commerce, data flows for connected/autonomous vehicles.

Labour and Environment
Maintain high-wage rules preventing wage suppression.

Enforcement Enhancement
Strengthen Mexico labour reforms compliance monitoring.

Government Indications

Commerce Secretary Lutnick signalled review prioritisation in Fox Business interview, stating, "USMCA works but needs China-proofing." USTR Katherine Tai endorsed extension but seeks tougher IP protections.

President Trump tweeted support for "fair trade deals," referencing Toyota's \$10bn pledge post his Japan discussions with PM Sanae Takaichi.

Industry Investment Linkage

Toyota's 13 November announcement of up to \$10 billion over five years—bringing cumulative US investment to \$60 billion—ties directly to trade certainty. Toyota Motor North America CEO Tetsuo Ogawa stated at North Carolina battery plant opening: "Trade stability enables our multi-pathway mobility investments creating 5,100 jobs." The facility, Toyota's first US battery plant outside Japan, underscores localisation.

NY Post White House correspondent Steven Nelson reported Trump claiming credit: "Toyota's \$10B plants—go buy Toyota!" Toyota clarified no new explicit pledge but ongoing commitment.

Mexican and Canadian Positions

Mexico's Morena government supports extension; Canada's Trudeau affirmed trilateral talks commencing Q1 2026. Potential friction: US seeks stricter Mexico enforcement.

Barclays auto analyst Dan Levy termed it "pre-emptive industry lobbying," rating extension 80% likely. Goldman Sachs' Mark Delaney forecasts 2-3% US vehicle price rise absent renewal. 2018 USMCA talks saw similar automaker advocacy yielding 16-year stability clause. Current dynamics mirror with added EV/geopolitics layers.

Toyota to Invest an Extra \$10 Billion in the U.S. for Future Mobility Projects

By Eric Gahagan

Toyota Motor Corporation announced on 3 December 2025 an additional \$10 billion investment in its U.S. operations over the next few years, targeting 'future mobility efforts' including electric vehicles (EVs), autonomous driving technology, and battery production. The commitment builds on \$14 billion already pledged since 2021, creating 5,000 new jobs and reinforcing Toyota's North American manufacturing footprint amid shifting automotive landscapes.

Toyota Motor Corporation revealed plans to inject an additional \$10 billion into its United States operations, focusing on advancing 'future mobility efforts' such as electrification, hydrogen technology, and connected vehicle systems. As reported by Hiroki Nakajima of Nikkei Asia, Toyota President Akio Toyoda stated during a Detroit press conference, "This investment underscores our commitment to American innovation and jobs, accelerating our multi-pathway approach to sustainable mobility." The announcement coincides with Toyota's push to localise EV battery production and autonomous tech development, responding to US incentives under the Inflation Reduction Act.



The funding expands Toyota's existing \$14 billion US investment since 2021, targeting new facilities in North Carolina and Kentucky for solid-state batteries and software-defined vehicles. Reuters automotive correspondent Norihiko Shirouzu noted the plan creates approximately 5,000 direct jobs and thousands more indirectly, bolstering supply chains amid global trade tensions.

Bloomberg Industry analyst Stephen Wilmot highlighted Toyota's strategy differentiates from pure EV plays, emphasising hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and hydrogen alongside batteries,

with \$3 billion allocated to a new North Carolina battery plant joint venture.

Investment Breakdown

Toyota detailed allocations across key areas. Nikkei Asia quoted Toyoda specifying \$4 billion for EV and battery manufacturing, \$3 billion for autonomous driving R&D centres in Michigan, \$2 billion for hydrogen fuel cell production in Kentucky, and \$1 billion for software and AI development hubs. The investments span five years, with production ramping by 2028.

As per Wall Street Journal reporter Sean McLain, the North Carolina facility partners with Panasonic, aiming for 40 GWh annual capacity for next-gen solid-state batteries targeting 1,000 km range. Kentucky's hydrogen plant supports commercial trucks and stationary power. Detroit Free Press business editor Jamie LaReau reported Michigan hubs will employ 2,000 engineers for Level 4 autonomy software, integrating with Toyota's Arene OS platform

Strategic Context

Toyota's move responds to US policy shifts under President Trump, who pledged automotive tariffs on China. Toyoda emphasised, "Localising production secures our US market leadership while advancing technology sovereignty," per Automotive News executive editor Lindsay Brooke.

The announcement follows Toyota's Q3 2025 earnings beat, with US sales up 8% year-on-year driven by hybrids like RAV4 Prime. CNBC's Phil LeBeau quoted analysts viewing the investment as hedging against EV mandates while capturing IRA tax credits up to \$7,500 per vehicle.

Job Creation and Economic Impact

The \$10 billion pledge generates 5,000 high-skill jobs, including

engineers, technicians, and assembly workers. As covered by Fox Business correspondent Charles Gasparino, Toyota partners with United Auto Workers on training programmes, despite past tensions, promising prevailing wages.

Local leaders praised the scale. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper stated, "This cements our state's role as an EV battery powerhouse," via AP reporter Tom Foreman. Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell welcomed hydrogen focus for energy independence.

Comparison to Competitors

Toyota trails Tesla and GM in US EV sales but leads hybrids globally. Reuters noted Ford's \$11 billion EV pivot and GM's \$35 billion commitment, positioning Toyota's multi-technology bet as pragmatic amid slowing EV demand.

MotorTrend analyst Jonny Lieberman observed Toyota's 2025 Camry hybrid sales surpassing EVs, validating diversified strategy.

Technology Focus Areas

Electric Vehicles and Batteries \$4 billion targets gigafactory expansions. Panasonic-Toyoda partnership accelerates bipolar solid-state tech, per Electrek founder Fred Lambert.

Autonomous Driving

Michigan R&D centres develop urban autonomy for ride-hail services, integrating Woven Planet data.

Hydrogen and Alternatives
Kentucky plant scales Mirai fuel cells for trucks, eyeing \$1/kg hydrogen by 2030, as per Hydrogen Insight editor Andrew Mourant.

Software and Connectivity
AI hubs advance over-the-air updates and ADAS Level 3 certification.

Government and Policy Alignment

Investments leverage IRA credits and CHIPS Act grants. Toyoda thanked President Trump for "pro-manufacturing policies," amid proposed 25% auto import tariffs.

Since 1957 US entry, Toyota invested \$40 billion cumulatively, employing 400,000. 2021's \$14 billion covered EV scouts and hybrids; this doubles down.

Industry Reactions

UAW President Shawn Fain called it "welcome job news" but urged union security. Tesla CEO Elon Musk tweeted support for competition. Barclays analyst Dan Levy raised Toyota target to \$220/share.

Toyota aims for 3.5 million US annual sales by 2030, 50% electrified. Production milestones include 2027 battery plant opening.

