FROM § EACH

FIRST YEAR · WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2026 — THE AFTERNOON EDITION · FREE, FOREVER — EVERY CLAIM LINKED

Trump turns a Paris riot into his midterm warning; Le Monde calls it deliberate, Macron calls it stupid.

PHOTO: NEW YORK POST

BY THE LODGERS
The Euro Desk

Today we are making a closing argument, which is not a dish you can get over here, so I shall go slowly. A closing argument needs a filling or it collapses on the way to the table, and this year Trump and his inner circle have reached across the Atlantic for one: a weekend of rioting in Paris, folded in to warn that a Democratic Congress would bring the same chaos and destruction home.

Start the filling early, before anyone notices it travelling. On September twenty-third the Washington Examiner had Macron waving off Trump's rivalry over a triumphal arch, calling monuments bigger than either man. On October seventeenth, with buildings burning, Macron promised rioters would be 'prosecuted and punished'; the same day the protests themselves widened to a hundred and forty cities, the demonstrators citing inequality, the cost of living and the state of French schools.

Clive *Retaken. ...*

... Continued on Page A219

DOJ watchdog says weaponized prosecution isn't its job, hands it to the office it already gutted.

BY MITCH
Investigations

On October 1, in a 26-page order, Judge Todd Edelman dismissed the Reflecting Pool vandalism case against the former Olympic canoeist with prejudice — the Justice Department can never bring it again.

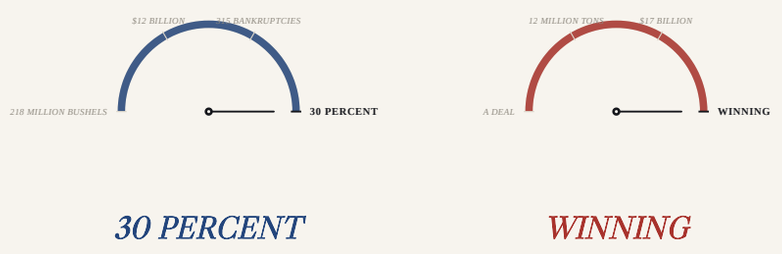
... Continued on Page A219

THE WORD

§68 — 21 OCTOBER 2026

On winning

DEMOCRAT | REPUBLICAN



30 PERCENT — *WINNING*

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Ukraine's only leverage against Russia, cut by its own satellite provider, ends in a freeze offer.

BY LOU
One More Question

You're smart. I don't say that to soften you up for what's coming; I say it because it bears on this case. A smart operation does not announce a ceasefire on a public feed before telling the other side it exists.

... Continued on Page A219

THE WAIVER

Trump waives Russia sanctions he signed, then calls enforcing them the thing that would have stopped Hubbard's release.

BY THE WRECKING CREW
The Remedy Desk

The chief puts two things on the table: a law, and the evening before it was due to work. The mess begins as a number. On 5 September AAA priced a gallon of diesel at $5.88, a record, and Axios reported that Republican incumbents' own polling placed the blame on the president. On 14 September Trump posted that Ukraine had agreed not to strike Russian energy targets, and that Russia had agreed to do the same. On 19 September he signed the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, named for the South Carolina senator who championed it before he died in July. On 11 October Senator Thom Tillis said the new Russia diesel deal was tarnishing Graham's own work. Hours later, more than 320 drones hit Ukraine's power grid.

The planner watches the sequence keep running. The day after that, Sunday, former Vice President Pence called on Trump to restore the sanctions and scrap the diesel deal, saying the waiver dishonors the legacy of the senator whose name is on the statute.

... Continued on Page A218

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

THE HOUSE IS A PARK

Chapter 8: Three Doors

Take out your keys. Not the car — the ring, with the three keys you cannot identify and will not throw away. Seven chapters in, you have walked from a truck-bed liner to a demolished wing, and at each turn I handed you a key. Here they are on the table: three doors into the president's house, each cut by a Congress looking at something else, and none of them — hold this — the door the Constitution built. First,

... Continued on the Investigative Reporting page

■ THE SHORT VERSION

typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Trump's campaign turned a Paris riot into a midterm warning that Democrats would bring the same chaos home.

WHO GETS PAID. Trump's campaign gets a ready-made turnout pitch to energize the MAGA base before the midterms.

WHAT SLIPS. The voters' check slips here: Macron says there is no evidence behind the "foreign manipulation" warning driving the argument.

WHAT'S NEXT. If this pattern holds, the same messaging continues through Election Day; the vote is November 3.

On Trump turns a Paris riot into his midterm warning; Le Monde calls it deliberate, Macron calls it stupid. — the column, by The Lodgers. The whole front, short, and the precedents, on E6

Administration moves to cut climate report's worst case; two months later, the U.S. becomes it.

BY MITCH
Investigations

Follow along, folks. The document in front of us this week is not one filing but two, filed weeks apart by two different governments, and if you hold them side by side the joke writes itself — all together now — because it is written in verbs.

Clause one. On August 27th, the Trump administration published a notice proposing to reframe how the Fifth National Climate Assessment, the 2023 federal report, treats its worst-case warming scenarios. The administration's stated justification: U.N. scientists had said earlier in the year that

... Continued on Page A218

§

❦ FROM THE CORNER ❦

Dutch

Trump waived the Russia sanctions law the night before it took effect, and more than 320 drones hit Ukraine's grid hours later. That isn't a hostage release, it's an invoice for the diesel deal paid in a human being. Because the law stays on the shelf, the diesel it was written to choke off keeps crossing the border; because it keeps crossing, the price that set a record in September doesn't have to come down on its own; and the only place that math still lands is pump four, Tuesday.

⁂

On Trump waives Russia sanctions he signed, then calls enforcing them the thing that would have stopped Hubbard's release. *— the column, by The Wrecking Crew*

❦ FROM THE MAILBAG ❦

Dear Vivian,

Hey Viv, love the column. If I were the next Democratic president, I'd revoke every federal firearms license in the country and make them reapply for a new fee of $1 million a year.

⁂

— Million-Dollar License in Lancaster. Vivian answers on E5 ☞

Today

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The Outbreak Ledger	H2
The Exodus	H3

Ramaswamy's campaign faces bipartisan condemnation, answers with $4 million more.

BY RUTH
The Money Desk

Vivek Ramaswamy's campaign put Amy Acton's estranged mother on camera to call her own daughter a liar. Donna Arthur does not dispute the abuse her daughter has described; she disputes the word Acton puts on it. Stearns called the ad "a despicable low." He was not alone. By the next day, Acton's own family and Meghan McCain, a Republican senator's daughter, condemned it from opposite ends of the same party map.

None of that stopped the ad. Ramaswamy confirmed Tuesday evening that his campaign built it. The Hill's headline read that as Ramaswamy "taking responsibility." The quote itself took

... Continued on Page F123

Administration calls Venezuela oil deal a gift, keeps the contract secret.

BY RUTH
The Money Desk

A reconciliation starts with what two sides say about the same thing, and this one starts in August.

On August 26, Senator Elizabeth Warren told the health secretary she was still waiting for him to publish the terms of the administration's secret pricing deals with drug makers. Three days later, on August 29, the president announced on social media that his government had secured majority control of Venezuela's oil reserves — 65 billion barrels of it — and Senator Chris Van Hollen answered the same day: "Let's be clear: This isn't a win." The next day, August

... Continued on Page F123

Venezuelan billionaire's daughter hires Trump lawyer Alina Habba; billionaire gets pardon shortly after.

BY RUTH
The Money Desk

The pardon came through on October 21st, and The New York Times laid out the sequence: Julio Herrera Velutini, a prominent Venezuelan businessman, wanted clemency, and not long before he got it, his daughter handed Alina Habba — a lawyer close to President Trump — a job the paper's own headline priced at fifty million dollars, though the text beneath calls it only "an extraordinarily lucrative" one. Readers can split that difference themselves; either way, the daughter paid and the father walked free.

Habba had other money troubles that same month. On October 14th, the White House opened an inquiry into her claim that six million dollars — donated to the Kennedy Center by her husband, a Turkish billionaire — did not reach its account under Ric Grenell's watch; whether that is true is exactly what the inquiry exists to find out, not a count either side has settled.

A third figure landed October 15th and made the

... Continued on Page F123

ASK VIVIAN

"Hey Viv, love the column. If I were the next Democratic president, I'd revoke every federal firearms license in the..." She answers on E5.

— this paper

THE WIRE

Every right or mainstream headline answered before it renders.

— this paper

"Read the page top to bottom and notice what connects it: somebody priced something you thought was yours — your ballot, your checkup, your tank of gas — and mailed you the bill with a flag stamped on it. I started circling the good news. Still holding the pen."

— Sal

WANTED 11,780 votes, Georgia only. Fresh or aged, no questions asked. *Reward: one pardon, gently used.* — **Classifieds**

WANTED Seat-fillers, Constitution Avenue, folding chairs provided. *The tanks ran forty-five million; the crowd was extra.* — **Classifieds**

WANTED Thoughts and prayers, in bulk. Standing order, restocked after each. *Gun control preferred, but that's out of reach.* — **Classifieds**

"Every story on this page is a success that hasn't been explained to you properly yet."

— Chip

Snow held the fox's prints till the thaw,
while the farmer mended the door.

ENOCH · THE OWNERSHIP DESK

DOJ watchdog says weaponized prosecution isn't its job, hands it to the office it already gutted.

By MITCH
INVESTIGATIONS



"DOJ watchdog passes off investigation into case of Olympian who was charged in Reflecting Pool case", 21 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA WASHINGTON EXAMINER — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. A judge dismissed the Olympian's vandalism case with prejudice, and the Justice Department's inspector general then declined to investigate the prosecution.

WHO GETS PAID. The Justice Department's own prosecutors keep the complaint against them inside the department, routed to an internal unit instead of an outside watchdog.

