The Single-Column Edition

FROM § EACH

WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2026 — THE EVENING EDITION FREE, FOREVER

Trump's promise to wait until after the midterms reaches Tehran, which doesn't believe it, 13 days out.

BY LOU
One More Question

You run a smart operation. I mean that straight, no needle in it. Whoever keeps the calendar over there — the war room, the political shop, whoever decides which Tuesday carries the bad news — they know their business. A smart operation does not make the mistake sitting quietly on page nine of today's paper, between the oil numbers and the weather. I want to walk through it slow, because it took me a few readings myself.

Start on September 1st. Iran's president, a man named Pezeshkian, told the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Kyrgyzstan that his country would go back to the ceasefire reached with the United States in June, if Washington did the same — this after a report that it was the U.S., not Iran, that had broken that ceasefire first. That's not my read. That's what came across the wire that day.

Sixteen days later, on the 17th, word went out that the president would sit down with Gulf leaders at the UN General Assembly to talk through what the report called "postwar strategy" — while the war itself was still very much on.

Eleven days after that — September 28th — two things happened, same

... Continued on Page A219

THE WORD

§68 — 21 OCTOBER 2026

On winning

DEMOCRAT

30 PERCENT

REPUBLICAN

WINNING

"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

... Continued on Page W68

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

THE HOUSE IS A PARK

The house costs $15.5 million a year to run and $600 million this year to add a room; Congress voted on the first number.

... Continued on the Investigative Reporting page

Noncitizen-vote dragnet subpoenas a secretary of state, sends armed agents door to door, charges one voter in Indiana.

BY LOU
One More Question

You people are good at this. I mean that plainly — no edge in it. A smart operation doesn't leave the mismatch sitting out on page nine of its own filings where anybody with a notebook could find it, and I don't think this one left it out by accident. Let me find where I wrote it down.

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September nineteenth. The NAACP and a coalition of civil rights groups sued the other direction, asking a federal court to keep armed agents away from polling places in November, on the theory that an armed agent near a ballot box intimidates the people who are allowed to be there same as the people who aren't. Two lawsuits, same month, aimed at each other across the same subject. I underlined that part.

... Continued on Page B43

Vance says he's disgusted by Republicans criticizing the ad, not by what the ad says.

BY RUTH
The Money Desk

On September 8th, Amy Acton was thanking first responders after someone tried to attack her in person. By September 16th, independent polling already had her ahead of Vivek Ramaswamy. NPR filed the race, on September 27th, as the rare seat Democrats might actually flip in Ohio. On October 5th, the Times called it the ugliest campaign in the country, pointing to ads calling one candidate a con artist and the other a drunk.

Then Ramaswamy's campaign put Acton's estranged mother on camera. Donna Arthur calls her own daughter a liar. The ad names the stepfather who abused Acton as a child — the same stepfather Arthur stayed married to after his arrest, after the state took her children away. Acton's brother called it a despicable low. Meghan McCain, a sitting Republican senator's daughter, condemned it from the other end of the same party. Ramaswamy confirmed his campaign built it, called that ownership "responsibility," then filed the number that matters on this desk: four million more dollars, to keep it airing.

Jon Husted, Ohio's own Republican senator, told the AP on Wednesday he

... Continued on Page F123

Meta's $25 billion fine is one-ninth of what the law actually allowed.

BY RUTH
The Money Desk

Judge Francis Mathew signed the order in Santa Fe on Wednesday: $25 billion, the largest sum a court has ordered Meta to pay, after a jury found the company misled users for years about what happened to their data. Attorney General Raúl Torrez's office called it one of the largest corporate penalties in American history. The same case record carries the other number: state law allowed up to $219.5 billion. Twenty-five billion comes to about eleven cents of that dollar.

This is not the first invoice for the same conduct. The Federal Trade Commission fined Meta $5 billion in 2019 over the identical Cambridge Analytica breach — the breach that became public eight years ago this spring, when a consulting firm working for the 2016 Trump campaign was found to have pulled the data of tens of millions of Facebook users without asking them.

Eight weeks before this verdict, forty-seven states closed a different account: up to $17.1 billion for building Instagram and Facebook to addict children. California's attorney general said the deal would make the platforms

... Continued on Page F123

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

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. That's rather the word for what I did to my own closing stanza, if we're trading retakings.*

Gary *Retaken. You retook a stanza. I could retake the back door with a crow-*

... 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. 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.