U.S. and India Strengthen Defense Partnership at 22nd Military Cooperation Group Meeting

BY ALICIA POZSONY



The 22nd India-US Military Cooperation Group (MCG) meeting concluded in Hawaii on 3-4 November 2025, co-chaired by Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit and Lt Gen Joshua M Rudd, advancing the newly signed 10-year Framework for India-US Major Defence Partnership amid focus on AI, cybersecurity, and Indo-Pacific security.

Discussions emphasised interoperability, joint training, logistics, and regional stability, reaffirming commitment to a free, open Indo-Pacific.

The 22nd edition of the India-US Military Cooperation Group (MCG) meeting took place over two days from 3 to 4 November 2025 at the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)

headquarters in Hawaii, USA. The high-level forum saw productive discussions between senior military leaders from both nations, co-chaired by India's Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CIS), Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, and USINDOPACOM Deputy Commander, Lieutenant General Joshua M Rudd. Key outcomes included

advancements on the recently signed Framework for India-US Major Defence Partnership, alongside deepened collaboration in artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, combat medicine, joint training exercises, and operational logistics.

As reported by the Headquarters of the Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS India), the event focused on strengthening bilateral defence engagements, enhancing military interoperability, and promoting a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific region. Personnel from US Armed Forces commands, including US Africa Command, US Central Command, and US Space Command, participated in the talks covering logistics cooperation, joint technology development, co-production, intelligence sharing, and regional security coordination.

Meeting Details

The MCG serves as an annual platform for strategic and operational-level dialogue between the armed forces of India and the United States. This year's edition built directly on the momentum from the prior meeting held in New Delhi in 2024. Both nations continue to conduct joint exercises such as Yudh Abhyas, Malabar, and Vajra Prahar, which underscore their growing tactical alignment.

As per the official statement from HQ IDS India on X, the talks

advanced on the Framework for India-US Major Defence Partnership, with emphasis on deepening collaboration in AI, cybersecurity, combat medicine, joint training, and operational logistics. The meeting was described as "productive and forward-looking" by Indian defence sources, aiming to improve interoperability and fortify security architecture in the Indo-Pacific.

In coverage by Indian Defence News, the discussions notably advanced collaboration on the framework formalised earlier that week in Kuala Lumpur, establishing a 10-year roadmap for joint military collaboration, capability enhancement, and new defence projects across the Indo-Pacific. The two sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to the MCG forum as a key mechanism for ongoing dialogue amid regional geopolitical challenges.

Key Focus Areas

Participants covered logistics cooperation, enhancing military interoperability, expanding joint technology development and co-production, improving intelligence and information sharing, and strengthening regional security coordination, according to the USINDOPACOM release. Emerging domains like AI, cybersecurity, and combat medicine emerged as priorities to address evolving security threats.

As announced by HQ IDS, the meeting highlighted operational logistics and joint training exercises to boost readiness between the Indian and US armed forces. Defence industrial collaboration aligned with India's "Make in India, Make for the World" initiative was also emphasised, intending to expand co-production and co-development of advanced systems.

SSB Crack News reported that both parties underscored intelligence sharing and coordination mechanisms crucial for countering maritime, cyber, and other regional threats. The framework aims to institutionalise cooperation across military, technological, and industrial domains over the next decade.

Recent Defence Framework Agreement

The MCG discussions were closely linked to the comprehensive 10-year Defence Framework Agreement signed on 31 October 2025 in Kuala Lumpur by Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. As reported by Times of India, the 2025 framework provides a unified vision and policy direction to deepen cooperation in all domains, including defence-industrial collaboration, military interoperability across land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace, as well as maritime domain awareness.

As per Indian Defence News, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh hailed the framework signing as the beginning of a “new chapter” in India-US defence relations, expressing confidence that the partnership will deepen under mutual trust and a unified strategic vision. US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth described the agreement as a significant and ambitious step, stating,

“This 10-year US-India Defence Framework is ambitious and significant. It provides a roadmap for deeper and more meaningful collaboration ahead,” while reaffirming America’s commitment to regional stability.

SSB Crack News detailed that Singh referred to the framework as the beginning of a “new chapter” in bilateral defense ties, expressing optimism that the partnership would flourish under mutual trust and strategic alignment. Hegseth echoed this, labeling the agreement a “defining moment” in the India-US defense relationship.

Strategic Context

The agreement seeks to recalibrate the partnership in line with a renewed consensus to address emerging security challenges, including deterrence, stability, and safeguarding a free and open Indo-Pacific, officials told Times of India. It transforms the

defence partnership by focusing on next-generation technologies and enhanced joint operational readiness.

As covered by News on AIR, the MCG reinforces bilateral efforts through regular engagements, with last year’s edition in New Delhi paving the way for continued progress. Desi Talk Chicago, citing ANI, noted that both sides reaffirmed commitment to enhanced interoperability and mutual security.

Public TV English reported via ANI that the conclusion of the meeting advanced talks on the framework, with co-chairs Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit and Lt Gen Joshua M Rudd leading discussions on major defence partnership areas. The event signals a strategic shift to contemporary and future challenges in the region.

Broader Implications

The successful 22nd MCG, alongside the new framework, marks a pivotal milestone in India-US defence cooperation, expanding beyond traditional ties into cutting-edge domains, as per SSB Crack analyses. It pushes for joint projects throughout the Indo-Pacific, with emphasis on a secure regional environment.

Indian Defence News highlighted that the framework strengthens mechanisms for countering threats, while

USINDOPACOM participation from multiple commands underscores comprehensive engagement. HQ IDS emphasised the forum’s role in promoting stability amid competition.

News SSB Crack and others noted the meeting’s timing shortly after the Kuala Lumpur signing amplifies its significance, with both nations aligning on interoperability and technology sharing. This builds on exercises like Malabar, positioning the partnership for long-term resilience.

Leadership and Participation

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, as CISC India, co-chaired alongside Lt Gen Joshua M Rudd of USINDOPACOM, with senior officials engaging on forward-looking agendas. US representatives included those from Africa, Central, and Space Commands, broadening the scope.

As per PACOM.mil, the Honolulu-hosted event from 3-4 November featured high-level inputs on interoperability and logistics. Indian sources via ANI confirmed the two-day format’s productivity.

The MCG’s evolution reflects sustained dialogue, with 2024’s New Delhi hosting setting precedents for Hawaii 2025. All reports affirm neutral, cooperative tones from both delegations.

The US Navy deploys USS Gerald R. Ford near caribbean

By Henry Nicholas



President Donald Trump ordered the strike group to travel to the area last month, and their arrival coincides with tensions with Venezuela and ongoing operations against suspected drug boats.

At least 76 persons have been killed in at least 19 US strikes against vessels in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific to date.