WHAT SLIPS. The outside check on a prosecution a judge called weaponized slips, since the complaint lands inside the same department it is about.

WHAT'S NEXT. The complaint now sits with the Office of Professional Responsibility, the unit Hearn's lawyers say the department already gutted of independence, with no date set in the record for any review.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

On October 1, in a 26-page order, Judge Todd Edelman dismissed the Reflecting Pool vandalism case against the former Olympic canoeist with prejudice — the Justice Department can never bring it again. Attorney Jeanine Pirro, a weaponization ploy, and noted the case had already imploded on its own before the dismissal made it official.

A dismissal with prejudice is usually the last page of a story. Here it was the first page of a different one. Five days later, on October 6, Hearn's lawyers wrote to the inspectors general at the Justice Department and the Interior Department, asking them to examine how a felony case against an Olympian with no record of vandalism got built in the first place. The letter went to two watchdogs. Fifteen days after that, one of them answered....

...(cont) On October 21, the Justice Department's inspector general told Hearn's lawyers the complaint fell outside its jurisdiction. All together now — read that sentence twice: a prosecution a sitting judge called weaponized, examined by the office built to examine prosecutions, is not this office's business. The inspector general did not decline to act on the complaint. It declined to recognize it as the kind of complaint it handles.

The watchdog did not leave the letter unanswered, exactly. It forwarded it to the Office of Professional Responsibility, the Justice Department's internal unit for investigating its own lawyers.

The case against Hearn ran its entire life inside the building that charged him. It was built by prosecutors employed by the same department that employed the prosecutor who brought it. It was ended by a judge who does not work there. And when Hearn's lawyers asked the one office designed to check that department's own conduct, the request was filed under a jurisdiction that does not cover it, then handed to a desk the department has already emptied out. The case is closed. The question the dismissal order asked out loud is sitting in a drawer marked Office of Professional Responsibility, waiting for whoever is left there to open it.

"They build a felony case, a judge calls it weaponized and kills it for good, and the office that's supposed to check how it got built tells you it's not their department. Then they ship the complaint to the one unit they already hollowed out themselves — that's not oversight, that's a filing cabinet with the key already thrown away. This is how you charge someone twice: once in court, once by making sure nobody ever answers for the first time."
— Sal

"Look, jurisdiction is jurisdiction — the inspector general reviews Justice Department conduct, not what a judge writes in a dismissal order, that's just how the — did I say chain of command? Forget I said that. Point is, the Office of Professional Responsibility exists for exactly this. It's right there in the name."
— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

~~DOJ watchdog declines investigation in Reflecting Pool case~~

DOJ reroutes the case to an internal watchdog it already gutted

CBS News | MAINSTREAM | $ *09:42 EDT*

Hearn's lawyers complain the inspector general has referred the case to the Office of Professional Responsibility, a unit that was largely gutted and lacks independence.

But: The DOJ disbanded its own crypto enforcement team and ordered inconsistent investigations closed in April 2025 - while the president's family runs a crypto business *CNBC, 8 April 2025 (Blanche memo)*

DOJ watchdog passes off investigation into case of Olympian who was charged in Reflecting Pool case

Washington Examiner RIGHT $ *10:50 EDT*

The Justice Department's inspector general has declined to investigate the handling of the case against David Hearn, a former Olympic athlete accused of damaging the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, prompting his lawyers to call for an independent review of alleged misconduct by federal officials. The department's internal watchdog said...

· Judge permanently blocks Jeanine Pirro from pursuing charges against former Olympian in Reflecting Pool vandalism case *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

· Lawyers urge watchdogs to examine Reflecting Pool case against ex-Olympian *from the morgue, 6 Oct 2026*

· Former Olympian charged in Reflecting Pool vandalism case urges inspectors general to investigate prosecution *from the morgue, 6 Oct 2026*

· Another Trump DOJ Weaponization Ploy Implodes as Judge Permanently Ends Reflecting Pool Vandalism Case *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

· Judge dismisses Reflecting Pool case against former Olympian with prejudice *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

Ukraine's only leverage against Russia, cut by its own satellite provider, ends in a freeze offer.

By LOU
ONE MORE QUESTION

"We're done': Ukraine resumes strikes on Russian oil refineries as 'only leverage' for peace talks", 15 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA FRANCE 24 — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Zelensky said he would accept freezing the front lines to end the war with Russia.

WHO GETS PAID. Russia's negotiating position gains the most, keeping whatever territory it holds if the front line freezes where it now sits.

WHAT SLIPS. Congress's oversight slips: lawmakers are only demanding an investigation into why a private citizen could slow a wartime ally's satellite link, not yet holding one.

WHAT'S NEXT. If the call for a probe goes the way past war-oversight votes have, nothing changes; that is what Congress got after its 2019 vote to end support for the Yemen war: the president vetoed it, the override failed 53 to 45, and support continued 21 more months.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

You're smart. I don't say that to soften you up for what's coming; I say it because it bears on this case. A smart operation does not announce a ceasefire on a public feed before telling the other side it exists. A smart operation does not spend a week insisting a satellite slowdown had no author, the same week a wire service names one. That's the mistake sitting on page nine, and I keep coming back to it, not because I'm clever, but because the dates won't let me alone.

Here's the order, as near as I can lay it out. On September 14th, the American president posted that Ukraine and Russia had agreed to leave each other's energy targets alone. On October 11th, Ukraine's president said that agreement was news to him. On October 13th, he was still objecting, this time to a diesel deal struck without him. On October 14th, Kyiv told reporters its Starlink access had been throttled, and officials there said the order, as best they could tell, came from Washington. On October 15th, Ukraine's president called the ceasefire dead and sent the drones back to Russian refineries, giving a reason for it, calling the strikes Ukraine's "only leverage" left to get anyone to a table....

...(cont) So: the same week a government official calls refinery strikes his only leverage, his satellite access gets slower. On October 18th, a member of the Armed Services Committee called for a congressional investigation into that slowdown. The Secretary of State was asked, on the record, who had given the order. The number he gave back was zero.

I've got a dimmer switch in my garage, the kind you turn with your thumb. Turn it most of the way down and the bulb is still burning — dim, not out. If I told you no one had touched the switch, you'd still want to know why the light looks different than it did an hour ago. That's not an accusation. That's a bulb.

By today, October 21st, Democrats on the Hill are demanding a separate investigation into the company that runs those satellites, because a different set of sources now say Elon Musk himself made the call. A senator put the choice plainly: either the president was wrong about that, or the company was. Somebody in that sentence has an answer that doesn't match the garage.

Also today: Moscow's side says Putin has agreed, in principle, to three-way talks after November 10th. The American envoy says he hopes Ukraine gets a seat at that table. And Ukraine's president — the same one who called refinery strikes his only leverage six days earlier — says he would now accept freezing the front lines where they sit, calling it a real way to end the war.

I don't know what turns a man's only leverage into a line he's ready to freeze. I'm not asking you to know either. I'm asking you to look at the six days between the dimmer switch and that sentence. Which one moved first?

Oh — one more thing, since you're still standing here. The slowdown that had no author on the 18th had one by the time a different wire called around. Was that the same switch for all three days, or did somebody only just admit to touching it?

"You want to know how you lose leverage? You let a billionaire who also runs your government's satellite link decide how fast your side talks to itself, and then act surprised when the word "leverage" disappears from the sentence. Same week they're calling for a hearing on why the switch got turned, Zelensky's already offering to freeze the line — that's not diplomacy, that's a man negotiating after somebody already took his cards off the table."
— Sal

"Nobody ordered anything, the Secretary of State said so himself, on television, case closed. Sure, CBS says the owner of the satellite company made the call personally, but that's — that's a different nobody. Did I say that? That doesn't sound like me. Anyway, Russia agreeing "in principle" to talk after November 10th is basically the breakthrough we've all been waiting for."
— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

- *Trump waives Russia sanctions he signed, then calls enforcing them the thing that would have stopped Hubbard's release.* By The Wrecking Crew · the afternoon edition, 21 October 2026
- *Starshield slowdown Rubio insisted wasn't deliberate was, CBS sources say, Musk's own deliberate choice.* By Lou · the morning edition, 21 October 2026
- *Rubio insists Patriots weren't "deliberately denied"; Hegseth admits "our guys" need them too.* By Lou · the afternoon edition, 20 October 2026
- *Rubio says Patriots weren't 'deliberately denied'; Zelensky asks for the ones Washington still won't release.* By Lou · the morning edition, 20 October 2026
- *Purge spares senator bribery probe; his namesake sanctions law waived next, Tillis calls it 'beyond irresponsible'* By Mitch · the morning edition, 20 October 2026
- *Trump's purge spares Graham a bribery probe; weeks later, Trump spares Russia his own sanctions law.* By Mitch · the morning edition, 20 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

'We're done': Ukraine resumes strikes on Russian oil refineries as 'only leverage' for peace talks

France 24 MAINSTREAM § *12:14 EDT*

Delano D'Souza is pleased to welcome Peter Zalmayev, Founder and Director of the Eurasia Democracy Initiative, LIVE from Kyiv. As Zelensky declares Ukraine "done" with Trump's self-declared energy ceasefire and resumes strikes on Russian oil refineries, Zalmayev warns: "When you talk about the energy ceasefire, it presupposes two to be...

Democrats call for investigation into Musk over reported Starlink slowdown order

The Hill MAINSTREAM § *10:47 EDT*

Democrats are calling for an investigation into SpaceX CEO Elon Musk following a Wall Street Journal report alleging he ordered the Starlink slowdown in Ukraine. "Either the President was lying or Musk was lying, but the decision to slow down satellite speed and access has life or death consequences for Ukraine," Sen.

But: **Trump promised 53 times he would end this war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky** *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Ukraine's Zelensky says he'd accept peace deal with Russia that 'freezes' front lines: 'Real way to end war'

New York Post RIGHT § *09:13 EDT*

Zelensky said he would be willing to stop the fighting immediately — even as Russian troops have been struggling mightily on the battlefield.

