

CLAWS Newsletter



America Decoded | Volume I | Issue 04

by Yuvvraj Singh

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. Political Tensions Mount Over Trump's Chicago Crackdown Plans ([Wall Street Journal, August 16](#))

President Trump has signaled that Chicago is likely the next city targeted in his federal “crackdown on crime,” following recent deployments of National Guard troops to Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. Describing Chicago as “a mess,” Trump suggested residents are demanding federal intervention to restore order, though he acknowledged no formal action has yet been initiated. His announcement has immediately drawn strong criticism from local leadership. Mayor Brandon Johnson emphasized that crime in the city has been on the decline and opposed military involvement, while Illinois Governor JB Pritzker denounced the proposal as an overreach of federal power.

2. Massive National Guard Deployment in D.C. ([ABC News, August 17](#))

ABC News reported that hundreds more National Guard troops were expected to arrive in Washington, D.C. in the coming days. These additional forces, joining the 800 DC-based Guard members already activated by President Trump, were being sent from at least four Republican-led states, including West Virginia, Mississippi, Ohio, and South Carolina. State authorities confirmed that the total deployment was anticipated to exceed 1,700 troops. The newly arriving guardsmen were unarmed and not authorized to make arrests; their role was to support federal law enforcement tasks such as protecting federal property and potentially assisting in detention only until local police could assume responsibility.

3. Tulsi Gabbard Slashes National Intelligence Staff by 40% ([Associated Press, August 20](#))

In late August 2025, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) announced a sweeping overhaul under Director Tulsi Gabbard, with plans to slash over 40% of its workforce and eliminate more than \$700 million in annual funding. Gabbard framed the cuts as necessary to eliminate inefficiencies, unauthorized leaks, and the “weaponization” of intelligence, emphasizing the need for a streamlined, mission-focused agency. A key facet of the reorganization involves dissolving the Foreign Malign Influence Center, which had countered election interference, and merging its functions into other government entities. The move elicited a partisan reaction: Republicans applauded efforts to streamline

operations, while Democrats warned it might undermine national security amid a broader pattern of dismantling institutions overseeing election integrity.

4. Trump Administration Asks Supreme Court to Halt Foreign Aid Payments **([Reuters, August 23](#))**

The Trump administration filed an emergency request with the U.S. Supreme Court to suspend a federal district court's injunction requiring the continuation of foreign aid payments. This injunction had forced the administration to disburse nearly \$2 billion to aid organizations despite President Trump's January 20 executive order pausing all foreign aid for 90 days and moves to dismantle USAID. The Department of Justice argued that, without relief from the Supreme Court, the State Department would be compelled to obligate roughly \$12 billion by the fiscal year's end on September 30, potentially overriding the President's foreign policy judgment and undermining interbranch dialogue.

5. Mass Shooting at Minneapolis Catholic School ([CNN, August 25](#))

During a back-to-school morning Mass held in the church section of the Annunciation Catholic School, a 23-year-old former student, Robin Westman, opened fire from outside the building. Armed with a rifle, shotgun, and pistol, Westman fired through stained-glass windows, tragically killing two children, ages 8 and 10, and injuring 17 others, including 14 children and three elderly worshippers.

Survivors recounted how they sought refuge under pews, one fifth-grader said a friend shielded him from bullets. First responders and law enforcement swiftly secured the scene, confirming that Westman died by suicide. Investigators uncovered a pre-scheduled manifesto on YouTube and on the shooter's weapons, many bearing hateful slogans and references to past mass shootings and antisemitic content. The FBI is investigating this as a domestic terrorism event and a hate crime targeting Catholics.

6. U.S. Jobless Claims Rise Sharply ([Bloomberg, August 25](#))

In mid-August 2025, U.S. labor market data revealed early signs of cooling: initial jobless claims rose sharply by 11,000 to 235,000 for the week ending August 16, marking the highest level since June and exceeding economists' projections of 225,000. More notably, continuing claims, which track those still receiving unemployment benefits, jumped by roughly 30,000 to 1.97 million by the week ending August 9, the highest reading since November 2021. Though layoffs remain historically moderate, these trends, along with weak hiring and elevated unemployment, point toward rising labour market strains and may buoy expectations of interest rate cuts in the near term.

7. Court Rules Most Trump Tariffs Illegal, As Appeals Continue ([CNBC, August 29](#))

A U.S. appeals court ruled on August 29, 2025, in a 7–4 decision that most of President Trump's sweeping global tariffs, which he imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), were unlawful, concluding that the law does not authorize the president to impose broad import taxes without explicit congressional authority. However, the court allowed those tariffs to remain in effect until October 14, giving the administration time to appeal to the Supreme Court. The decision sets the stage for a major constitutional showdown over the limits of executive power in trade policy.