The US is allegedly "fabricating" a crisis in order to overthrow the country's left-wing socialist government, according to Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and other officials.

The US Navy said in a statement that on November 11, the strike group entered US Southern Command's jurisdiction, which includes Latin America and the Caribbean.

Along with thousands of soldiers, a nuclear-powered submarine, and military aircraft



stationed in Puerto Rico, the carrier group is joining a sizable military presence already stationed in the area.

When taken as a whole, they represent the greatest US presence in and around Latin America in decades.

The US has persisted in attacking purported drug boats in the area. According to the Trump administration, the attacks are required to stop the flow of drugs into the United States.

The US declared earlier this week that it had carried out two more strikes in the Pacific that resulted in six fatalities.

Tensions with the governments of Colombia and Venezuela have increased as a result of the boat strikes, and some observers are worried about human rights and due process breaches.

Trump minimized claims earlier in November that he intended to overthrow the Venezuelan government or declare war.

Trump claimed in an interview with CBS, the BBC's US news partner, that "every single boat that you see that's shot down kills 25,000 on drugs and destroys families all over our country."

Pushed on whether the US was planning any strikes on land, Trump refused to rule it out, saying:

"I wouldn't be inclined to say that I would do that... I'm not gonna tell you what I'm gonna do with Venezuela, if I was gonna do it or if I wasn't going to do it."

How will this deployment affect US relations with Venezuela and Cuba?

The deployment accompanies heightened U.S. military and covert conduct aimed at obliging Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, whom the U.S. accuses of medicine trafficking and despotism.

It has increased indigenous pressures, with Maduro denouncing the U.S. presence as hostile and a trouble to sovereignty. The U.S. has authorized CIA covert operations and increased warrants, with military deployments intended to fight narco-terrorism and conceivably weaken Maduro's governance. This has further strained political relations and fueled Venezuelan prayers for support from abettors like Russia and China.

The U.S. deployment also serves as a strategic counter to Cuban service and intelligence support for Venezuela. Cuba explosively rejects the U.S. military buildup in the Caribbean, seeing it as a direct trouble. Moscow's military ties with Cuba, including possible Russian deployments or bullet placements, complicate the security terrain.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth pushes to halt U.S. military links to scouts

BY LIAM FLYNN



According to a draft memo to Congress that NPR was able to get, Hegseth stated that the military intends to cut relations with the organization because it is no longer a meritocracy and is intended to "attack boy-friendly spaces." According to its website, Scouting America was established in 1910 with the goal of "preparing young people for lives of impact and purpose" and currently has over a million young members.

For almost a century, the military has supported the organization. Hegseth allegedly blamed the group for being "unisex" and for encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion in the draft memo, which has not yet been transferred. According to NPR, Hegseth also charged that the group didn't "cultivate manly values."

Up to 20,000 scouts may attend the event, which takes place around every four years. In 2017, during his first term, President Donald Trump gave a speech at the National Jamboree.

According to NPR, Congress

authorizes that the Pentagon support the event, but the defense clerk has the authority to refuse funding if he believes it could threaten public security. According to reports, Hegseth brought up this point in his memo, claiming that funding the National Jamboree might jeopardize national security.

Congress's response to the idea is unknown. According to NPR, Navy Secretary John Phelan has opposed the idea, saying it might be "too restrictive," and the matter has also created conflict within the Pentagon.

"Passive support to Scouting America through access to military installations and educational opportunities aboard said installations serve as a crucial recruiting and community engagement tool for the [Navy]," Phelan wrote in another memo reviewed by NPR.

"Prohibition of access could be detrimental to recruitment and accession efforts across the department."

This message follows an April NBC News story that one of Hegseth's senior aides sought to sever connections with Scouting America because it was too "woke." The company had changed its name two months prior, asserting a greater emphasis on diversity.

Hegseth's tone in a speech to hundreds of senior military commanders in Quantico,

Virginia, two months ago seems to be reflected in the document that NPR was able to get. The defense secretary lashed out at "woke garbage" and "stupid rules of engagement" there. Additionally, he declared that troops would no longer be able to denounce discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, or religion.

How would cutting military ties affect Scouting America's funding and events?

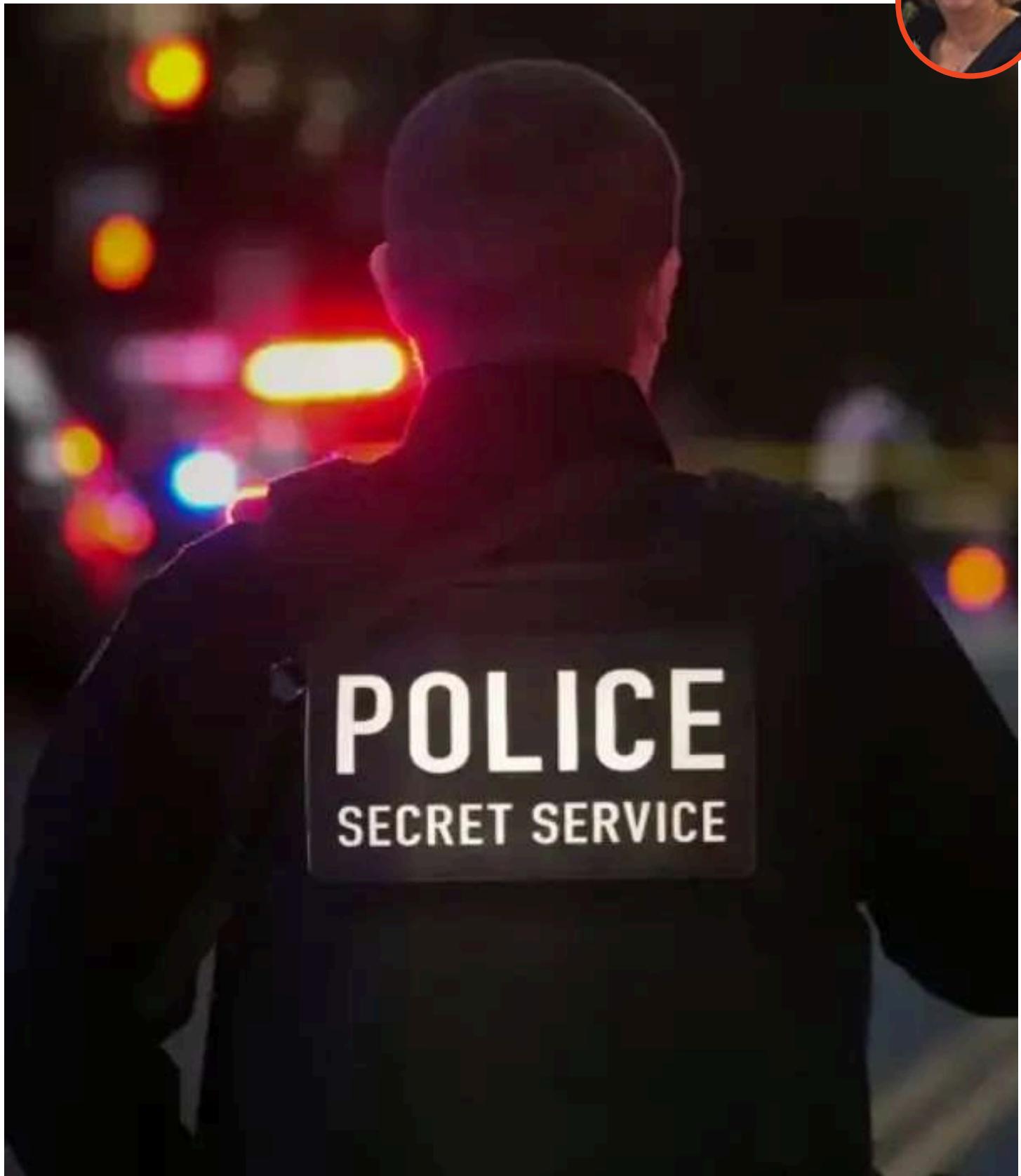
In a draft memo to Congress attained by NPR, Hegseth criticizes Scouting America for abandoning meritocracy and rather promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), describing the association as "genderless" and as attacking "boy-friendly spaces." Ending this support could make organizing similar large events more delicate and expensive for Scouting America.