But: **I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... and within 24 hours, that war will be settled.** *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Zelensky unleashes on Trump over Russia diesel deal

The Hill MAINSTREAM § *20:16 EDT*

Welcome to The Hill's Defense & NatSec newsletter {beacon} Defense &National Security Defense &National Security The Big Story Zelensky unleashes on Trump over Russia diesel deal Kyiv's allies, including those in President Trump's circle, are rallying around Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, pushing back against Trump's diesel deal...

Zelenskyy blindsided after Trump announces 'energy ceasefire' in Ukraine war

The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *07:38 EDT*

Ukrainian president says the deal is 'news to me' and that Russia is still attacking energy infrastructure. Plus, investigation into continuing mystery of Havana syndrome Don't already get First Thing in your inbox? Sign up here Good morning.

But: **Trump promised to settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours - CNN counted 53 separate times he said it** *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Putin agrees to trilateral talks with Ukraine, US to end war

New York Post RIGHT § *10:02 EDT*

Moscow's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov said that Putin said "in principle" peace talks will continue after Nov. 10

But: **Trump promised he'd settle the war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky - CNN counted 53 separate such promises** *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Witkoff says he hopes Ukraine included in U.S., Russia talks

CBS News MAINSTREAM § *11:34 EDT*

U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff, meeting with Vladimir Putin in Russia, voiced hope for new trilateral talks involving Ukraine, and Moscow indicated the talks could resume in November.

But: **"I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled" - Trump, 53 times by CNN's count** *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Ukraine's Zelenskyy open to freezing front lines in ceasefire with Russia

Fox News RIGHT § *10:11 EDT*

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says he's open to freezing the front lines of the Ukraine-Russia war as a real path to end the conflict.

Rep. Turner calls for congressional probe into Starlink slowdown that disrupted Ukraine drones

CBS News MAINSTREAM § *11:59 EDT*

Rep. Mike Turner, who is on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said on "Face the Nation with Margaret Brennan" that the slowdown in speeds for Elon Musk's Starlink and Starshield is "something where there needs to be a congressional investigation." Secretary of State Marco Rubio said "nobody" in the U.S. government ordered any slowdown.

Throttling of Ukraine's Starlink Access Heightens Concerns Over Government Reliance on Elon Musk

Common Dreams § *10:53 EDT*

The Ukrainian government on Tuesday night said that its access to the SpaceX-owned Starlink satellite internet service was throttled, prompting critics to question the wisdom of depending on any company owned by far-right billionaire Elon Musk. According to a Wednesday report in The New York Times, Ukrainian officials suspect that orders...

But: **Trump promised to settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky - CNN counted 53 separate times he made that promise** *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Peter Zalmayev: 'Ukraine was showing all sorts of cards that Trump took away and gave to Putin'

France 24 MAINSTREAM § *10:44 EDT*

Angela Diffley is pleased to welcome Peter Zalmayev, Founder and Director of the Eurasia Democracy Initiative, LIVE from Kyiv. And he warns, "I'm seeing, I'm smelling a Yalta II. I'm smelling another Munich (1938), where we're seeing appeasement of the aggressor." Ukraine faces the possibility that its sovereignty and security could...

But: **Trump promised to settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours - 53 separate times, per CNN** *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Zelensky says he'd be open to freezing front lines to end Russia war

The Hill MAINSTREAM § *10:52 EDT*

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday said he would be open to freezing the front line of his forces to allow the war with Russia to end and keep much of Ukraine's territory intact. "Right now, we have to freeze, and I think this is a real way to end this war," Zelensky told "Fox...

· Trump says Ukraine and Russia have agreed to energy target ceasefire *from the morgue, 14 Sep 2026*

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THE WAIVER

Trump waives Russia sanctions he signed, then calls enforcing them the thing that would have stopped Hubbard's release.

By THE WRECKING CREW
THE REMEDY DESK

"Trump says Ukraine needs a new leader after diesel deal with Russia", 10 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA THE GUARDIAN — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

The chief puts two things on the table: a law, and the evening before it was due to work. The mess begins as a number. On 5 September AAA priced a gallon of diesel at $5.88, a record, and Axios reported that Republican incumbents' own polling placed the blame on the president. On 14 September Trump posted that Ukraine had agreed not to strike Russian energy targets, and that Russia had agreed to do the same. On 19 September he signed the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, named for the South Carolina senator who championed it before he died in July. On 11 October Senator Thom Tillis said the new Russia diesel deal was tarnishing Graham's own work. Hours later, more than 320 drones hit Ukraine's power grid.

The planner watches the sequence keep running. The day after that, Sunday, former Vice President Pence called on Trump to restore the sanctions and scrap the diesel deal, saying the waiver dishonors the legacy of the senator whose name is on the statute....

...(cont) The tinkerer sets the next part of the mechanism on the bench. On 21 October Russia released Stephen Hubbard, a 74-year-old retired schoolteacher held since 2022 on what the State Department called fabricated charges. Trump says it happened without a swap. Special envoy Steve Witkoff, who flew to St. Petersburg to meet Putin, called the man wanted for war crimes a "humanitarian" for letting Hubbard go — a description Senator John Cornyn answered with one of his own: "a stone cold killer." Then came the part the chief had been waiting on since 17 October: Trump told reporters that enforcing the sanctions he had just waived would have halted the very talks that freed Hubbard.

The muscle finds nothing left standing to wreck; the mechanism does that work on its own. A sanctions law gets signed, then waived, then credited by the man who waived it with producing the outcome sanctions exist to pressure for. The tool stays on the shelf, and its staying there is now called the achievement. The pilot just flies the thing out and reads the instrument panel straight: the statute is still signed, still on the books, still not applied to the war that hit the grid the same week its enforcement window closed.

❦ FROM THE CORNER ❦

DUTCH

TRUMP WAIVED THE RUSSIA SANCTIONS LAW THE NIGHT BEFORE IT TOOK EFFECT, AND MORE THAN 320 DRONES HIT UKRAINE'S GRID HOURS LATER. THAT ISN'T A HOSTAGE RELEASE, it's an invoice for the diesel deal paid in a human being. Because the law stays on the shelf, the diesel it was written to choke off keeps crossing the border; because it keeps crossing, the price that set a record in September doesn't have to come down on its own; and the only place that math still lands is pump four, Tuesday.

"You waive a law, drones hit the grid that same night, and days later the hostage comes home — and somehow the lesson they want you to take is that using the law would've stopped it. That's not diplomacy, that's a stickup where the ransom note doubles as the thank-you card. Putin gets his energy deal, the teacher gets a plane home, and the only thing that doesn't come back is the leverage the law was supposed to be."
— Sal

"Look, the sanctions weren't abandoned, they were strategically paused for maximum diplomatic leverage, which is exactly why Russia released an American for free — because the waiver was working. Wait, the thing we didn't do is what made the thing happen? That doesn't — let me get back to you on the sequencing there."
— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

- *Starshield slowdown Rubio insisted wasn't deliberate was, CBS sources say, Musk's own deliberate choice.* By Lou · the morning edition, 21 October 2026
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- *Trump's purge spares Graham a bribery probe; weeks later, Trump spares Russia his own sanctions law.* By Mitch · the morning edition, 20 October 2026
- *Pentagon withholds NATO-paid Patriots with no explanation; a congressman vows to be 'fully accountable'* By The Wrecking Crew · the morning edition, 20 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

American Stephen Hubbard released by Russia, Trump confirms
CBS News MAINSTREAM *08:53 EDT*
Steve Witkoff lauded Vladimir Putin as "a humanitarian" as Russia freed Stephen Hubbard, an American deemed wrongfully detained by the U.S., after more than 4 years in prison.

But: Trump promised he'd settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours of talking to Putin and Zelenskyy - he's said some version of that 53 separate times *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump says Ukraine needs a new leader after diesel deal with Russia
The Guardian MAINSTREAM *16:42 EDT*
US president suggests Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has not done enough to end war Donald Trump has said Ukraine needs "a new leader", a day after making a deal with Vladimir Putin to buy large quantities of Russian diesel. The US president suggested Volodymyr Zelenskyy has not done enough to end the war with Russia and...

~~Zelenskyy furious as Trump announces deal to buy Russian diesel~~
Trump funds Russia's war - the one he vowed to end in 24 hours, 53 times
The Guardian MAINSTREAM *06:09 EDT*
US president says agreement needed to lower fuel prices, but move likely to create fresh crisis with Ukraine and Nato allies Donald Trump is on a fresh collision course with Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European allies after his stunning agreement to buy Russian diesel upended years of US and western pressure on the Kremlin to end its war...

But: Trump promised in 2023 he'd end the Ukraine war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky - CNN counted 53 such promises *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Witkoff faces backlash after calling Putin a 'humanitarian'
The Hill MAINSTREAM *10:13 EDT*
Special envoy Steve Witkoff is facing criticism from lawmakers after calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a "humanitarian" for releasing an American who has been held in Russia for years. President Trump had made a direct appeal to Putin for the release of Stephen Hubbard, a teacher who was accused of being a Ukrainian mercenary.

Zelensky blasts 'unfortunate' decision to pause Russia sanctions as Moscow hits power plants
New York Post RIGHT *09:41 EDT*
Zelensky reported that Russia targeted the energy sector with over 320 drones, missiles, and munitions.

But: Trump promised he'd settle the war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky - CNN counted 53 separate times he said it *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Editor Daily Rundown: Russia Releases American Prisoner Without A Swap
Daily Caller RIGHT *09:13 EDT*
'Humanitarian'

~~Zelensky says Russian sanctions Trump waived 'could have helped enormously'~~
Trump waived new Russia sanctions days before they were set to take effect
The Hill MAINSTREAM *10:08 EDT*
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky decried President Trump's late-night decision to waive sanctions and tariffs against Russia days before they were set to take effect under a new law. "At a time when the Russians have carried out such a massive attack on our energy sector, a decision was unfortunately made in America to completely...

