

# CLAWS Newsletter



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by Nomita Chandola

## **US-IRAN WAR**

### **U.S.-Iran Ceasefire Talks Progress Amid Regional Pressure [\(CNN, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2026\)](#)**

President Donald Trump said the United States and Iran are moving closer to a possible peace agreement after weeks of military conflict and rising tensions in the Middle East. The discussions are focused on ending hostilities, reopening the Strait of Hormuz — a critical global oil shipping route — and preventing further disruption to energy supplies and international trade. Trump expressed optimism that a deal could be finalised soon, saying recent negotiations had been productive and that Iran appeared willing to engage diplomatically. Several regional countries, including Pakistan and Gulf allies, have been involved in mediation efforts to help ease tensions between the two sides. The U.S. also paused parts of its military operation in the region to create space for negotiations and avoid further escalation. However, despite the positive signals, Iran has not officially accepted the latest proposal, and military forces from both sides remain on high alert as uncertainty over the ceasefire continues.

### **Trump and Netanyahu Clash Over Iran Strategy [\(CNN, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2026\)](#)**

President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly had a tense phone call over the future of the Iran conflict, exposing growing differences between the two allies. Netanyahu pushed for renewed military strikes against Iran, arguing delays only help Tehran, while Trump favored continuing diplomatic negotiations brokered by Gulf nations and Pakistan. Trump recently paused planned U.S. attacks to allow more time for talks, saying a deal with Iran may still be possible. Israel remains skeptical of diplomacy, especially over Iran's refusal to give up its enriched uranium stockpile. Despite ongoing negotiations, Trump warned that military action remains an option if talks fail, while both U.S. and Israeli officials acknowledged that major disagreements with Iran remain unresolved.

### **Global Markets Slide as Iran War and China Talks Raise Uncertainty [\(NBC News, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2026\)](#)**

Global markets fell sharply after President Donald Trump's trip to China failed to deliver major trade agreements and tensions surrounding the Iran war continued to disrupt global energy markets. Investors remained worried about the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a key global oil

shipping route, with no clear breakthrough in U.S.-Iran negotiations. Trump also said Iran's latest proposal to end the war was "not enough," adding to fears that the conflict could continue.

Oil prices surged as supply concerns intensified, with U.S. crude rising above \$105 per barrel and Brent crude crossing \$109. Since the war began in February, oil prices have jumped more than 80%, pushing average U.S. gas prices to \$4.50 per gallon and increasing inflationary pressure across the economy. Rising energy costs also contributed to higher bond yields, with the 30-year U.S. Treasury yield climbing above 5.12% for the first time since 2007. Mortgage rates also increased, raising concerns about consumer borrowing costs and inflation.

Markets were further disappointed by the lack of concrete outcomes from Trump's Beijing visit. Despite hopes of progress on tariffs, trade, and semiconductor export controls, U.S. officials confirmed that key issues such as chip restrictions and tariffs were not meaningfully addressed in talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Although discussions included possible Chinese purchases of U.S. agricultural products and a proposed "board of trade," no major deals were announced.

The uncertainty triggered a broader global sell-off, with major U.S., European, and Asian stock indexes falling sharply as investors worried about inflation, rising borrowing costs, and prolonged geopolitical instability.

### **Israel-UAE Defence Ties Deepen Amid Iran Conflict** ([The Times of Israel, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2026](#))

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee confirmed that Israel has sent Iron Dome air defence systems and trained military personnel to the United Arab Emirates, highlighting the growing military cooperation between the two countries as they respond to Iranian attacks in the region. Huckabee credited the partnership to the Abraham Accords, calling the UAE-Israel relationship "extraordinary."

Huckabee also discussed Gaza's future, expressing doubts about the effectiveness of the proposed International Stabilisation Force meant to oversee the territory after Hamas disarms and Israeli troops withdraw. He suggested that Israel Defence Forces may ultimately be the only entity willing to forcibly disarm Hamas, while urging the international community not to criticize Israel if it takes military action to do so. Meanwhile, negotiations over Gaza remain

stalled, with Hamas refusing to surrender weapons and Israel continuing military operations in the enclave.

### **Trump Pauses Hormuz Operation After Gulf Allies Push Back** ([NBC News, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026](#))

President Donald Trump abruptly paused “Project Freedom,” a U.S. military operation aimed at helping ships safely pass through the Strait of Hormuz, after backlash from key Gulf allies led by Saudi Arabia. According to U.S. officials, Saudi Arabia suspended permission for the U.S. military to use its airspace and Prince Sultan Airbase for the operation, forcing Washington to halt the mission just 36 hours after it began. Other Gulf partners, including Qatar and Oman, were also reportedly caught off guard by the announcement.