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

... Continued on Page A219

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. 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 any-

... Continued on Page A219

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.

The tinkerer sets the next part of the mechanism on the bench. On 21 October Russia released Stephen Hubbard, a 74-year-old retired school-

... Continued on Page A218

"Nothing up there is a conspiracy. That's the part that should worry you — it's all on the record, filed, stamped, and in a couple of cases notarized."

— *Sal*

"Nothing here is a scandal. A scandal requires surprise, and I can assure you nobody involved was surprised."

— *Chip*

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

ENOCH · THE OWNERSHIP DESK

THE DRAGNET

Noncitizen-vote dragnet subpoenas a secretary of state, sends armed agents door to door, charges one voter in Indiana.

By LOU
ONE MORE QUESTION

"House Republicans subpoena New Jersey secretary of state over noncitizen voter registration", 21 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA WASHINGTON EXAMINER — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Homeland Security agents canvassed homes on citizenship and voting status; House Republicans subpoenaed New Jersey's election chief.

WHO GETS PAID. House Republicans and the Justice Department gain leverage over state voter rolls heading into the midterms.

WHAT SLIPS. Local election officials lose independent control of their own voter rolls to federal subpoenas and armed home visits.

WHAT'S NEXT. If this pattern holds, the rejections and the fear come now and the fix comes after the vote; that is what Texas got after 1 March 2022: a new ID rule drove mail-ballot rejections to 12.4 percent before they fell to 1.78 percent by the 4 November general, months of litigation and voter education later.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

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Then the list. Twenty thousand names out of Los Angeles County, called "likely noncitizens" by the office that compiled it. I have the county's own preliminary number here — a high percentage of that twenty thousand were born in this country. Born here. And the county says, on the record, that it has no independent way to confirm citizenship for any voter on that list, or off it. Six days later Texas told a judge its own registration system had failed — six hundred thousand applications backed up, days before early voting opened. Does that backlog have anything to do with citizenship? Nothing in the lawsuit says it does. I wrote it down anyway.

This week it got a body to it. Agents from Homeland Security, armed, in uniform, started knocking on doors asking people whether they were citizens and whether they were registered to vote. The House Judiciary Committee subpoenaed New Jersey's acting secretary of state the same week, over sixty-six hundred names somebody flagged on that state's rolls. Twenty thousand in California. Sixty-six hundred in New Jersey. Twenty-six thousand six hundred names, two states, one week.

And then Indiana, which I kept separate because it's the only number in this whole stack with a courtroom attached to it. A charge, filed Wednesday, against one person, for voting in four federal elections. One. I checked the page twice because I was sure I'd copied it wrong. I hadn't.

My car needs a fan belt again, which has nothing to do with any of this except that I was sitting in the lot waiting on the part when I did the arithmetic. Twenty-six thousand six hundred names between two states this week. One case anybody has actually walked into a courtroom with. Does an operation this size need an armed agent at a door to find out what a county already told it in its preliminary read — that most of the twenty thousand were born here? Does a subpoena answer a number, or does it just move the number into a different building?

Across every list in this story, state and federal — California's twenty thousand, New Jersey's sixty-six hundred — Indiana's got the only one that's become an actual charge in a courtroom. The agency knocking on doors hasn't produced one yet. The agency being subpoenaed hasn't produced one yet. Which of these three things has actually gone to court this week, and which two are still just lists? Oh — before you go. Page nine. The one I said I couldn't find at the start. It was Indiana's docket number, and it was sitting right on top the whole time.

❦ FROM THE CORNER ❦

DUTCH

TWO STATES, TWENTY-SIX THOUSAND NAMES FLAGGED AS LIKELY NONCITIZENS, AND AFTER Homeland Security sent armed agents to knock on doors and House Republicans subpoenaed a secretary of state, the government's own running count of confirmed cases stands at one voter, charged this week in Indiana. That isn't a fraud investigation, it's an enforcement budget that needed a receipt and found exactly one the whole operation could afford. Because a prosecution costs more than a doorbell, the agents go to doors instead of courtrooms; because a list travels faster than a verdict, the list becomes the news instead of the case; and because somebody has to be on the other end of all that knocking, the search ends on the ballot already addressed to you, sitting in your mailbox with your name printed on the front.