But: Trump promised 53 separate times he would settle the Ukraine war, including 'within 24 hours' - CNN count *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
U.S. Floats Lifeline to Russia: Allowing More Gas Sales to Europe
The New York Times MAINSTREAM *14:00 EDT*
The Trump administration is pitching the idea as part of a peace deal with Ukraine, but Europe is wary and critics say Russia would be strengthened.

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, 53 separate occasions per CNN *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Witkoff blasted for calling Putin a "humanitarian"
CBS News MAINSTREAM *10:57 EDT*
After special envoy Steve Witkoff told Putin he was a "humanitarian" for releasing a U.S. citizen deemed to have been wrongfully detained, GOP Sen. John Cornyn responded, "No.

Trump envoy Steve Witkoff praises Putin as 'humanitarian' as Ukraine peace talks hang in the balance
New York Post RIGHT *09:45 EDT*
US special envoy Steve Witkoff complimented Russian dictator Vladimir Putin as a "humanitarian" during their meeting in St. Petersburg -- as President Trump desperately tries to get Russia back to the negotiating table to end the Ukraine war.

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, 10 May 2023; CNN counted 53 such promises *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Sister of Stephen Hubbard, released by Russia, thanks Trump as 'hand of God'
ABC News MAINSTREAM *10:45 EDT*
President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff landed in the Russian city of St. Petersburg on Wednesday morning, a Kremlin aide confirmed.

But: Trump promised 53 times he'd end the war within 24 hours *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump says Ukraine needs new president, blames Zelenskyy for diesel prices
CBS News MAINSTREAM *21:59 EDT*
President Trump's criticism of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy comes after Russian strikes killed at least 20 people, including three children, in Ukraine.

Trump: Implementing Russia sanctions would have halted Stephen Hubbard release talks
The Hill MAINSTREAM *08:51 EDT*
President Trump defended his waiver of Russian sanctions, saying it would have halted negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin regarding the release of Stephen Hubbard, a retired schoolteacher who was arrested by Russian authorities when it invaded Ukraine. "Numerous people, who requested that sanctions be immediately imposed...

Live updates: Trump lauds Russia's release of American; Vance to campaign with Ramaswamy in Ohio
The Hill MAINSTREAM *08:55 EDT*
President Trump on Wednesday morning praised Russia's release of American teacher Stephen Hubbard after four years of wrongful imprisonment. "Stephen is on his way back home and will soon be with his family. The United States, out of respect for President Trump, was not required to give anything in return - an unprecedented situation...

~~Sen. Graham on Trump waiving Russia sanctions: 'I look forward to talking to him'~~
Trump waived the Russia sanctions law that carries Graham's own name
The Hill MAINSTREAM *20:18 EDT*
Sen. Darline Graham (R-S.C.) said Saturday that she would prefer to keep sanctions pressure on Russia after President Trump waived sanctions on the country that were enacted through a bill Graham championed. Trump signed an executive order Friday waiving sanctions on Russian energy, passed under the Lindsey O.

Zelensky says US-Russia diesel deal is a 'birthday gift' to Putin to 'kill us, kill our children'
The Hill MAINSTREAM *10:29 EDT*
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday said the U.S.-Russia diesel deal is a "birthday gift" to allow Russian President Vladimir Putin to "kill us, kill our children." When asked by ABC's Jonathan Karl on "This Week" about his remark that the deal helps Putin as a "gift," Zelensky explained that it "gives Putin money and...

But: Trump promised to settle the war within 24 hours - on 53 separate occasions, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump says Ukraine needs 'a new leader who can make a deal'
Washington Examiner RIGHT *13:38 EDT*
President Donald Trump on Saturday called for new leadership in Ukraine, marking a dramatic shift in the United States's relationship with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Trump has long pushed Russia and Ukraine to make a deal ending the war between the countries, which has now stretched over four-and-a-half years and appeared to...

Schumer: 'Trump just gave Putin the best birthday gift he'll get this year'
The Hill MAINSTREAM *12:06 EDT*
Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) accused President Trump on Saturday of giving Russian President Vladimir Putin "the best birthday gift" after he waived new sanctions on Russia days before they were set to take effect. "By giving the Russian economy life support Trump's deal with the devil keeps getting dirtier,"

Lawmakers in bipartisan statement push back on Trump over Russian oil
The Hill MAINSTREAM *18:54 EDT*
A bipartisan group of seven lawmakers on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee condemned President Trump's recent deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin, which would lift sanctions on Russia and permit the flow of its oil into the global economy. "Congress explicitly banned Russian energy imports in 2022 to prevent American dollars...

Trump Signs Order Exempting Russia From Sanctions Law
The New York Times MAINSTREAM *04:35 EDT*
The sanctions were part of a measure that was named after Senator Lindsey Graham, the South Carolina Republican who died in July.

But: Trump promised to settle the Ukraine war with Putin within 24 hours - on 53 separate occasions *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump says Russia will release millions of tons of diesel to help with costs
CBS News MAINSTREAM *12:08 EDT*
Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to release 300,000 tons of diesel immediately and millions more over the coming months.

But: Trump promised to settle the war within 24 hours - CNN counted 53 separate occasions he made that promise *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Rebuking Ukraine Over Oil Strikes, Trump Says It Should 'Get a New President'
The New York Times MAINSTREAM *15:28 EDT*
Hours after President Trump said the United States would buy Russian diesel, the Kremlin said there would be no immediate resumption of discussions to end the war.

But: Trump promised he'd settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky – 53 times, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump pauses new Russia sanctions passed by Congress amid deepening row with Ukraine
The Guardian MAINSTREAM *22:53 EDT*
President signed the legislation championed by late senator Lindsey Graham last month but has waived the restrictions as they were due to come into effect Donald Trump has put on hold a sweeping new sanctions package targeting the Russian economy, telling Congress the pause on the legislation passed by both chambers was in the national...

~~Massie offers rare praise for Trump on waiving Lindsey Graham's Russia sanctions~~
The White House waived sanctions built to help Ukraine fight Russia
Washington Examiner RIGHT *14:32 EDT*
Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) on Saturday issued rare approval of President Donald Trump, commending the White House for lifting sanctions on Russia. The White House waived the sanctions on Friday, after the late Sen.

But: Trump said he'd settle the Russia-Ukraine war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky – CNN counted 53 such promises. *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
GOP lawmakers bash Trump's decision to waive Russia sanctions: 'Beyond irresponsible'
The Hill MAINSTREAM *09:23 EDT*
Several GOP lawmakers criticized President Trump's move to exempt Russia from the sanctions bill he signed law last month, with Sen. Thom Tillis (R- N.C.) calling the move "beyond irresponsible." Trump signed an executive order Friday evening to waive sanctions against Russia in a legislative package that was meant to put pressure on the...

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, CNN town hall, 10 May 2023. CNN counted 53 separate occasions he promised it. *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump calls for Ukraine to replace Zelenskyy after clash over Russia diesel deal: 'Get a new president'
Fox News RIGHT *15:54 EDT*
President Donald Trump demanded Volodymyr Zelenskyy stop striking Russian oil refineries, warning the attacks worsen global diesel and fuel supplies.

Easing sanctions on Russia only helps fund Putin's killing machine
New York Post RIGHT *14:52 EDT*
Earlier this month, a Russian missile slammed into a housing complex in Pryluky, a Ukrainian city of no strategic value, far from the eastern front lines. Thirty apartments were destroyed. Twenty-two people were killed.

But: Trump promised he'd meet Putin and Zelensky and settle the war within 24 hours - CNN counted 53 separate such promises *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Pence calls on Trump to restore sanctions, scrap Russia diesel deal
The Hill MAINSTREAM *12:01 EDT*
Former Vice President Mike Pence on Sunday called for President Trump to restore sanctions on Russia and condemned his recent diesel agreement with President Vladimir Putin. "President Trump's decision to waive sanctions against Russia as Putin continues his brutal war of aggression against Ukraine dishonors the legacy of the late...

Russia frees retired US schoolteacher Stephen Hubbard
RTÉ MAINSTREAM *09:34 EDT*
Stephen Hubbard, a 74-year-old retired US schoolteacher in Russian custody since 2022, was freed from prison today and taken to St Petersburg's Pulkovo airport, President of Russia Vladimir Putin said.

But: Trump promised he'd meet Putin and Zelensky and settle the war within 24 hours – 53 separate times, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump and Putin sign diesel deal, angering Ukraine and its allies
Le Monde MAINSTREAM *05:38 EDT*
The US president announced Friday that Russia has committed to supplying nearly 5 million tons of diesel fuel to the United States and global markets 'within a short period of time.' The deal has sparked outrage across Europe.

But: Trump promised to end the Ukraine war within 24 hours - CNN counted 53 separate times he said it *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Witkoff calling Putin a humanitarian is "cringeworthy," former U.S. ambassador says
CBS News MAINSTREAM *10:25 EDT*
U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff called President Vladimir Putin "a humanitarian" after the Russian leader released a U.S. citizen who had been imprisoned by Russia since 2022.

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, CNN town hall, 10 May 2023. CNN counted 53 separate occasions he promised it *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Russia Releases American Stephen Hubbard From Prison, State Media Reports
The New York Times MAINSTREAM *11:23 EDT*
The move buys good will with President Trump while costing the President Vladimir V. Putin — who is wanted for war crimes — little.

~~Trump waives Russia sanctions ordered by law named for Lindsey Graham~~
Trump waived the Russia sanctions he signed into law last month
Washington Examiner RIGHT *23:09 EDT*
President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Friday that waived the sweeping Russian sanctions and tariffs enacted by the bill championed by the late Sen. Lindsey Graham. Trump signed the Lindsey O.