The operation had briefly provided military protection and surveillance for ships navigating the strait amid Iranian threats and attacks. Despite the pause, the U.S. continues to maintain a significant military presence in the Gulf, including two carrier strike groups and expanded air support capabilities.

At the same time, diplomatic efforts to end the war in Iran intensified. Trump said negotiations with Iran were progressing well and suggested a deal could be reached soon, though he warned that military action could resume if talks fail. Pakistan has continued to mediate between Washington and Tehran, while China has also called for an urgent ceasefire and renewed negotiations.

## **US-CHINA**

### **Trump-Xi Talks Focus on Taiwan, Iran and Trade Tensions** ([CNBC, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2026](#))

President Donald Trump concluded his summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing without any major agreements on key global issues, but both leaders described the talks as positive and aimed at stabilising U.S.-China relations. The discussions focused heavily on Taiwan, Iran, trade tensions, rare earth minerals, and global power competition. Xi reportedly warned that mishandling the Taiwan issue could lead to “clashes and even conflicts,” while Trump said he discussed U.S. arms sales to Taiwan “in great detail” and would decide soon on a delayed \$14 billion package.

The Iran war also remained a major topic during the summit. Trump said he would soon decide whether to lift sanctions on Chinese companies buying Iranian oil and reiterated that failure to reach a nuclear agreement with Iran could result in “annihilation.” While Trump claimed Xi agreed that the war should end and promised not to supply military equipment to Tehran, China’s official statement avoided directly mentioning Iran.

Despite no breakthroughs on tariffs or export controls, Trump announced tentative commitments for China to purchase 200 Boeing aircraft and billions of dollars’ worth of American soybeans. Both sides also signalled interest in continuing dialogue, with discussions underway for additional Trump-Xi meetings later this year at major international summits.

### **Taiwan Open to Trump Call Amid Rising U.S.-China Tensions ([US News and World Report, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2026](#))**

Taiwan said President Lai Ching-te would be “happy” to speak with President Donald Trump after Trump suggested he may hold talks with the Taiwanese leader, a move that would mark a major break from longstanding U.S. diplomatic protocol and likely anger China. The comments came shortly after Trump’s summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, where Taiwan emerged as a central issue.

Trump said he was still undecided on a proposed \$14 billion U.S. arms package for Taiwan, calling it a potential “negotiating chip” with China, which opposes all U.S. military support for the island. Xi reportedly warned Trump that disagreements over Taiwan could lead to “clashes and even conflicts” if mishandled.

Taiwan, meanwhile reaffirmed that its future should be decided only by its own people and stressed that China’s growing military activity around the island is the main threat to regional stability. Beijing opposed any potential Trump-Lai conversation and urged Washington to handle Taiwan issues with “utmost prudence.”

### **Xi and Putin Reaffirm Strong China-Russia Alliance After Trump Visit ([NPR Illinois, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026](#))**

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that China-Russia ties are at a “historic” and “unprecedented” high during Putin’s visit to Beijing, just days after Xi hosted President Donald Trump. Both leaders presented their partnership as a stabilising

force amid global tensions and criticised rising “unilateral hegemonic tendencies,” an apparent reference to the United States.

Xi and Putin also discussed the Iran war, calling for an end to the conflict to reduce disruptions to global energy supplies. The two leaders signed nearly two dozen agreements covering trade, energy, technology, and education, while also extending their long-term friendship treaty and reaffirming support for a “multipolar world.” Russia additionally promoted deeper energy cooperation with China, including progress on the proposed Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline.

The summit highlighted China’s continued diplomatic and economic support for Russia despite the ongoing Ukraine war and increasing pressure on Putin at home. Both countries also criticised the U.S. “Golden Dome” missile defence project and accused Washington of undermining global stability after the expiration of the New START nuclear arms treaty.

**Largest U.S.-Philippines Military Drill Raises China Concerns** ([South China Morning Post, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2026](#))

The 2026 Balikatan military exercise, led by the United States and the Philippines, became the largest in its history, involving around 17,000 personnel from seven countries, including Japan, Australia, Canada, France, and New Zealand. The drills were conducted near the South China Sea and close to Taiwan, with exercises involving maritime strikes, missile launches, amphibious landing simulations, and airfield control operations.