🍺

"They sent armed federal agents knocking on doors and subpoenaed a sitting secretary of state to chase down twenty-six thousand names across two states, and the total haul is one guy in Indiana. This isn't a fraud investigation, it's a turnout tax — the doorbell is the point, not the conviction. You don't need twenty thousand cases to scare off a hundred thousand voters, you just need the knock."
— Sal

🚬

"One confirmed case out of twenty-six thousand names proves the system catches cheats exactly when it's supposed to — that's not a failure, that's proof of concept. The armed agents at the door and the subpoena to New Jersey are just due diligence, not intimidation, it's — did I just call armed federal agents showing up at your door "due diligence"? That doesn't sound like me."
— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

— *DOJ sues California over 'noncitizen' voter list where a high percentage are US-born* By Lou · the morning edition, 21 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

House Republicans subpoena New Jersey secretary of state over noncitizen voter registration
Washington Examiner RIGHT § *16:25 EDT*

Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee and House Committee on Administration issued a subpoena to Gov. Mikie Sherrill's (D-NJ) acting secretary of state on Wednesday, seeking more information about the state's noncitizen voter registration scandal. The subpoena is the latest development in the saga over the 6,600 noncitizens who...

~~Texas sued after glitch delays almost 600,000 voter registrations~~
Texas's own system crashed — 600,000 registrations stuck days before early voting, suit says
The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *13:49 EDT*

Voting registration organizations accuse Texas officials of failing to ensure eligible voters can register properly Texas election officials are struggling to process a massive backlog of nearly 600,000 voter registration applications after a major state computer system failure, just days before early voting is set to open on Monday and...

Lawsuit: L.A. Officials Accept Any Voter's Citizenship Claims Despite Records Of Illegal Voting
The Federalist RIGHT § *14:36 EDT*

Voters Los Angeles won't verify are citizens have already been sent ballots as part of California's midterm election season, which lasts an entire month.

Indiana AG: Illegal Alien Voted In 4 Federal Elections
The Federalist RIGHT § *17:02 EDT*

Authorities charged an alleged illegal alien Wednesday with illegally registering to vote and voting in multiple elections. The charges come amid an ongoing legacy media campaign to undermine enforcement of voting laws, in part by claiming noncitizen voting rarely or never occurs. Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita announced alongside...

But: Republicans' reconciliation package puts $70 billion into ICE's department *NBC News, May 2026*
Armed federal agents knock on doors looking for noncitizen voters
CBS News MAINSTREAM § *14:20 EDT*

Armed and in uniform, agents from the Department of Homeland Security have been knocking on doors to ask residents about their immigration status whether they're registered to vote.

· NAACP Sues to Stop Trump From Sending Armed Agents to 'Intimidate' Minority Voters at Polls *from the morgue, 19 Sep 2026*

· DOJ asks Supreme Court to unblock voter database linking Social Security and citizenship records *from the morgue, 8 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.

Vance says he's disgusted by Republicans criticizing the ad, not by what the ad says.

By RUTH
THE MONEY DESK

"Ohio governor's race turns ugly with attack ad featuring candidate's estranged mother", 21 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA BBC NEWS — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ **THE SHORT VERSION**

typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Vice President JD Vance told Republicans criticizing Ramaswamy's ad to stop whining and called it disgusting that they did.

WHO GETS PAID. Ramaswamy's own campaign, which paid four million dollars more to keep the ad running statewide.

WHAT SLIPS. The one check that might stop it — Republican senators calling the ad false, not just tasteless — does not happen.

WHAT'S NEXT. If Republicans who object keep getting called the problem, that is what happened in Kentucky after 19 May 2026: Representative Thomas Massie lost his primary after the party ran a challenger against him.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

On September 8th, Amy Acton was thanking first responders after someone tried to attack her in person. By September 16th, independent polling already had her ahead of Vivek Ramaswamy. NPR filed the race, on September 27th, as the rare seat Democrats might actually flip in Ohio. On October 5th, the Times called it the ugliest campaign in the country, pointing to ads calling one candidate a con artist and the other a drunk.