8. White House Advances Plan to Rename Defence to “Department of War” ([MSN, August 31](#))

The Trump administration is actively advancing a proposal to rename the U.S. Department of Defense as the Department of War, reviving the historical title used until 1947. President Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth argue the old name "has a stronger sound" and better reflects a military posture that values offensive capability, not just defense. While such a renaming would typically necessitate congressional approval, the White House is exploring alternative routes to enact it. Notably, Republican Rep. Greg Steube has introduced an amendment to the annual defence policy bill to effect the change, indicating some legislative support.



1. Trump-Putin Meet in Alaska For a Historic Summit ([NBC News, August 16](#))

On August 15, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin met for nearly three hours at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska, the first time Putin had visited U.S. soil since the Ukraine invasion. The summit focused on the conflict in Ukraine, with Trump expressing optimism over progress, while Putin insisted that the “root causes” of the war, including NATO’s eastward expansion, must be resolved. Although both leaders described the talks as “constructive,” no ceasefire or formal agreement was reached, and responsibility for peace was shifted onto Ukraine, with Trump suggesting Kyiv must make territorial concessions. Putin's appearance marked a symbolic resumption of his international engagement, and he later claimed that the “understandings” from Anchorage could pave the way toward peace, even as military escalation in Ukraine continued.

2. Trump Herts Zelensky Post Alaska Summit ([CNN, August 18](#))

Following his August 15 summit with Vladimir Putin in Alaska, President Trump held a lengthy, “substantive” over-90-minute phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and several European and NATO leaders during his return flight, after which Zelenskyy announced he would travel to Washington for a planned White House meeting on Monday. At that meeting, attended by European heads of state, Trump and Zelenskyy discussed detailed security guarantees for Ukraine, ostensibly akin to NATO-style protection, and mapped out post-war territorial concerns; Zelenskyy emphasized that territory decisions must remain Ukraine’s prerogative, and the U.S. affirmed a commitment to supporting Ukraine’s sovereignty and defence.

3. U.S. Cancels India Trade Talks Ahead of Tariff Deadline ([Reuters, August 18](#))

A planned visit by U.S. trade negotiators to New Delhi, scheduled for August 25–29, was abruptly called off, derailing the current round of bilateral trade negotiations and extinguishing hopes of securing relief before a new 25% U.S. tariff, raising duties to as high as 50%, went into effect on August 27. The cancellation arrives amid escalating tensions over unresolved disputes, including India's reluctance to open its dairy and agricultural sectors and its continued imports of Russian oil, which Washington cited as justification for the punitive tariffs.

4. Talk of NATO-like Security Offer for Ukraine ([France24, August 20](#))

As Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky prepared to meet with U.S. President Trump alongside European leaders in Washington, the focus was on extending NATO-style security guarantees to Ukraine, archival commitments akin to Article 5 collective defence, which holds that an attack on one is an attack on all. Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy to Russia, indicated that this unprecedented approach might gain traction, with even Russia showing tentative openness to such security assurances. The proposed framework would aim to protect Kyiv without granting formal NATO membership, an outcome that Moscow has consistently opposed, representing a pivotal shift in Western diplomatic and defense postures toward Ukraine.

5. U.S. Pushing for Gaza Ceasefire Talks ([CNN, August 20](#))

Hamas agreed to a 60-day ceasefire proposal mediated by Egypt and Qatar, which includes the exchange of half of the remaining Israeli hostages (about 10 living and the remains of 18 others) for the release of Palestinian prisoners, expanded humanitarian aid, and a limited Israeli troop withdrawal, largely mirroring an earlier U.S. framework from Special Envoy Steve Witkoff. However, Israel has not agreed to the deal, maintaining that it will continue military operations until all hostages are freed and Hamas is disarmed. The development comes amid mounting humanitarian crises in Gaza, where over 62,000 Palestinians have died, and heightened internal strife in Israel, including massive protests calling for a resolution.

6. U.N. Declares Famine in Gaza ([PBS, August 22](#))

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), the world's most authoritative monitor of hunger crises, has formally declared a famine in Gaza City, marking the first time such a classification has been applied there. The report calls the situation a "man-made disaster", driven by Israel's military campaign, blockade restrictions, and the collapse of Gaza's food supply systems. Nearly half a million people, roughly a quarter of Gaza's entire population, are now enduring catastrophic conditions, facing starvation, destitution, and imminent death unless aid access dramatically improves. Humanitarian groups stress that famine is not a sudden event but the culmination of prolonged deprivation, with families surviving on animal feed, contaminated water, and sporadic aid drops. Experts warn the crisis could rapidly spread beyond Gaza City to other parts of the enclave unless an immediate ceasefire,

sustained humanitarian corridors, and large-scale international intervention are put in place, underscoring the devastating human cost of the ongoing conflict.

