

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Yuvvraj Singh

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. Trump's approval rating at 42% in Reuters/Ipsos poll ([Reuters, September 9](#))

A recent Reuters/Ipsos poll puts Donald Trump's approval rating at about 42%, with 56% of Americans disapproving of his performance as president. While he earns relatively better ratings on crime (43%) and immigration (42%), his handling of the economy is viewed much less favorably, with just 36% approving. On cost of living specifically, only 30% express approval. The poll surveyed about 1,084 adults nationwide and has a margin of error of roughly ± 3 percentage points.

2. Conservative activist Charlie Kirk shot dead ([ABC News, September 10](#))

Charlie Kirk, the 31-year-old conservative activist and founder of Turning Point USA, was fatally shot during a campus event at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. The attack took place while he was addressing a crowd of thousands, and he was rushed to the hospital but later pronounced dead. Authorities identified 22-year-old Tyler Robinson as the suspect, who had changed his clothing and positioned himself before firing a single fatal shot from a rooftop. A high-powered rifle believed to have been used in the attack was later recovered, along with other forensic evidence. Robinson's father recognized him in surveillance images and, with the help of a pastor connected to law enforcement, persuaded him to surrender. The killing sparked immediate political reactions, with figures across the spectrum condemning the violence, and security measures on campuses and at political events coming under renewed scrutiny.

3. White House creates "War Directorate" ([Reuters, September 13](#))

The White House has renamed its "Directorate of Defense" under the National Security Council to the "War Directorate," following President Trump's executive order that similarly rebranded the Department of Defense as the Department of War. Staff in this directorate will now be called "directors for war," and will report to a special assistant to the president for war. The change was approved by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who also serves as national security adviser. While the name shift is confirmed, it's not yet clear whether it will lead to substantive policy changes. The story also notes that the NSC has lost influence under Trump, with much of its work being ceded increasingly to the Pentagon, the State Department, and intelligence agencies.

IN THE WORLD

1. Several Strikes on Venezuelan drug boats ([New York Post, September 1](#))

Over the past few weeks the U.S. has carried out multiple strikes on small vessels it says were smuggling drugs from Venezuela, including a strike that killed 11 people and at least two subsequent operations President Trump said killed three people each; U.S. officials released footage and described seized narcotics while framing the strikes as part of a stepped-up campaign against Venezuelan-linked cartels and groups the administration calls “narcoterrorists.” Venezuela’s government has vehemently denied state involvement, condemned the strikes as hostile and potentially illegal, and accused Washington of using force to pressure the Maduro regime, while critics and some legal experts have questioned the transparency, legal basis and evidentiary support for lethal military action in international waters and warned the operations risk escalating tensions across the southern Caribbean.

2. U.S. warships deployed in Caribbean region ([Newsweek, September 3](#))

In recent weeks, U.S. military forces have significantly increased their presence in the Caribbean, deploying naval assets, aircraft (including F-35s) and conducting enhanced surveillance and operations aimed at drug trafficking routes associated with Venezuela. The move follows a series of U.S. strikes on boats allegedly smuggling narcotics, which have drawn sharp criticism and concern from the Venezuelan government. Caracas has condemned the buildup as provocative, accusing Washington of escalating tensions under the guise of counter-drug operations, while U.S. officials say the deployment is intended to disrupt cartel networks and interdict illicit shipments. The map shared with the public highlights the geographical spread of U.S. forces, showing bases, patrol areas, and naval deployments, underscoring how close many of the operations are to Venezuelan coastal zones.

3. Trade deal EO with Japan ([Business Standard, September 5](#))

President Trump has signed an executive order putting into effect a new US-Japan trade agreement which imposes a 15% baseline tariff on nearly all Japanese imports to the United States, with special, sector-specific terms for automobiles and automobile parts, aerospace products, generic pharmaceuticals, and natural resources not native to or produced in the US. Japan has committed to invest \$550 billion in the United States under the deal. The agreement also includes Japan buying US-made commercial aircraft and defense equipment, boosted purchases of agricultural goods (such as rice, corn, soybeans, fertiliser, bioethanol), and “breakthrough” market access for US producers across manufacturing, agriculture, food, energy, autos and industrial goods. The White House frames the agreement as leveling the playfield for American producers,

taking national security into account, expanding exports and investment-led production, and helping reduce the US trade deficit with Japan.

4. Restriction plans on Chinese imports (drones, heavy vehicles etc.) ([Global Times, September 5](#))

The U.S. Commerce Department is preparing rules to restrict or possibly ban imports from China of drones and medium-to-heavy duty vehicles (over 10,000 pounds), citing national security concerns tied to their information/communications technology and supply chains. This follows earlier U.S. actions targeting Chinese cars and trucks under similar justifications. Chinese experts quoted in the article argue that this is an abuse of "national security" grounds, saying that such restrictions risk disrupting global trade systems, raising costs, and reducing competition. They maintain that Chinese drones and heavy vehicles are competitive in performance and price, and that U.S. industries, and consumers, will suffer from diminished supply choices and higher expenses. China has strongly criticized the move, insisting such measures undermine proper trade relations and industrial stability, and reaffirmed its readiness to defend its interests.