Then Ramaswamy's campaign put Acton's estranged mother on camera. Donna Arthur calls her own daughter a liar. The ad names the stepfather who abused Acton as a child — the same stepfather Arthur stayed married to after his arrest, after the state took her children away. Acton's brother called it a despicable low. Meghan McCain, a sitting Republican senator's daughter, condemned it from the other end of the same party. Ramaswamy confirmed his campaign built it, called that ownership "responsibility," then filed the number that matters on this desk: four million more dollars, to keep it airing....

...(cont) Jon Husted, Ohio's own Republican senator, told the AP on Wednesday he "would not have run" the ad. Vice President Vance said Wednesday too: he is "a little bit disgusted," he said — not at the ad, at the Republicans criticizing it — and he told them to stop whining. National Review's headline reminded voters why they never liked Ramaswamy in the first place; the dek called the ad bad taste. The magazine ran no dollar figure under that verdict, hon. The campaign did: four million, still on the air, same as Tuesday. Byron York told Hugh Hewitt's radio audience the ad was "really weird" and predicted it would not move the race at all — which, if true, raises the question of what the four million is buying.

Acton answered that question herself. She told Truthout her mother's then-husband sexually assaulted her as a child, and that Ramaswamy's campaign is spending money to put that fact in her opponent's mouth instead of in a courtroom record. The BBC carried the ad to readers in Britain under one headline: the race has turned ugly. From this desk it is simpler than ugly. It is four million dollars, still on the air, and a vice president's definition of disgusting — aimed at the Republicans who objected, not at the ad they objected to.

"They call it disgusting when one of their own senators says he wouldn't have run the ad — not when the ad puts a child's abuser on television to call his victim a liar. Follow the four million: that number doesn't shrink after a senator complains, it goes up. Parents in Ohio are the ones explaining this ad to their kids tonight."

— Sal

"Negative ads are nothing new in this business — nobody scripted what the mother says, she's on tape in her own words. Vance has a point that some of this is just Republicans getting squeamish about hardball... though I guess "hardball" isn't usually run through a stepfather's rap sheet — did I say that? That's not — forget I said that."

— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

- *Ramaswamy's campaign faces bipartisan condemnation, answers with $4 million more.* By Ruth · the morning edition, 21 October 2026
- *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 governor's race turns ugly with attack ad featuring candidate's estranged mother~~

Candidate's ad has his opponent's mother call her 'a liar'

BBC News MAINSTREAM § *13:48 EDT*

The Democratic candidate has been estranged from her mother since childhood after her stepfather was charged with sexual abuse.

Vivek Ramaswamy Reminds Voters Why They Never Liked Him

National Review RIGHT § *15:13 EDT*

A staggering act of bad taste.

'Stop whining': Vance doubles down over Ramaswamy campaign ad – video

The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *15:34 EDT*

JD Vance, the vice-president, criticized Republicans who have spoken out against a controversial campaign ad from Ohio gubernatorial candidate Vivek Ramaswamy. The ad features the mother of his Democratic opponent, Amy Acton, calling her daughter a liar. In a Tuesday statement, Acton's brother, Philip Stearns, said his sister is...

Vance says he's disgusted with GOP "whining" over anti-Acton ad with her estranged mother

CBS News MAINSTREAM § *14:37 EDT*

Vice President JD Vance said Wednesday he's "disgusted" with Republicans "whining" over an attack ad from Vivek Ramaswamy in the Ohio governor's race featuring Amy Acton's estranged mother. Acton's mother, Donna Arthur, whose husband was accused of raping Acton when she was a child, calls Acton a liar in the ad.

JD Vance says he is 'a little bit disgusted' by Republicans who criticized Ramaswamy campaign ad – live

The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *17:37 EDT*

Vice-president says GOP representatives should 'stop whining' about advertisement featuring estranged mother of Ramaswamy's Democrat opponent Sign up for Breaking News US email Send us your questions about immigration and the midterms Reporting from Jerusalem The Israeli military has detained about 80 US, Israeli and British volunteers...

Acton Says Ramaswamy Exploited Her Estranged Mother for Political Gain

Truthout § *14:36 EDT*

Ohio gubernatorial candidate Amy Acton accused her mother's then-husband of sexual assault when she was a child.