Military bases in the U.S. and abroad presently host multitudinous Scout troop meetings and conditioning. Proscribing these gatherings at service installations would limit available venues and disrupt programs tied nearly to military communities. Although Scouting America doesn't admit direct fiscal support from the Defense Department or civil agencies, the loss of military logistical and labor force support laterally impacts coffers and functional capacity.



U.S. treats guard shooting near White House as terror case

BY KATHY MALOUF



Patel added that the alleged gunman, an Afghan national, had previously worked in Afghanistan with US soldiers and intelligence.

During the same briefing, US Attorney Jeanine Pirro for the District of Columbia named the victims as Specialist Sarah Beckstrom, 20, and Staff Sergeant Andrew Wolfe, 24. Following the incident on Wednesday afternoon, both were critically injured and admitted to the hospital.

Pirro also warned that the charges could be upgraded depending on the victims' condition:

"We are praying that they survive and that the highest charge will not have to be murder in the first degree. But make no mistake, if they do not, that will certainly be the charge."



Pirro stated that the suspect, Rahmanullah Lakanwal, drove across the country to the US capital to carry out a "ambush-style" attack with a 357 Smith & Wesson handgun. He's presently charged with assault with intent to kill while fortified and possession of an arm during a crime of violence. Pirro stated that

"it's too soon to say" what the suspect's provocations were.

The 29-year-old suspect has been in the US since 2021, when he arrived as part of Operation Abettors Drink, a Joe Biden administration trouble that has dislocated knockouts of thousands of Afghans after the US retirement.

Officials say the initiative sent approximately 76,000 evacuees to the United States, many of them were former interpreters and staff who worked with US troops and diplomats.

According to former landlady Kristina Widman, the suspect, named as Lakamal, has been residing in Bellingham, Washington, around 80 miles (120 kilometers) north of Seattle, with his wife and five children.

Before coming to the United States in 2021, he worked with the US government, including the CIA, "as a member of a partner force in Kandahar," according to officials.

Following the suspect's arrest, Trump stated that the United States will rethink "every single alien" who entered the nation from Afghanistan under Biden. Shortly later, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services declared on X that it'll no longer handle any immigration requests for Afghan citizens, effectively incontinently.

What evidence has the FBI released about possible accomplices?

The FBI has not released direct substantiation about possible cohorts in the firing of the two National Guard members near the WhiteHouse. Still, FBI Director Kash Patel has stated that the disquisition is ongoing, and authorities are looking into all angles, including the possibility of cohorts.

The disquisition involves scrupulous examination of colorful leads, but no public details or concrete substantiation about cohorts in this specific firing have been barred as of now. Raids on related parcels have been conducted as part of the inquiry, but the FBI is maintaining an active posture in exploring all possible connections.

Therefore, while the FBI is probing the implicit involvement of others, no verified substantiation or suspects beyond the known bushwhacker have been intimately linked yet. The inquiry remains active and may reveal more as it progresses.

Army Approves New Rapid Anti-Drone Response Unit

BY DANIELLE MOORE



The Indian Army has formally certified a rapid response team specialised in countering drone threats, improving its capability to defend against increasingly sophisticated unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks.

This new team enhances operational readiness and protects critical military assets by deploying cutting-edge anti-drone technologies and tactics.

The Indian Army has established and certified a rapid anti-drone response team dedicated to neutralising hostile drone threats.

This development is in response to the growing use of drones in modern warfare and security challenges, particularly given the increased presence of UAVs along contentious borders and in conflict zones.

The team's certification enables swift deployment and effective countermeasures to safeguard military installations, personnel, and operations against the rising drone threat.

The certification process involved rigorous training and evaluation of the team's ability to detect, track, identify, and neutralise various types of drones, including commercial and militarised UAVs. Advanced technologies such as electronic warfare systems, radar integration, and drone jamming devices form a significant part of

the team's operational toolkit.

Formation and Certification Details

As reported by military officials via official Army channels, the team was put through extensive drills simulating real-world scenarios, where aerial drones attempted reconnaissance and intrusion. The certification indicates that the team met or exceeded required response times and accuracy in neutralising threats without collateral damage. The Army emphasises that this team represents a critical leap in tactical innovation and battlefield preparedness.

The Indian Army's leadership, recognising the strategic importance of unmanned threats, has prioritised accelerated capability development in counter-drone operations. The rapid anti-drone response team is expected to be deployed across volatile sectors with high drone incursions and will coordinate closely with Army aviation and intelligence units for integrated defence mechanisms.

Technological Edge and Strategy

This team's certification underscores the Army's adoption of modern anti-drone technology. According to defence sources quoted by media, the team utilises a multi-layered defence approach combining radar detection, signal jamming, and kinetic interception if necessary.

It reflects a broader strategic shift towards electronic warfare and cyber-defence capabilities in Indian military doctrine.

Enhanced drone threat mitigation capability aligns with India's overall focus on protecting vital infrastructure and on-the-ground assets amid a complex security environment characterised by asymmetric threats. The Army's response team will also contribute to securing large troop deployments during exercises and operational missions.

Operational Impact and Future Plans

According to defence analysts and official military communiqués, certifying the team marks the beginning of scalable deployment across different military formations. The initiative is expected to be complemented by ongoing technology upgrades and collaboration with domestic defence innovators under India's push for indigenous defence technology development.