But: Trump promised he'd settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky – 53 times, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump doubles down after waiving new Russia sanctions, calling it a 'very good decision'
NBC News MAINSTREAM *22:45 EDT*
President Donald Trump waived sweeping new sanctions against Russia passed by Congress, arguing in an executive order Friday that the move "is in the national interests of the United States."

~~Graham Breaks With Trump Over Russia Sanctions Law Her Brother Championed~~
Trump exempts Russia from the sanctions law his own party wrote
The New York Times MAINSTREAM *20:19 EDT*
Senator Darline Graham, appointed to fill the Senate seat of her late brother, Lindsey, gently disagreed with the president's decision to exempt Russia from the sanctions legislation.

~~Trump announces deal for Russian diesel as Zelensky calls it a gift to Putin~~
Diesel prices doubled since the Iran war began. Now Trump wants Putin to fix it.
BBC News MAINSTREAM *10:24 EDT*
Ukraine's president sharply criticised the move, calling it an "investment in war that must be ended, not prolonged".

But: Trump promised to settle the war within 24 hours - on 53 separate occasions, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump rips into Volodymyr Zelensky — insisting it's time for Ukraine to 'get a new president'
New York Post RIGHT *16:56 EDT*
President Trump ripped into Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday telling reporters outside the White House that it's time for Ukraine to "get a new president."

~~Trump Offers Putin Economic Relief in Hopes That Russia Will Return the Favor~~
Trump defies Congress, waives Russia sanctions to shield Republicans from gas prices
The New York Times MAINSTREAM *19:46 EDT*
The Trump administration is ignoring the will of Congress and waiving new Russia sanctions amid fears that high energy prices will cost Republicans in next month's elections.

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, CNN town hall, 10 May 2023. CNN counted 53 separate occasions he promised it. *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump says Russia will export diesel, lifts sanctions
The Hill MAINSTREAM *18:23 EDT*
{beacon} Energy & Environment Energy & Environment The Big Story Trump says Russia will export diesel, lifts sanctions Russia will supply the U.S. and global market with diesel, President Trump announced Friday, responding to sky-rocketing prices exacerbated by both the Russia-Ukraine and U.S.-Iran wars. © Andrew Caballero-Reynolds, AFP...

~~Trump announces immediate 'energy ceasefire' between Russia and Ukraine~~
Trump demanded Ukraine replace its leader. A day later, he declared a ceasefire.
Washington Examiner RIGHT *10:34 EDT*
President Donald Trump on Sunday announced an immediate "energy ceasefire" between Russia and Ukraine, a day after ripping Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for targeting Russian energy infrastructure during the war and calling for a new Ukrainian leader. "Effective immediately, there is an ENERGY CEASEFIRE in the War between Russia...

~~Trump rips Zelensky amid Russia diesel deal feud: 'I suggest they get a new leader'~~
The White House lifted sanctions on Russian diesel. Then it blamed Zelensky for the war.
The Hill MAINSTREAM *14:26 EDT*
President Trump on Saturday pushed back on criticism from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to the White House's decision to lift sanctions on Russian diesel amid the Russia-Ukraine war. The president told reporters outside the White House that Zelensky "could have settled this war many times," but "chose not to."

But: Trump promised he'd settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky – 53 times, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump waives several Russia sanctions as row with Zelensky intensifies
BBC News MAINSTREAM *21:10 EDT*
The US president temporarily ends many restrictions on Moscow recently passed by Congress over "national security" concerns.

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, 10 May 2023; CNN counted 53 such promises *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
US citizen Stephen Hubbard freed by Russia as Trump envoy meets Putin
BBC News MAINSTREAM *11:53 EDT*
The 74-year-old former teacher, who was captured, has been released without any "swap" required, Trump says.

~~Trump waiving sanctions 'rewards' Putin, says Zelensky~~
Trump waived the Russia sanctions he signed into law last month
RTÉ MAINSTREAM *23:20 EDT*
Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky has said that US President Donald Trump's decision to waive Russian sanctions only "rewards" Vladimir Putin.

But: Trump promised to settle the war within 24 hours - on 53 separate occasions, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
'Time for Ukraine to get new president,' says Trump after Zelensky condemns diesel deal
BBC News MAINSTREAM *21:41 EDT*
Ukraine's leader had said the deal with Russia to release diesel into the US would help Moscow fund the war.

Tillis: Trump's Russia deal 'is tarnishing Lindsey Graham's efforts' at sanctions
The Hill MAINSTREAM *16:20 EDT*
Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) slammed President Trump's deal with Russia for diesel Sunday amid the energy struggles the U.S. is experiencing.

But: Trump promised he'd settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours of meeting Putin and Zelensky – 53 times, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Trump waives tariffs on largest buyers of Russian oil
CBS News MAINSTREAM *22:49 EDT*
President Trump prevented some new sanctions on Russia and hefty tariffs on large-scale buyers of Russian oil from taking effect late Friday, as he seeks to ease prices by tapping Russian energy.

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, CNN town hall, 10 May 2023. CNN counted 53 separate occasions he promised it. *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
War in Ukraine: Europe stands united behind Kyiv but must revisit how to finance its support
Le Monde MAINSTREAM *19:25 EDT*
Invited to the European leaders' summit in Brussels on Friday, Volodymyr Zelensky, weakened by what he called the 'betrayal' of Donald Trump, asked his allies for an additional €70 billion in aid for the year 2027.

Zelenskyy vows to retaliate if Russian strikes on Ukraine's power grid continue
The Guardian MAINSTREAM *12:10 EDT*
Ukrainian leader says he was surprised by Trump's 'energy ceasefire' announcement, posted as Russian drones hit Kyiv Volodymyr Zelenskyy has vowed to respond to Russia's continuing attacks on the Ukrainian power grid as European leaders rally around Kyiv amid a feud with Donald Trump over Ukraine's strikes on oil refineries. Speaking to...

~~Stephen Hubbard released by Russia after years in prison~~
Musk cut Ukraine's access to Starlink, sources say
CBS News MAINSTREAM *09:15 EDT*
Stephen Hubbard, an American jailed in Russia since 2022, has been released, according to U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff and President Trump. Meanwhile, Elon Musk chose to limit Ukraine's access to Starlink, sources say.

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, CNN town hall, 10 May 2023. CNN counted 53 separate occasions he promised it *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*
Zelensky bashes Trump over diesel deal with Russia
Washington Examiner RIGHT *22:32 EDT*
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky bashed President Donald Trump's deal with Russia to supply millions of tons of diesel fuel to global markets, giving arguably his most direct and biting criticism of Trump so far. Trump announced the deal on Friday in a post on Truth Social after a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin...

Who Is Stephen James Hubbard, the American Released From Russian Jail?
The New York Times MAINSTREAM *09:10 EDT*
Mr. Hubbard, a 74-year-old teacher, was held for more than four years on what the State Department called fabricated charges.

- Trump and Putin held call over Witkoff-Kushner meeting and state of Ukraine war, Russia says *from the morgue, 8 Sep 2026*
- Trump signs Russia sanctions bill named after Lindsey Graham *from the morgue, 19 Sep 2026*
- Europe blasts Russian finance minister's attendance at Asheville G20 *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*
- Trump: Russia has 'lost control' of its diesel industry as prices soar *from the morgue, 21 Sep 2026*
- Trump says Ukraine and Russia have agreed to energy target ceasefire *from the morgue, 14 Sep 2026*
- Trump calls on Ukraine to halt strikes on Russian diesel fuel *from the morgue, 14 Sep 2026*
- Trump blames Ukraine for diesel fuel price spike, urges Zelensky to stop hitting Russian refineries *from the morgue, 13 Sep 2026*
- Trump calls out Zelensky over rising diesel prices *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*
- Ukraine persists with Russian oil refinery strikes, defying Trump on fuel price warnings *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*
- Britain in talks with European allies over release of emergency diesel stockpiles amid Trump pressure *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*
- Russia's Lavrov blasts US, Western allies as "warmongers' in fiery UN tirade *from the morgue, 26 Sep 2026*
- Russia and China unite against US over Iran and Cuba in UN speeches *from the morgue, 26 Sep 2026*
- U.S. military lays groundwork for potential action around Cuba *from the morgue, 26 Sep 2026*
- The United Nations Security Council has resoundingly rejected a United States bid to extend a global arms embargo on Iran. In a Security Council vote, United States only got support from the Dominican *from the morgue, 14 Aug 2020*
- U.S. Threatens New Economic War on Iran by Targeting China & Tehran's Other Top Trading Partners *from the morgue, 25 Aug 2026*
- In Defiant UN Speech, Iranian President Says US and Israel Are the Real Terrorists *from the morgue, 23 Sep 2026*
- Trump slams reporting on removal of his endorsements from GOP candidate's website *from the morgue, 27 Sep 2026*
- Donalds removes several Trump mentions from campaign website *from the morgue, 22 Sep 2026*
- GOP hopeful removes 'Pro-Trump' mention from campaign slogan in deep-red seat *from the morgue, 23 Sep 2026*
- Where Trump's 2026 endorsement record stands after primary season *from the morgue, 9 Sep 2026*
- U.N. experts say U.S. may have committed war crimes with 2 Iran strikes *from the morgue, 22 Sep 2026*
- Trump Says 'Big Decision' Coming on Whether to 'Annihilate' Iran *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Pentagon No. 3 frustrates senators in closed-door briefing on Iran war, Trump defense strategy *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Senate Democrats, minus Fetterman, urge Hegseth to provide receipt for Iran war costs *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Hegseth on "devastation" to Iran's capabilities *from the morgue, 10 Sep 2026*

· Trump admits Iran war will not end before midterms *from the morgue, 9 Sep 2026*

· Iran War Trump Said Would Be Quick Has Now Lasted 6 Months With 'No End In Sight' *from the morgue, 28 Aug 2026*