Ad featuring Acton's mother is 'really weird' and unlikely to play role in Ohio governor's race: Byron York

Washington Examiner RIGHT § *15:03 EDT*

Washington Examiner chief political correspondent Byron York said the recent attack ad against Democratic gubernatorial candidate Amy Acton, featuring her estranged mother calling her a liar, was unsettling. "You know, when I saw this, I thought, there's something really weird about this," York said Tuesday on The Hugh Hewitt Show.

Ohio GOP senator: 'I would not have run' Ramaswamy ad

The Hill MAINSTREAM § *16:40 EDT*

Ohio Sen. Jon Husted (R) pushed back on a controversial campaign ad run by Ohio gubernatorial nominee Vivek Ramaswamy (R) featuring his opponent's mother. In a statement to The Associated Press on Wednesday, Husted said he "would not have run"

· The Campaign for Ohio's Next Governor May Be the Ugliest in the Country *from the morgue, 5 Oct 2026*

· Ohio gubernatorial hopeful Amy Acton thanks first responders after attempted attack *from the morgue, 8 Sep 2026*

· Ohio governor's race: Ramaswamy and Acton clash in rare Democratic pickup opportunity *from the morgue, 27 Sep 2026*

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THE TALLY

Meta's $25 billion fine is one-ninth of what the law actually allowed.

By RUTH
THE MONEY DESK

"Meta fined $25bn for 'lies' over user data privacy", 21 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA BBC NEWS — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. A New Mexico jury found Meta lied to users about data privacy, and a judge ordered it to pay.

WHO GETS PAID. Trump's political operation, which took millions from Meta the month the Justice Department closed its Meta probe.

WHAT SLIPS. Federal oversight of Meta slips: the Justice Department closed its own criminal probe, leaving one state jury verdict as the only check on the company.

WHAT'S NEXT. No appeal date is set for the $25 billion order; the Justice Department's own Meta probe is already closed for good this month.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Judge Francis Mathew signed the order in Santa Fe on Wednesday: $25 billion, the largest sum a court has ordered Meta to pay, after a jury found the company misled users for years about what happened to their data. Attorney General Raúl Torrez's office called it one of the largest corporate penalties in American history. The same case record carries the other number: state law allowed up to $219.5 billion. Twenty-five billion comes to about eleven cents of that dollar.

This is not the first invoice for the same conduct. The Federal Trade Commission fined Meta $5 billion in 2019 over the identical Cambridge Analytica breach — the breach that became public eight years ago this spring, when a consulting firm working for the 2016 Trump campaign was found to have pulled the data of tens of millions of Facebook users without asking them....

...(cont) Eight weeks before this verdict, forty-seven states closed a different account: up to $17.1 billion for building Instagram and Facebook to addict children. California's attorney general said the deal would make the platforms "less dangerous for our kids." Three weeks later, the real math arrived: Meta made $130 billion off the same underage users in the period it was being sued for exploiting them. The settlement covers about thirteen cents of every profit dollar. Hon, that is not a penalty, that is a cost of doing business, filed on time.

The company keeps the other side of its ledger open too. Senate Democrats wrote Meta on October 14th that it had used a research-and-development tax credit — written for laboratories, not warehouses — to cut $6.6 billion off its federal tax bill for the data centers it is building to run on exactly the kind of user data this trial says it took without consent.

Two days after that letter, Bloomberg Law reported that Justice Department leadership ordered prosecutors in the Western District of Virginia to close a separate, years-old criminal investigation into Meta over allegedly profiting from illegal drug sales on its platforms — after lobbying from Meta's own legal team, and after the company's money reached President Trump's political operation. Five days after that, a New Mexico jury did what the Justice Department had just declined to.

Add up what is open on the books this month: one federal probe closed, one 2019 fine of $5 billion, one child-safety settlement running about thirteen cents on the profit dollar, one tax credit worth $6.6 billion, and one $25 billion order a state calls historic and the statute calls a fraction. Only one number moved money out of Meta toward the public this week. It came from a jury, not a department.

❦ FROM THE CORNER ❦

DUTCH

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CLOSED A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION INTO META OVER ILLEGAL drug sales to children on its platforms on October 16th, five days before a New Mexico jury ordered Meta to pay $25 billion in a separate privacy case. That is not prosecutorial discretion, it's a purchase: the federal case vanished the same week Meta's money reached President Trump's political operation, and the only number that survived was a jury's, not a department's. Because the agency built to police drug sales to children on Meta's platforms just closed that file, and because nothing federal stands behind it now, the only check left on what lands in a kid's feed is whoever opens the backpack and checks the phone first.