7. U.S. Administration Mulls Long-Term Governance of Gaza ([Firstpost, August 24](#))

The Trump administration is weighing a sweeping post-war proposal for Gaza, under which the U.S. would administer the territory for at least a decade through the so-called Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation Trust (GREAT Trust). The plan envisions the temporary relocation of Gaza's more than 2 million residents, either to other countries or into secured zones, for reconstruction into a high-tech tourism and industrial hub, often dubbed the "Riviera of the Middle East." Displaced Palestinians would be offered \$5,000 in cash, four years of rent subsidies, and one year of food; landowners might exchange their property rights for digital tokens redeemable for apartments in new AI-powered smart cities. Developed by backers of the U.S.– and Israeli-aligned Gaza Humanitarian Foundation with financial modelling by the Boston Consulting Group, the plan has faced condemnation from humanitarian groups and regional leaders as tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

8. China Faces Pressure on Rare-Earth Trade With the USA ([Associated Press, August 26](#))

The U.S. is intensifying efforts to reduce its strategic vulnerability to China's near-monopoly on rare-earth minerals, critical for defense, clean energy, and technology, by investing heavily in domestic and allied supply chains. The Trump administration, for instance, injected \$400 million into MP Materials and provided additional support for companies like NioCorp and USA Rare Earth, with mechanisms such as price floors and guaranteed purchases to bolster production outside China. Simultaneously, Canberra's Lynas is raising hundreds of millions to expand operations in Malaysia and the U.S., as part of a Western push to break Beijing's dominance. Despite these initiatives, China retains overwhelming control over processing capabilities, prompting Washington to rely on semiconductor export flexibilities to keep rare-earth imports flowing while it scales up alternatives. Gradual shifts are underway, but full decoupling will take years.

9. Trump Signals Tougher Sanctions if Russia Avoids Ceasefire ([Reuters, August 26](#))

President Trump warned that he could impose “massive sanctions,” “massive tariffs,” or both on Russia within two weeks if there is no progress toward a Ukraine peace deal, signaling a shift toward economic pressure after his talks with Putin in Alaska failed to yield a breakthrough. Speaking at the White House, Trump said he would soon make a “very important decision” on Russia’s future, underscoring that Washington would not resort to military confrontation but could escalate economic costs if Moscow does not move toward a ceasefire.

10. U.S. Considers Sanctions Over EU Digital Services Act ([Politico, August 26](#))

The Trump administration is actively weighing whether to impose sanctions on European Union and national officials responsible for enforcing the bloc’s Digital Services Act (DSA), escalating tensions in the transatlantic digital policy space. According to U.S. officials, options under consideration include visa bans and other punitive measures, reflecting Washington’s frustration with what it views as a regulatory framework that disproportionately burdens American tech giants like Meta, Google, and X, while also restricting the free expression of U.S. citizens online. The administration argues that the DSA’s content moderation requirements amount to censorship and violate core U.S. principles of free speech, a claim Brussels rejects outright. EU officials maintain that the law is intended to create a safer and more transparent digital environment by curbing disinformation, hate speech, and illegal activity. While no final decision has yet been taken, the fact that these discussions are underway signals a growing willingness in Washington to weaponize economic and diplomatic tools in defense of U.S. tech interests, adding yet another layer of strain to U.S.–EU relations already tested by disputes over trade, tariffs, and data privacy.

11. Russia Warns U.S. Over Arctic Drills ([Newsweek, August 31](#))

United States and Norway carried out a significant joint military operation near Russia’s Arctic border, involving naval ships and aircraft in the Barents Sea as part of NATO’s ongoing efforts to enhance its presence and interoperability in the region. This demonstration of military strength comes in the context of heightened regional tensions, as NATO has expanded to include Finland and Sweden, and as Russia maintains extensive defensive infrastructure in the Arctic. The joint maneuvers, including large-scale cold-weather exercises, highlight the alliance’s preparedness for Arctic operations and aim to deter perceived Russian aggression while reinforcing collective defense commitments. These activities also reflect broader geopolitical competition, with both sides viewing the Arctic as a

strategically vital zone for projecting power and securing national interests amid a complex and evolving security landscape.



About the Author

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