· CBO Finds Trump's Iran War Has Already Cost Nearly $40 Billion—And That's a 'Conservative' Estimate *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Tillis supports Hegseth impeachment resolution: 'He needs to go' *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Massie Files Impeachment Articles Against Hegseth for Illegal Iran War, Boat Murders *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Massie launches effort to impeach Hegseth *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Tillis urges Trump to fire Hegseth over 'inept management' of military *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· Tillis renews calls for Hegseth's firing after Driscoll's departure: 'I have never witnessed more inept management' *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· Farmer who voted for Trump says farmers are "all just in survival mode" *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Farmer who voted for Trump says "I can't stay in business" amid rising costs *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Massie says he's convinced enough Republicans to pass Epstein Files II discharge petition *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Massie names Epstein 'coconspirators,' discusses new Epstein files legislation *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*

· Read Thomas Massie's eight impeachment charges against Pete Hegseth *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Fake Republican midterm convention site still redirects to Epstein files *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· Trump says he has a 'big decision' coming up on Iran: 'Do I want to go in and annihilate them' *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Fox News Poll: 71% think Trump administration lacks plan to end Iran war *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Iran recently downed at least 2 American drones, officials say *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Big Oil Stocks Surged Due to Iran War—and New Filings Show How President Trump Cashed In *from the morgue, 27 Aug 2026*

· Live updates: Energy secretary downplays rising gas prices as US, Iran trade strikes *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· U.S. Strike on Iranian School May Have Been War Crime, U.N. Report Says *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at ***the front****. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor:* ***how this is made****.*

Administration moves to cut climate report's worst case; two months later, the U.S. becomes it.

By MITCH
INVESTIGATIONS



"Emissions Gap Report Identifies U.S. as Outlier Among G20 Nations", 21 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA THE NEW YORK TIMES — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. The Trump administration moved to cut the worst-case warming scenarios from its own federal climate report.

WHO GETS PAID. The receipts name no buyer yet.

WHAT SLIPS. The government's own climate report, the public's early warning on worst-case risk, gets edited by the same government it is supposed to check.

WHAT'S NEXT. No pattern in the ledger fits yet; the administration's notice on the worst-case scenarios remains open, with no decision date set.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Follow along, folks. The document in front of us this week is not one filing but two, filed weeks apart by two different governments, and if you hold them side by side the joke writes itself — all together now — because it is written in verbs.

Clause one. On August 27th, the Trump administration published a notice proposing to reframe how the Fifth National Climate Assessment, the 2023 federal report, treats its worst-case warming scenarios. The administration's stated justification: U.N. scientists had said earlier in the year that the high-emission worst case was "not plausible." Fair enough — borrow a citation, trim a paragraph, move on. The bouncing ball lands on one sentence: the government did not dispute that emissions were rising. It disputed how bad the paperwork was allowed to say rising could get....

...(cont) Clause two. On September 2nd, the United Nations filed its own report, and it did not read like an administration eager to retire its worst case. The planet, it said, has already moved past the point where holding warming to 1.5°C is possible. Sea levels rise either way. Heatwaves intensify either way. The report did not ask permission to say so.

Clause three, and this is the one that closes the loop: on October 21st, the U.N.'s Emissions Gap Report came back with a seating chart. Of the G20, the major economies responsible for most of the planet's greenhouse gas, exactly one had its pollution go up last year, not down, not flat — up, and dramatically. The United States. Not a rounding error, not a quarter's blip. The only one.

So here is the record, in the order the government and the United Nations filed it, and I will not editorialize beyond repeating it: in August, a notice goes out trimming the worst-case scenario from the national climate report as implausible. In September, the United Nations files that the planet is already on the overshoot track the worst case described. In October, the United Nations files that the only major economy moving the wrong way is the one that spent August trimming the paperwork.

I don't have a motive to assign here, and the receipts don't carry one. I have a date stamp on a Federal Register notice, and a date stamp on a report with the word "outlier" attached to one flag. All together now — the two dates are weeks apart, and the arithmetic between them is the only joke on the page.

"They didn't shrink the worst-case scenario, they shrunk the warning label so you'd stop reading before the thing happens. The United Nations says we're the only major economy that got worse while the paperwork back home got friendlier. That's not a climate report anymore, that's a receipt with the total blacked out."
— Sal

"Look, the UN's own scientists said the worst-case scenario wasn't plausible, so trimming it from the federal report is just following the science — did I say "the science"? We don't say that anymore. The point is, one bad year of emissions numbers doesn't prove a trend, it proves a chart, and charts can always be redone."
— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

Emissions Gap Report Identifies U.S. as Outlier Among G20 Nations
The New York Times MAINSTREAM 01:00 EDT

The scientific report, identifies the United States as an outlier among the nations responsible for the vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions.

United Nations report highlights significant increase in U.S. climate pollution
NPR MAINSTREAM 01:00 EDT

The U.S. is the only major economy where planet-warming pollution dramatically increased last year. The United Nations warns the planet is on track for catastrophic warming.

· Trump seeks to cut report's worst-case climate scenarios *from the morgue, 27 Aug 2026*

· Trump administration proposes changes to Biden-era climate report *from the morgue, 27 Aug 2026*

· With Planet Set to Overshoot 1.5°C Threshold, Emissions Must Still Be Cut Rapidly to Limit Damage: UN Report *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

Ramaswamy's campaign faces bipartisan condemnation, answers with $4 million more.

By RUTH
THE MONEY DESK



"Vivek Ramaswamy defends controversial ad featuring Amy Acton's estranged mom – admits his campaign is behind it", 21 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA NEW YORK POST — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Ramaswamy's campaign ran an ad with Acton's estranged mother calling her a liar, then spent $4 million more.

WHO GETS PAID. Ohio television stations collect the $4 million Ramaswamy's campaign is spending to keep the ad on air.

WHAT SLIPS. Bipartisan condemnation, from Acton's own family to a Republican senator's daughter, did not pull the ad off the air.

WHAT'S NEXT. No dated case shows an ad like this coming down after bipartisan condemnation. Ohio votes November 3; until then, the ad and the $4 million stay on the air.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Vivek Ramaswamy's campaign put Amy Acton's estranged mother on camera to call her own daughter a liar. Donna Arthur does not dispute the abuse her daughter has described; she disputes the word Acton puts on it. Stearns called the ad "a despicable low." He was not alone. By the next day, Acton's own family and Meghan McCain, a Republican senator's daughter, condemned it from opposite ends of the same party map.

None of that stopped the ad. Ramaswamy confirmed Tuesday evening that his campaign built it. The Hill's headline read that as Ramaswamy "taking responsibility." The quote itself took responsibility for authorship. It took none for content....

...(cont) Then the campaign filed the number that matters on this desk: four million dollars, new money, to keep the one-minute spot running on Ohio television. That is not the cost of making the ad. Production is cheap. Four million dollars is the cost of buying more time for a thing each voice that has commented on it so far — family, opposing campaign, a senator's daughter from the other party — has called indefensible. The condemnation did not move the buy. The buy moved after the condemnation.

Run the filing against the calendar. In mid-September, Bowling Green State University and YouGov had Acton ahead of Ramaswamy by three points, 48 to 45, with seven percent undecided. That is the gap a candidate spends four million dollars to close in the campaign's final stretch, hon — not the gap an ad about a stepfather closes by being true.

Acton's campaign has called the spot "a controversial political ad against her." Sherrod Brown, running for the Senate seat next to this one, has gone further, asking his own Republican opponent, Jon Husted, to condemn an ad from his own party's nominee for governor. Husted has not answered yet. The ledger has two columns tonight: what the ad costs, and who has been asked to say it is wrong and hasn't. Both columns are still open.

> "They want you to think condemnation is the punishment. Instead, each round of outrage gets logged like a focus group, then followed by another check from Ramaswamy's campaign. Four million dollars doesn't fix a bad ad — it means the ad is working exactly how it was built to work."
>
> — Sal

> "Look, he didn't hide anything — he said flat out, "it's an ad from our campaign," that's accountability right there. Sure, we kept it running with four million more, but that's just — that's just standing by your message, that's not — okay, standing by a message your own opponent's family calls a despicable low isn't usually the sales pitch. Did I say "sales pitch"? Forget I said that."
>
> — Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

— *Ramaswamy ad asks Acton's estranged mother to call her a liar, unites her brother and McCain's daughter.* By Sal · the afternoon edition, 20 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

Ohio race takes ugly turn with ad featuring Amy Acton's mother

CBS News MAINSTREAM · *21:38 EDT*

Democrat Amy Acton's estranged mother calls her a liar in a new GOP ad. Acton's brother says the ad marks a "despicable low" and says their stepfather sexually abused Acton when she was a child.

Vivek Ramaswamy defends controversial ad featuring Amy Acton's estranged mom – admits his campaign is behind it

New York Post RIGHT · *00:54 EDT*

"It is an ad from our campaign," Ramaswamy said of the blistering 1-minute spot, in which Donna Arthur – Acton's mother – accused her daughter of being a "liar" and embellishing claims of abuse she allegedly suffered as a child.

Amy Acton campaign slams Ramaswamy over controversial ad featuring estranged mother

ABC News MAINSTREAM · *20:19 EDT*

Ohio Gubernatorial Candidate Amy Acton's campaign alleged her opponent's campaign is using her estranged mother in a controversial political ad against her.

Brown calls on Husted to condemn ad featuring Acton's mother

The Hill MAINSTREAM · *19:40 EDT*

Ohio Democratic Senate candidate Sherrod Brown pressed his Republican rival, Sen. Jon Husted (Ohio), to condemn a recent advertisement allegedly from Republican gubernatorial candidate Vivek Ramaswamy. "The ad released by Vivek Ramaswamy is disgusting.