"They handed Meta the biggest fine they've ever handed it and called it historic, except the law said they could've taken nine times that — call it what it is, a tip jar. Same month, the Justice Department killed its own criminal case on Meta over drug sales to kids, right around when the money Meta sent to Trump's political operation got reported. The only check that actually landed on Meta this week came from twelve people in a jury box, not from the agency whose whole job was to do it first."

— Sal

"Twenty-five billion dollars — that's real accountability, that's the system working, full stop. Did the Justice Department also just drop an actual criminal investigation into the same company? Sure, but that's prosecutorial discretion, that's unrelated, that's — okay, even I don't love how that sounds."

— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

— *Venezuelan billionaire's daughter hires Trump lawyer Alina Habba; billionaire gets pardon shortly after.* By Ruth · the morning edition, 21 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

Meta fined $25bn for 'lies' over user data privacy

BBC News MAINSTREAM § *17:49 EDT*

The fine is the largest to date against Facebook's owner, larger than an $18bn deal with California.

~~Meta Under Fire for Exploiting Tax Credit to Save Billions on AI Data Center Bonanza~~

Meta dodged $6.6 billion in taxes using an R&D credit - over 10% of all US research credits claimed

Common Dreams § *15:01 EDT*

A group of Democratic senators wrote Tuesday that Meta is violating "the spirit and, potentially, the letter" of federal tax law by using a research and development tax credit to save billions of dollars on its massive data center buildout. In a letter to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the Senate Democrats noted that the $1.9 trillion company...

Meta Ordered to Pay $25 Billion Over Cambridge Analytica Privacy Violations

The New York Times MAINSTREAM § *16:37 EDT*

The penalty, one of the largest levied against the tech giant, stemmed from a lawsuit by New Mexico claiming the social media company had misled users about their data privacy.

Meta ordered to pay $25 billion to New Mexico in data privacy ruling

CBS News MAINSTREAM § *15:52 EDT*

A jury found that the social media company had deceived consumers for years about its data privacy policies.

Meta ordered to pay $25bn to New Mexico in Cambridge Analytica data-privacy case

The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *14:34 EDT*

Jury had found Meta misled consumers after Trump's 2016 presidential campaign obtained user data without consent A judge in New Mexico ordered Meta Platforms to pay $25bn on Wednesday after a jury found the company had misled consumers in a case arising from allegations that a political consulting firm involved in Donald Trump 's 2016...

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

'What Meta's Money Is Buying': DOJ Halts Probe of Facebook Owner That Has Given Trump Millions

Common Dreams § *14:44 EDT*

Top officials at the US Department of Justice have reportedly halted a years-long criminal investigation into Facebook parent company Meta for allegedly facilitating—and profiting from—the illegal sale of drugs on its platforms, including to children. Bloomberg Law reported Thursday that "senior leaders" at the Justice Department...

Meta hit with $25 billion penalty over Cambridge Analytica data privacy violations

Washington Examiner RIGHT § *15:21 EDT*

A New Mexico court ordered Meta, the parent company of Facebook, to pay a $25 billion penalty over data privacy violations connected to the Cambridge Analytica scandal. The whopping penalty comes more than eight years after the stories of the data-harvesting scandal first broke and sparked political uproar in the United States....

~~'Historic Day': New Mexico Judge Orders Meta to Pay $25 Billion in Data Privacy Case~~

Meta's 'historic' $25 billion fine is about 11% of what the law allowed

Common Dreams § *17:14 EDT*

A New Mexico judge on Wednesday ordered Meta to pay $25 billion for misleading users about data privacy—and while state Attorney General Raúl Torrez's office touted it as "one of the largest financial penalties against a corporation in US history," it's also just a fraction of the $219.5 billion warranted under the law. The case stems...

· Child safety pays: Meta paid $17 billion for exploiting children — and made $130 billion doing it *from the morgue, 14 Sep 2026*

· As Meta Agrees to $17B Settlement, Now Is the Time to Regulate AI Before It's Too Late: Amba Kak *from the morgue, 27 Aug 2026*

· $17 Billion Meta Settlement 'Will Make Social Media Less Dangerous for Our Kids,' Says California AG *from the morgue, 26 Aug 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.