5. Israel strikes Hamas leaders in Qatar; U.S. response ([CNN, September 9](#))

Israel conducted a bold airstrike in Doha targeting Hamas leaders who were meeting in Qatar to weigh a U.S.-backed ceasefire proposal. The attack killed several individuals, including the son of senior negotiator Khalil al-Hayya and four others, as well as a Qatari security official. Top Hamas figures reportedly survived. The strike took place in the diplomatic quarter of Doha, drew condemnation from Qatar, and raised serious concerns about violations of sovereignty. The move undermined ongoing peace negotiations, with Qatar accusing Israel of "state terror" and saying this action sabotaged the chance of a hostage release deal. The U.N. Security Council, with support from the U.S., formally condemned the attack, stressing that strikes on a third-party like Qatar do not advance peace or U.S./international objectives.

6. US urges G7 / EU to impose tariffs on China & India over Russian oil purchases ([Reuters, September 13](#))

The U.S. Treasury has urged G7 and EU partners to impose "meaningful tariffs" on imports from China and India, arguing that their purchases of Russian oil are helping fund Russia's war in Ukraine. Officials said these tariffs would be lifted once the war ends. The issue was a central topic in a recent G7 finance ministers' meeting, where members also discussed using frozen Russian sovereign assets to support Ukraine's defense, and exploring further sanctions and trade measures against countries that enable Russia's war effort. Meanwhile, the U.S. has already imposed additional tariffs on Indian goods,

bringing total U.S. tariffs on many Indian imports to around 50%, but has held off on similarly escalating tariffs on China, in part due to ongoing negotiations and trade-relations sensitivities.

7. Roadmap for peace in Sudan proposed by US, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt ([DW, September 13](#))

The United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt have jointly called for an immediate truce in Sudan amid escalating fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. The nations emphasized the urgent need to protect civilians, ensure humanitarian access, and allow aid to reach those affected by the violence. The statement also urged both parties to resume negotiations and engage in dialogue to reach a peaceful resolution, warning that continued conflict threatens regional stability. These diplomatic efforts come as clashes in key cities, including Khartoum, have intensified, leading to significant casualties, displacement, and a growing humanitarian crisis.

8. Talks in Kabul over U.S. detainees held by the Taliban ([Reuters, September 13](#))

U.S. officials held talks in Kabul with the Taliban administration on September 13, 2025, focusing on the issue of Americans detained in Afghanistan. The delegation included Adam Bohler, the Trump administration's special hostage envoy, and Zalmay Khalilzad, a former U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan. They met with Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to discuss detainees in both countries, with plans for future discussions. A key case is that of Mahmood Habibi, a naturalized U.S. citizen detained in Afghanistan for over three years. The U.S. considers his detention a significant obstacle to further engagement, while the Taliban denies holding him. Last year, the Taliban rejected an offer to exchange him for Mohammad Rahim al-Afghani, the last Afghan detainee at Guantanamo. During the talks, Taliban Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghani Baradar proposed economic collaboration, highlighting investment in rare earth minerals and criticizing U.S. sanctions. The Taliban remains unrecognized by the U.S. government. President Donald Trump has made freeing detainees a top priority, with recent successes including the release of George Glezzmann and a U.S.-Afghan prisoner exchange earlier in the year. A recent executive order allows punitive actions against nations deemed to be wrongfully detaining Americans.

9. U.S., China reach framework deal on TikTok; Trump, Xi slated to speak ([Bloomberg, September 15](#))

Donald Trump said he plans to speak with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday, signaling potential progress on a deal involving TikTok amid growing U.S. scrutiny over the popular app's ownership and data security practices. Trump indicated that the discussion could lead to an agreement allowing TikTok to continue operating in the United States under certain conditions, including tighter oversight

and possible changes to its ownership structure. The announcement comes as the administration balances national security concerns with efforts to maintain open trade and technology ties with China, while also addressing pressure from lawmakers demanding stronger safeguards for Americans' data. Trump framed the potential deal as a win for both national security and the U.S. tech economy, emphasizing a cooperative rather than confrontational approach with Beijing.

10. Peru F-16 sale approved by U.S. State Dept ([Janes, September 15](#))

The U.S. government has approved a proposed sale of F-16 fighter aircraft to Peru, aiming to bolster the Peruvian Air Force's capabilities in air sovereignty and counter-narcotics operations. The proposed package includes 10 single-seat F-16C Block 70 fighters and two two-seat F-16D Block 70 aircraft, along with 14 F110-GE-129 engines, 12 AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs), 12 AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder missiles, and 52 LAU-129 guided missile launchers. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) notified U.S. lawmakers of the approval, emphasizing that the sale will not alter the basic military balance in the region. The deal is designed to enhance Peru's ability to control its airspace, defend territorial borders, and conduct precision air-to-ground attacks in support of ground forces engaged in counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism operations. Additionally, the sale aims to strengthen military-to-military cooperation between the United States and Peru on a long-term basis.

About the Author

Yuvvraj Singh is a Research Intern at Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), focusing his research on the USA and its implications on the Global South. He holds a Master's and Bachelor's in Political Science (with specialisation in International Relations) from Kirori Mal College, Delhi University. He has previously worked at ORF, NITI Aayog, and Ministry of External Affairs (ICWA), researching on a range of topics concerning the Global South, Conflict, Maritime Security, and Sustainability. His research has also been published at several national and international fora like The Diplomat, RT, Indian Council of World Affairs, among others. He can be reached at yuvvraj.claws@gmail.com.



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