~~Ramaswamy pours $4 million into ad featuring Amy Acton's estranged mother~~

Ramaswamy's $4M attack ad equals what 4,469 teachers spend yearly on classroom supplies

Washington Examiner RIGHT · *22:09 EDT*

Ohio Republican gubernatorial candidate Vivek Ramaswamy is moving forward with a $4 million investment to run an ad featuring Democrat Amy Acton's estranged mother after the video received fierce backlash. Ramaswamy's campaign released a video featuring Acton's mother, Donna Arthur, who tells viewers not to vote for her daughter. Acton...

Ramaswamy takes responsibility for attack ad featuring Acton's estranged mother

The Hill MAINSTREAM · *22:05 EDT*

Ohio gubernatorial candidate Vivek Ramaswamy (R) confirmed to reporters Tuesday evening that his campaign was behind a new attack ad featuring his Democratic opponent Amy Acton's mother calling her a "liar" and insinuating she suffers from mental health issues. Ramaswamy acknowledged that his campaign produced the ad, which began...

· Acton ahead of Ramaswamy in latest Ohio gubernatorial polling *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

Venezuelan billionaire's daughter hires Trump lawyer Alina Habba; billionaire gets pardon shortly after.

By RUTH
THE MONEY DESK

"White House investigating Alina Habba's claim that $6 million donation went missing under Ric Grenell's leadership at Kennedy Center", 14 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA NEW YORK POST — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. A Venezuelan billionaire's family paid Trump lawyer Alina Habba for a lucrative job not long before he received a pardon.

WHO GETS PAID. Alina Habba, the Trump-aligned lawyer who took the job and whose husband's separate Kennedy Center donation is now under White House review.

WHAT SLIPS. The public loses any way to check whether the pardon was earned or purchased, since no inspector is weighing the family's payment against the clemency decision.

WHAT'S NEXT. The White House investigation into the missing six million, opened October 14, is still open, with no hearing or deadline set yet.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

The pardon came through on October 21st, and The New York Times laid out the sequence: Julio Herrera Velutini, a prominent Venezuelan businessman, wanted clemency, and not long before he got it, his daughter handed Alina Habba — a lawyer close to President Trump — a job the paper's own headline priced at fifty million dollars, though the text beneath calls it only "an extraordinarily lucrative" one. Readers can split that difference themselves; either way, the daughter paid and the father walked free.

Habba had other money troubles that same month. On October 14th, the White House opened an inquiry into her claim that six million dollars — donated to the Kennedy Center by her husband, a Turkish billionaire — did not reach its account under Ric Grenell's watch; whether that is true is exactly what the inquiry exists to find out, not a count either side has settled....

...(cont) A third figure landed October 15th and made the other two look small. Common Dreams, citing a Washington Post donor list, put total contributions to the president's ballroom project at $330 million from companies already "reaping benefits" — Apple and the Adelson Family Foundation at $25 million each, Nvidia matching them while asking to stay anonymous about it.

None of these three events shares an agency, a courtroom, or even a press office. One lawyer sits in the middle of all three: a pardon-seeker's daughter paid her, her own husband's donation went missing on her watch, and the same building fund holding his money banks nine figures more from corporations that need the government's favor. The pardon is dated October 21st. The $330 million is itemized, company by company, down to the one that paid extra for anonymity. The six million is still missing, and the only inquiry open into any of it is the White House investigating itself.

❦ FROM THE CORNER ❦

DUTCH

A VENEZUELAN BILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTER PAID ALINA HABBA FOR A JOB THE TIMES ITSELF COULDN'T PUT A FIRM NUMBER ON, AND HER FATHER GOT HIS PARDON NOT LONG AFTER. That's not a legal retainer, that's a wire transfer with a clemency form stapled to the back. Because a daughter's paycheck can buy her father's freedom, and because the president's own building fund can misplace six million dollars without a single resignation, you already know exactly how much care is going into tracking the refund check with your name on it.

"The daughter writes the check, the father gets the pardon — that's not a consulting fee, that's a toll booth with a law degree attached. Same month, Habba's own husband's six million goes missing from a building fund, and the White House investigates itself to find out why. Add the $330 million from Apple and Nvidia already cashing in on that same ballroom, and you've got one lawyer's ledger running half the money side of this administration."
— Sal

"Look, families hire lawyers all the time, that's called the free market, okay? And sure, the pardon came through not long after, but timing isn't — did I say pardon? I meant — look, these are just two things that happened near each other on a calendar, families hire counsel, presidents grant clemency, it's a coincidence, that's all this is."
— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

But: The Secret Service diverted $1.17 billion in appropriated funds toward the ballroom project *Sen. Blumenthal, official release*

White House investigating Alina Habba's claim that $6 million donation went missing under Ric Grenell's leadership at Kennedy Center

New York Post RIGHT § *16:15 EDT*

A bitter feud has erupted among President Trump's close allies as Alina Habba accuses Ric Grenell of failing to deposit millions of dollars donated by her Turkish billionaire husband to the Kennedy Center.

~~'Blatant Corruption': Donors Pouring $330 Million Into Trump Ballroom—and Reaping Benefits—Exposed~~

Trump vowed to pay 'a hundred percent' himself. Donors paid $330M and got pardons, contracts instead.

Common Dreams § *15:17 EDT*

A newly revealed list of companies and billionaire CEOs who donated millions of dollars to President Donald Trump's ballroom construction project shows that Big Tech, according to one government watchdog, "bankrolled it fully expecting a return on their investment." The list, first reported by The Washington Post, doesn't just show the...

A Billionaire Wanted a Trump Pardon. His Family Gave Alina Habba a $50 Million Deal.

The New York Times MAINSTREAM § *23:58 EDT*

Julio Herrera Velutini, a prominent Venezuelan, was seeking clemency. He got it not long after his daughter gave Ms. Habba, a lawyer close to President Trump, an extraordinarily lucrative job.

· Wedding reception for ex-Trump official Alina Habba and Turkish billionaire begins at posh NYC hotel *from the morgue, 27 Sep 2026*

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Administration calls Venezuela oil deal a gift, keeps the contract secret.

By RUTH
THE MONEY DESK

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

A reconciliation starts with what two sides say about the same thing, and this one starts in August.

On August 26, Senator Elizabeth Warren told the health secretary she was still waiting for him to publish the terms of the administration's secret pricing deals with drug makers. Three days later, on August 29, the president announced on social media that his government had secured majority control of Venezuela's oil reserves — 65 billion barrels of it — and Senator Chris Van Hollen answered the same day: "Let's be clear: This isn't a win." The next day, August 30, the president called the arrangement a gift from Venezuela to the people of the United States and said a "topping out" process would refill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve; critics called the language mobster, and the history behind it revisionist, that same afternoon....

...(cont) Those were the public's numbers through Labor Day: 65 billion barrels, 35 percent of it marked for the Pentagon, a military operation clocked at 30 minutes, and a record $4.15 a gallon at the pump while drivers waited for the savings a deal struck in their name was supposed to bring. Every one of those numbers came from someone announcing the deal, not from the deal itself. None of them came from a contract.

On September 20, the public got a preview of what that gap looks like when someone forces it shut. Public Citizen, a consumer group, filed a federal records request and obtained the actual text of the Big Pharma pricing deals Warren had been asking the health secretary to release since August. The documents carried perks for drug makers the administration had not announced: room to raise prices overseas, and limits on the savings promised to American patients at home.

On October 21, ProPublica filed its own story on the oil deal, under one headline: "The Secret Terms of Trump's Venezuelan Oil Deal." The headline is the finding. Nine months after the operation, fifty-three days after the 65-billion-barrel announcement, the count of contract pages the public has been shown stands at zero. Sixty-five billion barrels announced. Thirty-five percent assigned. Zero pages published. That is the gap, hon — not a feeling, a number. The administration's other secret deal this year stayed secret until a nonprofit filed a records request and found terms the administration had not volunteered. The oil contract has not reached that stage. As of today, it is still the deal the public has only been told about.

“They called taking a country's oil fields a gift, and the only paperwork anyone has seen is a headline that says the paperwork is secret. That is not new — the drug pricing deal worked the same way until a records request pried it open and found perks the administration had not announced. You do not get to call something a gift and keep the receipt in a drawer.”

— Sal

“Look, commercial terms stay confidential in energy deals all the time, that's just standard contracting practice — wait, this is a controlling stake in a foreign nation's oil reserves negotiated right after a military operation, not a vendor agreement, so maybe that one's different. The administration is protecting national security and America's competitive position, full stop. Did I just defend keeping a deal for public resources secret from the public? That is not what I meant to say.”

— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

- *Pentagon's oil stake stays untouched; the Maduros' docket just added a torture charge.* By Ruth · the afternoon edition, 8 October 2026
- *Pentagon appoints its biggest contractor, a top campaign donor, to help plan the future of war.* By Mitch · the early evening edition, 3 October 2026
- *Pentagon shifts troops from the hemisphere with no oil stake to the one where it claimed 35 percent.* By Ruth · the supper edition, 3 October 2026
- *Rubio's ex-housemate gets 10 years for the $50 million lobbying campaign he swore he had no idea about.* By Sal · the coffee break edition, 3 October 2026
- *Rubio testifies his roommate's $50 million Caracas lobbying operation, which drew 10 years, escaped his notice.* By Ruth · the supper edition, 2 October 2026
- *Senate asks who authorized the Pentagon's Venezuela oil stake; the record says a chatbot, over hours, in December.* By Ruth · the early bird edition, 2 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

The Secret Terms of Trump’s Venezuelan Oil Deal

ProPublica § *21:53 EDT*

The post The Secret Terms of Trump’s Venezuelan Oil Deal appeared first on ProPublica .