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

By THE LODGERS
THE EURO DESK

“France has fallen. America can’t be next”, 21 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA WASHINGTON EXAMINER — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ **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.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

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. That's rather the word for what I did to my own closing stanza, if we're trading retakings.*

Gary *Retaken. You retook a stanza. I could retake the back door with a crowbar before lunch and have something to show the house for it.*

Now the filling arrives fully cooked. On Wednesday the New York Post served looting, buildings on fire and thousands of arrests under the heading 'Anarchy in France,' and the Washington Examiner answered with 'France has fallen. America can't be next,' putting 'protesters' and 'protesting' in quotation marks, the way one holds a thing one does not believe. Macron, visiting Doha, called the comments 'stupid' and 'unacceptable,' and said there was no evidence foreign actors had instigated the protests. He warned the French public of 'foreign manipulation' in the same breath. You will be looking for the evidence under that warning. There is none in this kitchen; the warning is what stands in for it.

Keith *Evidence. I don't need evidence, I need a market. Two leaders trading insults over a riot, I could sell that twice before Thursday.*

Le Monde, which is what they read there, prints it plainest: Trump's camp 'exploiting' France's riots to energize the MAGA base, the violence of October seventeenth turned to warnings about immigration and Muslims, timed to a Democratic win in Congress that would supposedly expose America to the same dangers.

It serves Trump's campaign a closing argument thirteen days before Americans vote. The bill for the filling goes first to the thousands already arrested in France, and then to whatever the Americans themselves decide on November third.

Rob *Not much notice, is it. Less than the landlord gave us about the meter, and at least the French get arrested for their trouble.*

“A guy picks a riot in another country to scare voters about his own, and the ally's own newspaper says flat out it's strategy for turnout. Macron, who actually watched the fires, calls it stupid. That's the tell: when the threat on your screen is further from your house than the rent you can't make, somebody's selling you a fire so you won't look at the one at home.”

— Sal

“He's not blaming France, he's just pointing out a pattern — riots over there, Democrats over here, connect the dots yourself. Macron calling it "stupid" is pretty rich coming from the guy whose own capital's on fire — wait, did I just say his capital's on fire? That's not — that's a separate issue.”

— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

- *Trump calls Paris riots a preview of Democratic Congress, two weeks before voters decide.* By Ruth · the afternoon edition, 20 October 2026
- *Kansas rally recasts French school-funding protest as migrants, jihadists and communists, two weeks before Republicans face voters.* By Ruth · the morning edition, 20 October 2026
- *The $5,000 promise ships this month as a $90 check, less than half one Medicare premium* By Mort · the midnight edition, 4 October 2026
- *Trump priced a Republican Congress at $5,000 an adult; the checks mailing this month are $90.* By Mort · the noon edition, 3 October 2026
- *Putin pitches oil deal to Trump's son-in-law, the man negotiating peace with Putin.* By Ruth · the sunrise edition, 3 October 2026
- *Seniors get $90 once; the president's oil stocks gain up to $4.4 million from the war.* By Ruth · the wee small hours edition, 3 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

But: Teachers spent an average of $895 of their own money on classroom supplies last school year *AdoptAClassroom.org 2025 Teacher Spending Survey*

France has fallen. America can’t be next

Washington Examiner RIGHT § *10:19 EDT*

Since it’s a day that ends in “day,” the French seem busy doing what they do best: expressing their political dissatisfaction by having a good old-fashioned riot. This time (according to the legacy media), the “protesters”

~~How Trump's camp is exploiting France's riots to energize the MAGA base~~

13 days before the vote, Trump turns Paris riots into a campaign ad

Le Monde MAINSTREAM § *02:26 EDT*

The US president and his inner circle have repeatedly used the violence of October 17 to denounce immigration and Muslims, warning that a Democratic victory in the midterm elections on November 3 would expose the United States to the same dangers.

~~'The Government Is Trembling': Protests Erupt in France, Spreading to 140 Cities~~

'The Ultra-Rich Have Taken More and More': French Protests Spread to 140 Cities

Common Dreams § *12:53 EDT*

Protests erupted throughout France on Saturday, with demonstrators citing a wide variety of grievances including inequality, the high cost of living, and poor conditions in the nation's schools. As reported by Agence France-Presse, tens of thousands of demonstrators marched in Paris and other cities to protest what they said was inaction...