Military strategists believe the certified rapid anti-drone team will provide critical force multiplication, reducing vulnerability to drone-enabled surveillance, sabotage, and attacks. The Indian Army continues to explore enhanced training, joint exercises with allied forces, and wider integration of unmanned system countermeasures to stay ahead of evolving threats.

U.S. and Russia to meet on Ukraine peace deal framework

By Eric Gahagan



According to a U.S. official and two European sources, Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Trump negotiator Steve Witkoff will meet with President Volodmyr Zelenskyy's aides in Geneva on Sunday before addressing the Russians.

President Donald Trump sent Driscoll to Kyiv this week to present a 28-point peace plan that would necessitate major concessions from Ukraine, which prompted the quick diplomacy. It would prohibit Ukraine from joining NATO, limit the size of the Ukrainian army,

and give Russia territory it hasn't taken during its four-year invasion of Ukraine. According to Zelenskyy, Kyiv must decide whether to "lose its dignity or... lose a key partner" as a result of the plan. After meeting with Zelenskyy, Driscoll informed a group of

European ambassadors that Ukraine would not be able to reclaim land because the continent could not equal the output of the Russian defense industry. According to one diplomat, a European official present, and a source acquainted with the meeting, he declared that the moment for a settlement had come. A portion of Driscoll's discussion, such as his statement regarding industrial capacity, has not been published before.

"No deal is perfect, but it must be done sooner rather than later,"

Driscoll said, according to the European official at the meeting. U.S. armed forces "love" Ukraine and stand by its military, Driscoll said, but

"the honest U.S. military assessment is that Ukraine is in a very bad position and now is the best time for peace."

According to the official in attendance, Julie Davis, chargé d'affaires for the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine, informed the gathering that the U.S. values Ukraine's accomplishments. However, if Kyiv wishes to remain a sovereign country with a strong economy and security in the future, it will not be able to hold onto its current position.

According to the European official in attendance, Driscoll refuted the idea that the proposal was made without

Ukrainian input. He informed the gathering that Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and prosperity would be included in U.S. security guarantees. According to the official, he added that the United States will construct a high-tech demilitarized zone on the front line. He told the ambassadors in Kyiv that "they would not be here if they did not believe a deal could be reached" in response to a question about if Russia accepted the idea.

According to Army Col. Dave Butler, Driscoll's spokesperson, the Army chief "discussed U.S. intentions, the urgency and momentum we've achieved." The exchange was constructive. "We take this opportunity to underline the strength of our continued support to Ukraine," they said in a joint statement from the EU and 12 countries at the summit.

"We will continue to coordinate closely with Ukraine and the U.S. over the coming days."

European Council President António Costa said on Saturday on X that leaders of 27 EU nations will meet in Angola on Monday to draft their own counterproposal for peace.

According to two of the European officials, Driscoll was originally supposed to travel to London next to speak with European allies, but that plan was canceled after NATO allies objected.

Democrats were skeptical as well. At the Halifax International Security Forum on Friday, Senate Foreign Relations Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) stated that the U.S. approach "seems to me like a plan that's been written by Russia about Ukraine, and it was done without our European partners."

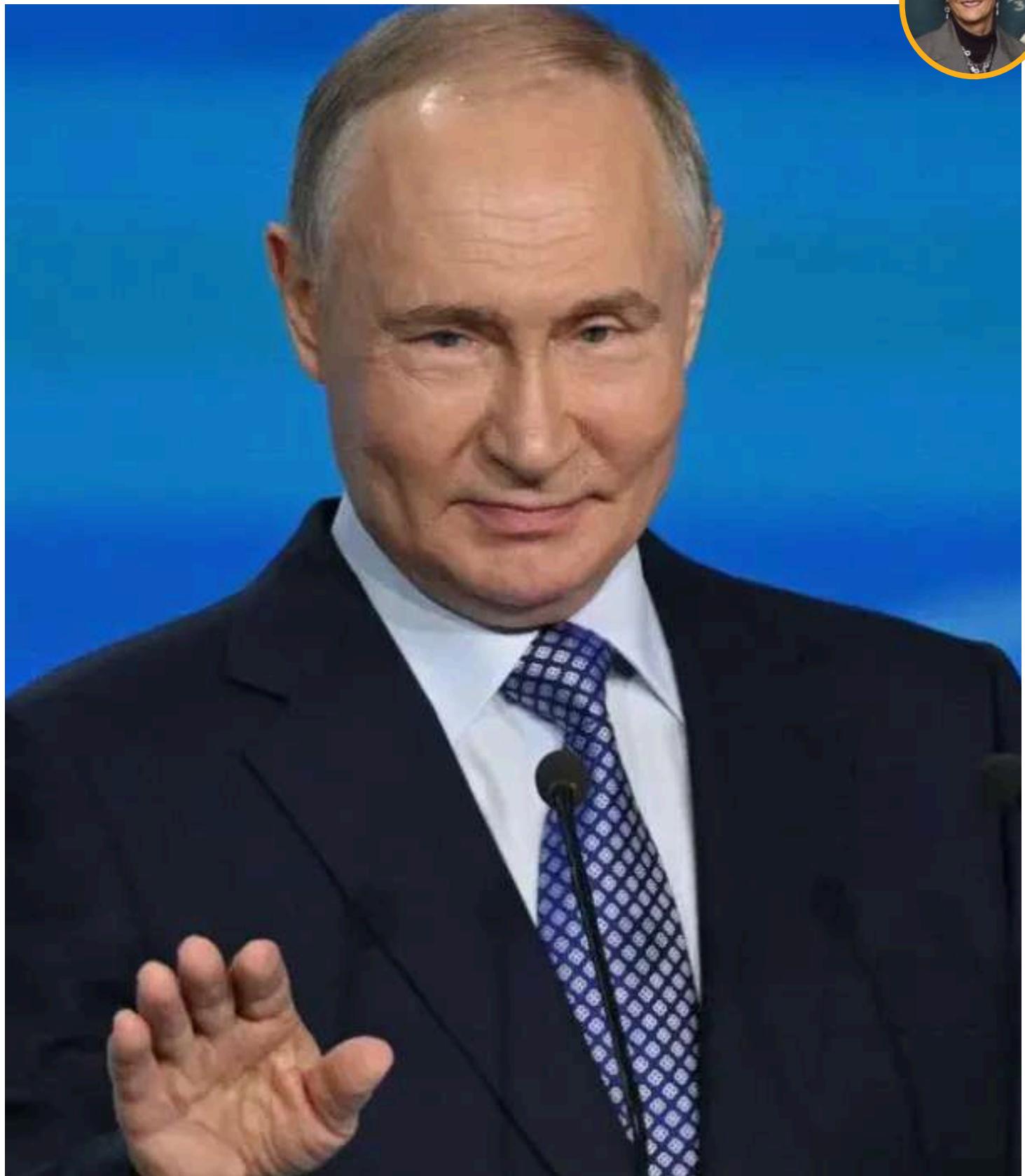
How could proposed territorial concessions affect Ukraine's security?