· 'Mobster Language': Trump Says Venezuelan Oil Will Replenish US Reserves *from the morgue, 30 Aug 2026*

· 'One Big Military Theft': Trump Announces Deal for US Control of Venezuelan Oil Fields *from the morgue, 29 Aug 2026*

· 'Still Crickets': Warren Reminds RFK Jr. of Pledge to Publish Secret Trump Deals With Big Pharma *from the morgue, 26 Aug 2026*

· Secret Trump Drug Deals Reveal Perks for Big Pharma, Uncertainty for Patients *from the morgue, 20 Sep 2026*

· Trump admin's list of US-designated 'foreign terrorist' groups in Latin America expands to 21 *from the morgue, 11 Sep 2026*

· Top Trump official reveals how 30-minute military op unlocked Venezuela oil windfall for US buyers *from the morgue, 11 Sep 2026*

· Ex-Venezuelan first lady Cilia Flores seeks release from NYC jail, citing heart ailment *from the morgue, 11 Sep 2026*

· New York City protest once again demands release of Maduro and Flores *from the morgue, 11 Sep 2026*

· Trump Official Denies Stealing Venezuela's Oil One Hour After Boasting Country is 'Forced to Work' With US *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· 'Yet Another Trump Grift': Congress Called to Stop US Takeover of Venezuelan Oil Fields *from the morgue, 28 Aug 2026*

· The Biggest Oil Deal or Theft at Gunpoint? U.S. Claims Majority Control of Venezuela's Oil Reserves *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*

· Tehran threatens attacks after U.S. strikes Iranian tankers *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· US forces take out 3 Iranian oil tankers in retaliation *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· Oil prices up as Iran says it will expand control over Strait of Hormuz *from the morgue, 8 Sep 2026*

· Iran live updates: Trump speaks to MBS, says everything will 'work out fine' *from the morgue, 13 Sep 2026*

· Iran threatens retaliation against U.S. tanker strikes *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· U.S. gas prices hit record high for Labor Day *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· Ship tracking websites, including Kpler, MarineTraffic, and TankerTrackers, show that three Iranian oil tankers, including two from the National Iranian Tanker Company, have escaped the blockade that *from the morgue, 17 Jun 2026*

· Iranian state media reports that the United States Navy attempted to capture an Iranian oil tanker. The oil tanker was boarded, commandeered and then returned by Iranian NEDSA marines in a helicopter *from the morgue, 3 Nov 2021*

· US strikes Iranian rocket launchers in first attack since late July *from the morgue, 30 Aug 2026*

· An Iranian Navy commander claims on state television that the Iranian Navy forced a U.S. submarine to surface as it transited the Strait of Hormuz and that the submarine violated Iranian territorial w *from the morgue, 20 Apr 2023*

· Trump Threatens to Rename Strait of Hormuz for Himself as War Pushes Diesel Prices Toward Record High *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· Trump floats renaming Strait of Hormuz after himself *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· U.S. strikes targets in Iran near Strait of Hormuz as Iran says it is retaliating *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*

· Trump Hammered Over Iran War That Drove Gas Prices Above $4 Per Gallon Every Day in August for First Time Ever *from the morgue, 31 Aug 2026*

· 'Trump Did It!': At $5.85 a Gallon, Diesel Price Hits All-Time High in US Thanks to War on Iran *from the morgue, 4 Sep 2026*

· Price of diesel in U.S. hits record as Vance downplays Iran war impact *from the morgue, 4 Sep 2026*

· Diesel prices hit record high as wars disrupt supply *from the morgue, 4 Sep 2026*

· Trump vows response to Iran's retaliatory strikes: 'We're going to hit them hard' *from the morgue, 31 Aug 2026*

· Trump threatens Iran against retaliation for latest U.S. strikes *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*

· Live updates: US, Iran ramp up strikes; incumbents hold on in Massachusetts *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· Trump calls Iran conflict "small potatoes" *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· Labor Day gas prices are highest ever for holiday *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· How ‘Hypermilers’ Are Trying to Beat High Gas Prices *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· Fuel prices at record Labor Day high in US thanks to Iran War and refinery issues *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· Oil Prices Rise Slightly After U.S. and Iran Trade Strikes *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· USS Lincoln heads home as war with Iran escalates *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· Lawler disagrees with Trump on Iran war: 'It is certainly not small potatoes' *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· OPEC Plus to Keep Oil Production Steady *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· Iran War Has Cost the Average American More Than $1,200 Over Six Months, Economist Estimates *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*

· Trump says military conflict in Iran is 'small potatoes for us' *from the morgue, 4 Sep 2026*

· Wright: US has 'a lot of leverage' in Venezuela after oil deal reached *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· White House unveils new details of Venezuela agreement *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*

· Chris Wright explains how Venezuelan crude will ‘fill’ the Strategic Petroleum Reserve *from the morgue, 4 Sep 2026*

· Energy Secretary Wright says Venezuela oil deal will bring down gas prices in a year or two *from the morgue, 4 Sep 2026*

· Chevron to expand in Venezuela, days after the U.S. and Venezuela strike oil deal *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· Venezuelan oil flows will lower gas prices in 12-24 months, Wright says in Caracas *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· Trump says Venezuelan oil will replenish Strategic Petroleum Reserves *from the morgue, 31 Aug 2026*

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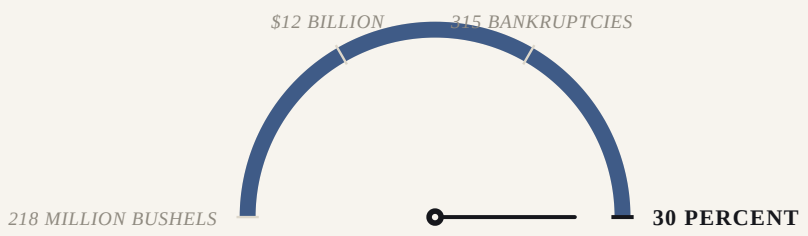
§68 — 21 OCTOBER 2026

On winning

BY LOU
The Word

DEMOCRAT



30 PERCENT

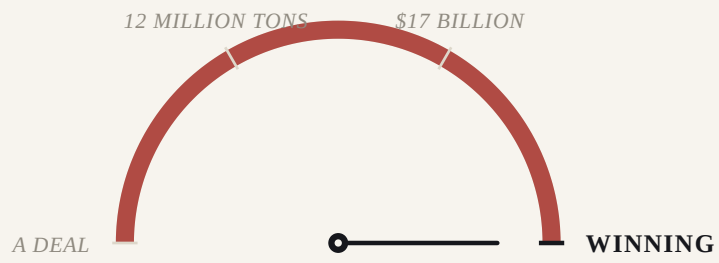
What it cost. From January through August 2025, U.S. soybean exports to China totaled 218 million bushels, against 985 million in the same months of 2024 [1]. In December the Agriculture Department announced $12 billion in aid, $11 billion of it Farmer Bridge Assistance, paying soybean growers $30.88 an acre [2]. Chapter 12 farm bankruptcies reached 315 in 2025, up from 216 the year before, a 46 percent rise [3].

And the income line. USDA projects 2026 net farm income at $158.4 billion, down 2.6 percent, or 5.5 percent after inflation [4]. Direct government payments are forecast at $47.4 billion, up nearly 70 percent — about 30 percent of net farm income [5]. The promise was that farmers would get tired of winning. Nearly a third of what they take home now arrives as a check from Washington.

SOURCES

1. "From January through August 2025, U.S. soybean exports to China totaled just 218 million bushels, down sharply from 985 million bushels in 2024" — American Farm Bureau Federation, 2 October 2025 ↑
2. $12 billion in aid: $11 billion in Farmer Bridge Assistance and $1 billion for specialty crops and sugar; soybeans at $30.88 per acre — American Farm Bureau Federation, 8 December 2025 ↑
3. Chapter 12 farm bankruptcies: 315 in 2025, 216 in 2024, up 46 percent — American Farm Bureau Federation, 9 February 2026 ↑
4. 2026 net farm income forecast at $158.4 billion, down 2.6 percent (5.5 percent inflation-adjusted) — USDA Economic Research Service, 3 September 2026 ↑
5. Direct government payments of $47.4 billion, up nearly 70 percent, about 30 percent of net farm income — American Farm Bureau Federation, 3 September 2026 ↑

REPUBLICAN



WINNING

The promise, at a rally in The Woodlands, Texas, in June 2016: Americans would win so much they "are gonna get sick of it" [1]. For farmers, the administration's best receipts are the deals with China. Beijing met its pledge of 12 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans by January [2]. In May the White House announced China would "purchase at least $17 billion per year of U.S. agricultural products in 2026 (prorated), 2027, and 2028" [3].

That is a real case. A trade war is supposed to end in purchases, and there are purchases, on paper and in the ports. A farmer who sold into China again this spring can say something came of it. What it cost to get there, and who covered the difference, is on the other side.

SOURCES

1. Americans "are gonna get sick of it" — rally in The Woodlands, Texas — CBS News, 18 June 2016 ↑
2. China reached its pledge to buy 12 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans — Farm Policy News, citing Reuters, January 2026 ↑
3. China to "purchase at least $17 billion per year of U.S. agricultural products in 2026 (prorated), 2027, and 2028" — White House fact sheet, 17 May 2026 ↑

"My brother-in-law has a farm, a small one, soybeans mostly, and he keeps his papers in a coffee can. January through August 2024: nine hundred eighty-five million bushels to China. Same months in 2025: two hundred eighteen. Then a letter about the aid — thirty dollars and eighty-eight cents an acre for soybeans. Then the bankruptcy figures he reads every February, and he doesn't like reading them: three hundred fifteen, up from two sixteen. Sorry — I know you're busy. He's supposed to be sick of winning. What part of the coffee can is the winning?" — Lou

"So much winning you'd get sick of it, he said. The soybean farmers got sick first: two hundred eighteen million bushels to China through August of last year, down from nine hundred eighty-five. Then twelve billion in aid, then farm bankruptcies up forty-six percent, and this year government checks are about thirty percent of what a farm takes home. That's not winning. That's a subscription."

— Sal

"The farmers are winning so much that the government has to send them checks to help them cope with all the winning, which is thirty percent of their income, which is thirty percent more winning than they had before."

— Chip

The Word today — 👍 👎