Macron slams Trump for ‘stupid’ comments about French riots and warns public of ‘foreign manipulation’

Washington Examiner RIGHT § *11:25 EDT*

French President Emmanuel Macron accused President Donald Trump of making “stupid” and “unacceptable” comments about the riots that have ravaged Paris, accusing him of twisting the chaos for his own political gain.

~~The Bastille Has Been Retaken~~

Rats in the classrooms, no teacher for 6 months, French student says — 71,500 marched

The Bullet § *08:00 EDT*

High school students across France on Thursday once again took to the streets to protest against against the state of the country’s schools.

But: Teachers spent an average of $895 of their own money on classroom supplies last school year *AdoptAClassroom.org 2025 Teacher Spending Survey*

Anarchy in France: Behind the riots and violent protests

New York Post RIGHT § *10:11 EDT*

Looting, rioting, and entire buildings going up in flames. These are the scenes that have poured out of France over the weekend showing anarchy nationwide, leading to thousands of arrests. The riots, initially attributed to discontent over the state of education and the high cost of living, come as furious students all over the world...

Macron says violent rioters will be ‘prosecuted and punished’ as buildings burn in France

Washington Examiner RIGHT § *17:18 EDT*

French President Emmanuel Macron released a statement on Saturday afternoon denouncing violent rioters who defaced national landmarks and attacked law enforcement officers in an escalation of protests that began last month. “No room for violence in our Republic,” he said, referencing the increasingly hostile clashes between protesters...

· Macron scoffs at Trump arch rivalry: ‘Monuments are bigger than ourselves’ *from the morgue, 23 Sep 2026*

· French student riots spill across Europe as Belgian minister attributes violence to antifa *from the morgue, 8 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.

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*

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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

"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
— *Rubio insists Patriots weren't "deliberately denied"; Hegseth admits "our guys" need them too.* By Lou · the afternoon edition, 20 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.

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 U.S.-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 occasions *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~~

Muck out 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*

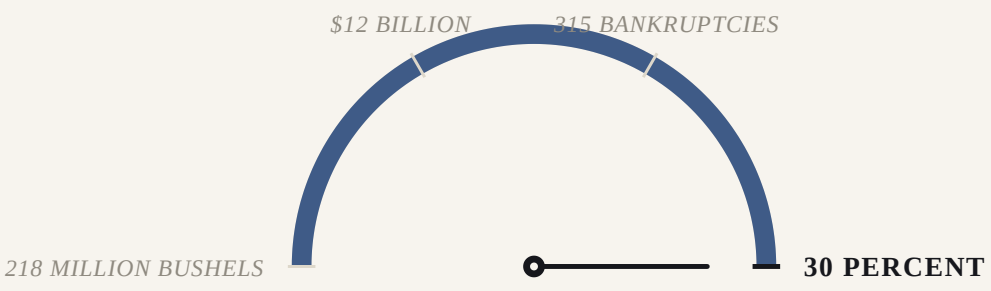
This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

§68 — 21 OCTOBER 2026

On winning

BY LOU
The Word

DEMOCRAT



30 PERCENT

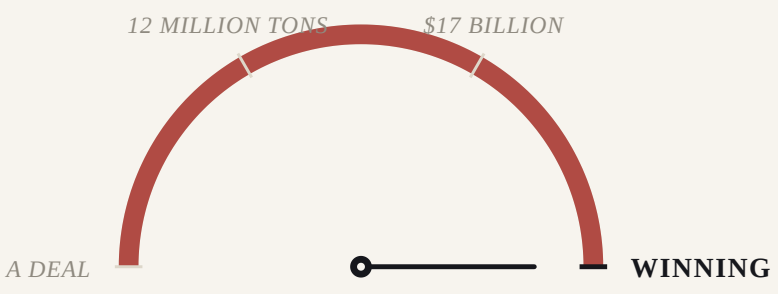
What it cost. From January through August 2025, U.S. soybean exports to China totaled 218 million bushels, against 985 million in the same months of 2024 [1]. In December the Agriculture Department announced $12 billion in aid, $11 billion of it Farmer Bridge Assistance, paying soybean growers $30.88 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

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“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

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“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 — 👍 👎