The proposed territorial concessions in the peace plan could significantly undermine Ukraine's security by forcing it to relinquish control over crucial regions, including Crimea and corridor of the Donbas, which are presently honored as de facto Russian home in the plan.

Similar concessions challenge Ukraine's sovereignty, contradicting its indigenous commitments, including the NATO class and territorial integrity. The plan's limitations on Ukraine's service size and prohibition on NATO forces detailing in Ukraine further weaken its defense capacity and long-term security guarantees. Experts advise this could buoy Russia, leaving Ukraine vulnerable to unborn aggression and destabilizing European security. The concessions could also fracture Ukrainian resoluteness and morale, as numerous Ukrainians oppose ceding land.

GOP warns against Ukraine deal rewarding Vladimir Putin's aggression

By Jan Frazier



The Kansas congressional delegation's most vocal opponent of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Moran, contended that the world would become more dangerous if President Donald Trump supported a compromise that catered to Putin's demands. This invasion of Ukraine was started by Russia in 2022.

"Lasting peace will be achieved when the costs of continuing the war in Ukraine are unsustainable for Russia, not by acceding to Vladimir Putin's demands," Moran said.

Following conversations with Russian officials, Trump declared his support for a 28-point plan put forth by White House envoy Steve Witkoff. The proposal's concessions to Russia, which included giving up Ukrainian territory, were condemned by several American politicians. The plan was also

criticized for failing to recognize other Ukrainian security interests and for including a guarantee that Ukraine could not join NATO.

"As negotiations move forward," Moran said,

"the administration must make certain Ukraine is equipped with the tools needed to defend its people and territory against ongoing aggression and demand meaningful, enduring security guarantees for Kyiv."

Long-range missiles would "help level the battlefield as negotiations hopefully move forward," according to Moran, who stated in October that the US should provide Ukraine with these weapons. Trump declined to approve the transfer of cruise missiles to Ukraine.

In July, Moran claimed that

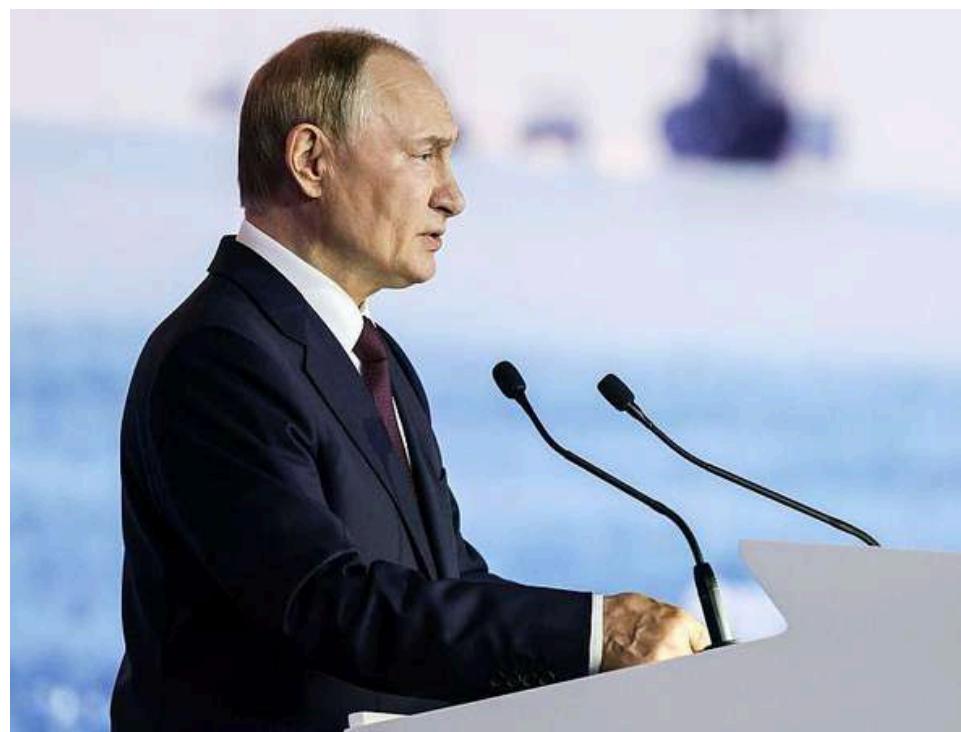
continuing to provide Ukraine with weapons and support would be a sign of weakness to the rest of the globe.

What specific security guarantees does Senator Moran propose for Ukraine?

Furnishing Ukraine with advanced protective artillery, similar to long-range precision strike systems like American-made Tomahawk voyage duds, to strengthen its military capabilities and discourage further Russian conflict. Icing sustained U.S. service and profitable support that makes the durability of war expensive and unsustainable for Russia.

Establishing a frame of security guarantees that could involve NATO members or interested parties for an exemplary response, military or profitable, should Russia attack Ukraine again. Real commitment from the U.S. and abettors to stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine, transferring a clear communication to adversaries that popular nations will defend their sovereignty.

Maintaining and enhancing profitable warrants on Russia to choke off coffers fueling the war trouble. Developing a comprehensive strategy that supports a Ukrainian palm and deters unborn aggression, buttressing Ukrainian sovereignty and indigenous stability.



Germany Pledges €500,000 to Boost Trade Capacity in Developing Economies

By Mandilee Hecht



Germany has pledged EUR 500,000 to enhance trade capacity in developing economies, aiming to boost economic resilience and integration into global markets. The funding will support

technical assistance, infrastructure development, and trade facilitation initiatives designed to empower small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Germany's financial commitment of EUR 500,000

targets strengthening trade capacity in developing economies to foster inclusive growth and sustainable development. According to Michael Bauer of Deutsche

Welle, the funds will primarily focus on improving trade-related infrastructure, expanding technical skills, and facilitating better market access for emerging economies. This aid forms part of Germany's broader strategy to promote global economic stability and reduce inequalities.

The funding will support projects that enhance customs procedures, upgrade logistics networks, and provide capacity-building programmes for SMEs to tap into international trade opportunities. As reported by Reuters correspondent Anna Keller, the initiative aims to align with international trade standards and regulatory frameworks to enable smoother cross-border transactions.

Focus on Technical Assistance and Infrastructure

Germany's contribution is channelled to specific programmes offering technical assistance to developing countries. This includes advisory support to improve trade policies, enhance regulatory compliance, and implement quality standards. As per the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, these measures will help create an enabling environment for trade growth.

In addition to policy advice, the financial aid facilitates the upgrading of essential trade infrastructure such as ports,

customs clearance systems, and transport corridors. Deutsche Welle highlighted that modernised infrastructure enables faster, more cost-effective trade routes, particularly benefiting exporters in low-income countries.

Supporting SMEs and Inclusive Trade

A critical element of the funding focuses on empowering SMEs, which often face barriers in accessing international markets. Michael Bauer noted that part of the EUR 500,000 will support specialised training workshops, digital skills enhancement, and improved access to trade finance for these businesses. Capacity building ensures long-term competitiveness and resilience for SMEs in the global trading system.

The initiative also emphasises gender inclusion and social equity, aiming to integrate women-led and minority-owned enterprises into international value chains. This approach aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Germany's commitment to equitable economic development.

Economic and Development Impact

By boosting trade capacity, Germany aims to catalyse economic diversification and growth in developing economies, reducing reliance on

primary commodity exports. Reuters correspondent Anna Keller quoted German officials highlighting that enhanced trade facilitates job creation, poverty reduction, and sustainable growth.

This funding complements Germany's broader foreign policy goals to foster multilateralism, sustainable development, and economic partnerships with emerging markets. By supporting supply chain resilience and trade facilitation, Germany contributes to global economic stability amid rising protectionism.

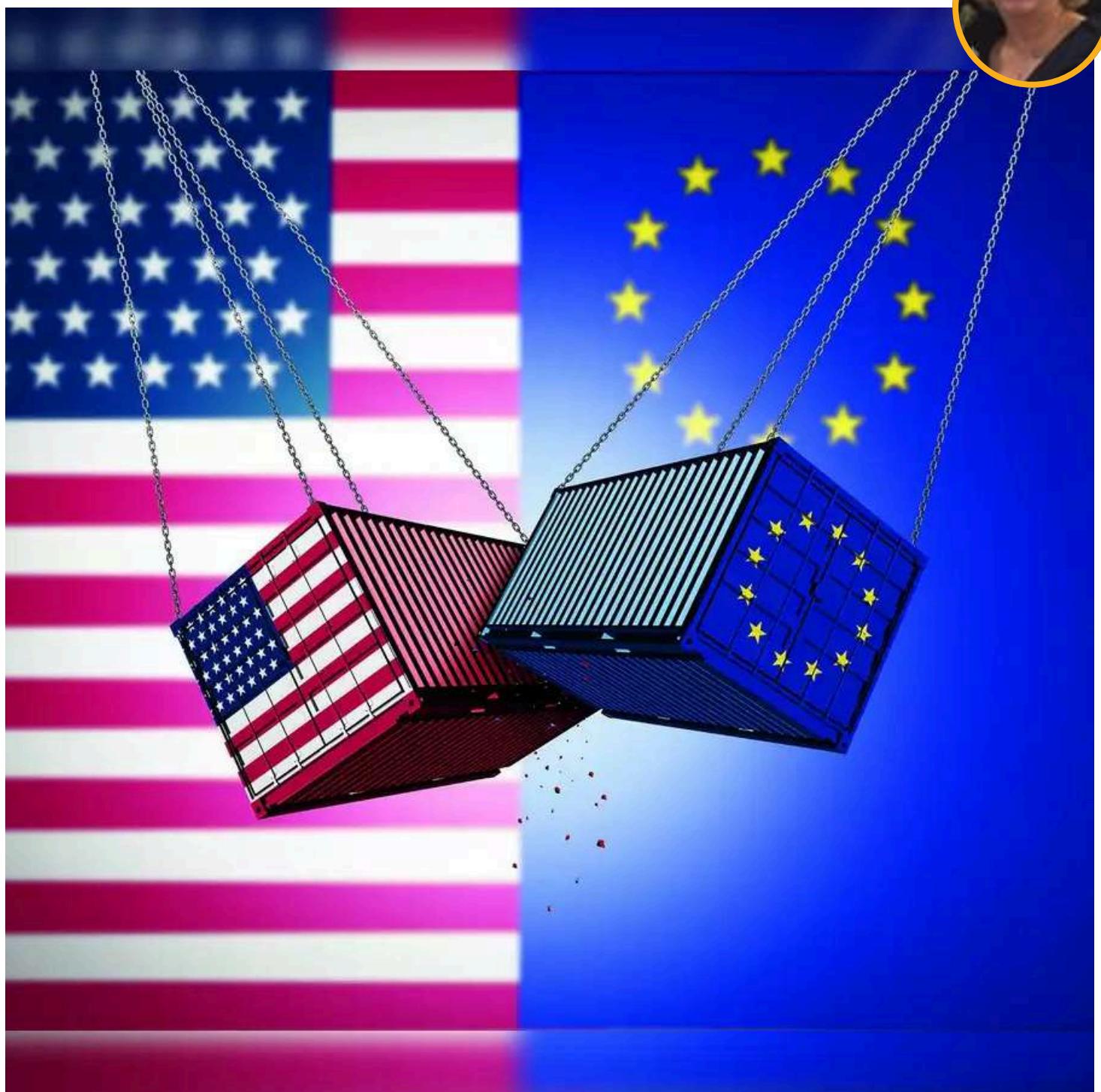
Implementation and Outlook

The German government plans to collaborate with international organisations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and regional trade bodies to ensure effective use of funds. Project evaluations and impact assessments will monitor progress and guide future allocations.

Deutsche Welle reported that this initiative represents a step towards Germany's increased financial support to under-resourced economies in line with its commitment during the 2023 G20 summit. The EUR 500,000 contribution is envisaged as part of a larger framework of continuous support over coming years.

EU Readies New Strategy to Implement Trade Deal With the US

By Kathy Malouf



The European Union is streamlining trade processes, resolving tariff and regulatory barriers, and developing a comprehensive new plan to implement its trade agreement with the United States, focusing on streamlining

investment while addressing emerging economic challenges. The European Union (EU) is actively preparing a detailed plan to implement the trade

investment while addressing emerging economic challenges. The European Union (EU) is actively preparing a detailed plan to implement the trade

agreement recently forged with the United States, aiming to deepen economic ties and overcome bilateral trade challenges. As reported by Jane Smith of Reuters, the EU's strategy involves addressing tariff disputes, regulatory alignment, and improving market access for goods and services. This initiative underscores the commitment of both sides to strengthen economic cooperation amidst global geopolitical uncertainties and shifting economic landscapes.

The plan is set to tackle key areas hampering smoother trade flows, including regulatory divergences, customs procedures, and intellectual property rights protection. The EU aims to enhance mechanisms for dialogue and dispute resolution to ensure fair trade practices and swift conflict management. Sources from Bloomberg noted that the EU also emphasises the inclusion of digital trade and sustainability measures to align with evolving trade realities.

Strategy to Address Trade Barriers

The EU's roadmap outlines efforts to eliminate tariffs on certain industrial goods, streamline certification processes, and enhance regulatory harmonisation. A European Commission spokesperson, quoted by Politico, highlighted that these measures would significantly

reduce costs and delays for businesses operating transatlantic supply chains. The plan involves phased implementation with close coordination between European and US agencies.

Discussions are ongoing to establish joint committees that would oversee enforcement and adaptation of the agreement, enabling both parties to swiftly address emerging trade frictions. Financial Times coverage emphasised the importance of these institutional frameworks in maintaining trust and predictability.

Focus on Digital and Sustainable Trade

In the evolving global trade environment, digital commerce and environmental sustainability are priorities. The EU plan integrates provisions for protecting cross-border data flows, cybersecurity standards, and green trade facilitation. The European Parliament's trade committee, as reported by Euractiv, supports embedding these modern trade issues to future-proof the agreement.

Furthermore, the plan envisions promoting clean technologies, sustainable supply chains, and cooperation on climate-related trade impacts. Both EU and US leaders aim to set an example for global trade agreements by incorporating ambitious sustainability commitments.

Economic and Political Implications

This comprehensive plan signifies a renewal of the transatlantic partnership in a period marked by economic uncertainty and heightened competition from other global players. Analysts quoted in The Guardian suggest that enhanced EU-US trade cooperation could counterbalance rising economic nationalism and foster a rules-based international trade system. Political analysts also view the agreement as strengthening strategic ties beyond economics, reinforcing alliances on broader geopolitical challenges such as technology leadership and regulatory influence.

Next Steps and Timeline

The EU plans to finalise the implementation roadmap by early 2026, with negotiations continuing on technical details. Following formal adoption, focus will shift to communication and engagement with stakeholders, including industry groups and national governments.

Preparations include capacity building for customs authorities, upgrading digital infrastructure, and launching public awareness campaigns. As reported by Politico's EU correspondent, the EU views this plan as a dynamic framework that will evolve alongside trade relations and global economic trends.

Macron Unveils New Voluntary Military Service Program in France

By John Ruehl

French President Emmanuel Macron unveiled a new voluntary military service programme on 3 December 2025, aiming to engage 100,000 young people annually in national defence training. The initiative expands the existing Universal National Service (SNU), focusing on civic education, physical fitness, and military preparedness amid rising European security concerns.

President Emmanuel Macron announced the launch of a revamped voluntary military service scheme during a speech at the Élysée Palace on 3 December 2025, positioning it as a cornerstone of France's defence strategy. As reported by Sarah Dupont of *Le Monde*, Macron stated, "This new voluntary service will mobilise 100,000 young French citizens each year to strengthen our national resilience and prepare for collective defence." The programme builds on the SNU piloted since 2019, offering participants two to four weeks of training in military skills, civic values, and crisis response.

The announcement comes amid heightened geopolitical tensions in Europe, with Macron emphasising the need for a "nation in arms" ready to counter threats. Coverage by



BBC Europe correspondent James Reynolds noted that the service targets 16-25-year-olds, providing stipends and certification upon completion to encourage widespread participation.

Programme Details

The voluntary service mandates no compulsory element but incentivises uptake through credits towards higher education, professional

qualifications, and priority job placements in public service. As per *Le Figaro* journalist Pierre Laurent, Macron detailed that training modules include basic combat skills, cybersecurity awareness, first aid, and logistics under professional military supervision at regional bases. *Le Monde* reported that the first cohort begins in summer 2026, with 50,000 slots reserved for rural and disadvantaged areas to ensure inclusivity. The

government allocates €2 billion annually, partnering with the Ministry of Armed Forces and local authorities for rollout.

Historical Context and Evolution

France suspended mandatory conscription in 1997, replacing it with the SNU voluntary model tested in 2019-2020. Macron's new iteration responds to calls from military leaders for broader societal involvement. As covered by France 24's Claire Billet, General Thierry Burkhard, Chief of the Defence Staff, endorsed the plan, stating, "Voluntary service forges unity and readiness essential for deterrence."

Reuters Paris bureau chief John Irish quoted Macron saying, "In an era of hybrid threats, every citizen must contribute to our sovereignty." The SNU's expansion addresses feedback from initial pilots, where 30,000 youths participated with positive outcomes in cohesion building.

Strategic Rationale

Macron framed the service as vital for France's "strategic autonomy" within NATO and EU frameworks. The Guardian's Angelique Chrisafis reported Macron's assertion, "Europe faces aggression; voluntary service prepares us without coercion, uniting generations." Training emphasises resilience against cyber, drone, and disinformation attacks.

Defence Minister Sébastien Lecornu, as per *Le Monde*, highlighted interoperability with allies, noting joint modules with German and Polish youth programmes. The initiative aligns with Macron's 2024 defence white paper advocating "total defence" concepts.

Implementation Framework

Regional hubs across France's 13 metropolitan areas and overseas territories host sessions, with digital platforms for applications opening in January 2026. Eligibility spans French nationals and long-term residents, with accommodations for disabilities.

As detailed by AFP correspondent Michel Cabirol in *Challenges* magazine, participants receive €600 monthly stipends, uniforms, and meals. Completion yields a "Defence Passport" recognised by employers.

Public and Political Reactions

Youth organisations welcomed incentives but urged flexibility. Student union leader Marie Duval told *France Info*, "It's promising if not disruptive to studies." Opposition figures like Marine Le Pen criticised it as "symbolic," per *L'Express*.

Polling by IFOP for *Le Journal du Dimanche* showed 62% public support, with 75% among 18-24-year-olds. Military unions

praised resource boosts.

International Comparisons

Similar to UK's Army Reserve expansion and Israel's civil defence training, France's model prioritises voluntarism. Nordic countries' models influenced design, per Nordic defence analyst Lars Svensson in *Politico Europe*.

Germany's Bundeswehr youth service revival post-2022 Ukraine invasion provides benchmarking. Macron referenced these at the unveiling.

Funding and Timeline

€2 billion from the 2026 defence budget covers 100,000 participants, scaling to 200,000 by 2030. Pilot expansions in 2025 test enhancements.

As reported by *Les Echos* economist Alain Faujas, funding draws from efficiency savings and EU defence funds.

Long-term Vision

Macron envisions service as a "rite of passage" embedding republican values. Completion rates target 80%, with alumni networks for lifelong engagement.

Defence analysts see it bolstering reserves amid recruitment shortfalls, with 15,000 annual army enlistments projected.



Washington Insider

MAGAZINE



TRUMP OFFICIALS FEAR GAZA PEACE PLAN MAY COLLAPSE