China criticised the expanding scale and complexity of the drills, warning that they would increase regional instability and provoke stronger responses from the Chinese military. Chinese analysts said the exercises appeared to simulate a potential Taiwan conflict and were clearly aimed at deterring China, especially with the deployment of U.S. Typhon missile systems and Japan’s Type 88 anti-ship missiles.

Japan’s participation drew particular attention as it marked the first time since World War II that Japanese combat troops operated on Philippine soil. The growing military coordination among the U.S., Japan, and the Philippines was viewed by Beijing as a rapidly strengthening regional security alliance targeting China amid rising tensions in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait.

**Questions Raised Over Trump-Class Battleship Plan Against China** ([South China Morning Post, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026](#))

The U.S. Navy's proposed "Trump-class" battleships, part of President Donald Trump's planned "Golden Fleet," are facing skepticism from defence analysts despite being promoted as a major deterrent against China. The Navy plans to build up to 15 nuclear-powered guided-missile battleships by 2055, designed to carry hypersonic and nuclear weapons while projecting American military strength in the Indo-Pacific.

Experts, however, questioned whether the massive ships would be effective in modern warfare, warning they could become vulnerable targets for China's anti-ship missiles, drones, and advanced naval systems. Analysts also raised concerns about the high costs, technological complexity, and America's limited shipbuilding capacity, especially after delays and failures in previous U.S. naval programs.

The battleship proposal comes as China rapidly expands its naval capabilities and increases military pressure around Taiwan and the South China Sea. While supporters argue the ships could strengthen deterrence and maintain a strong U.S. presence in the western Pacific, critics doubt whether the ambitious project can realistically be completed on schedule or survive beyond Trump's presidency.

**US-INDIA**

**Rubio Visits India to Repair Strained U.S. Ties** ([The Hindu, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2026](#))

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited India to strengthen ties that have been strained by President Donald Trump's tariffs, growing U.S. engagement with Pakistan, and recent U.S.-China diplomacy. During talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, both sides discussed trade, defence, energy cooperation, and the Iran conflict, with Rubio stressing that the U.S. would not allow Iran to disrupt global energy markets and offering increased American energy exports to India.

India reiterated support for diplomacy and peaceful conflict resolution while balancing its stance on the Iran war. Although the U.S. and India previously reached an interim trade framework reducing tariffs, a broader trade deal remains unresolved, creating continued friction in bilateral relations. Analysts noted that Trump's recent outreach to China and

Pakistan has increased Indian concerns about Washington's strategic priorities, even as both countries continue to emphasise the importance of the Quad alliance and Indo-Pacific cooperation.

**Trump's China Outreach Raises Concerns in India** ([The New York Times, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2026](#))

President Donald Trump's growing outreach toward Chinese leader Xi Jinping has raised concerns in India, prompting Secretary of State Marco Rubio to use his India visit to reassure New Delhi about U.S. strategy in Asia. Indian officials are concerned after Trump praised Xi, discussed revisiting Taiwan arms sales, and described U.S.-China relations as a potential "G2" partnership, while offering little public reassurance to regional allies.

The report says ties between Washington and New Delhi have worsened due to Trump's tariffs on India, his praise for Pakistan's role in Iran diplomacy, and perceptions that the administration is downgrading India's strategic importance. Analysts noted that India is now cautiously improving relations with China to balance uncertainty in U.S. support, including easing travel restrictions and considering more Chinese investment. Rubio's trip is therefore seen as an effort to stabilise relations and reassure India, Japan, and Australia about America's long-term Indo-Pacific commitments through the Quad partnership.

**Energy Security Dominates Rubio-Modi Talks** ([US News and World Report, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2026](#))

Energy security emerged as the central focus during U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, as disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz continue to threaten India's fuel supplies. Rubio stressed that the U.S. would not allow Iran to disrupt global energy markets and pushed for increased American oil and gas exports to India, which imports more than 80% of its energy needs. The discussions highlighted Washington's effort to position itself as a key long-term energy partner for India amid the ongoing Middle East crisis.

## **US-EUROPE**

### **Greenland Push Faces Strong Local Backlash** ([NBC News, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2026](#))

Trump's envoy to Greenland, Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry, faced strong backlash during his visit despite saying he came to "make friends." Greenlandic leaders and residents criticised the trip as an attempt by the U.S. to pressure and influence the island amid Trump's continued interest in expanding American control there. Protesters rejected U.S. involvement, with lawmakers stressing that Greenland "is not for sale" and that most Greenlanders do not want to become part of the U.S. The visit also raised tensions because Landry was not formally invited, visited during sensitive negotiations on Greenland's future, and was accused of trying to sway public opinion through symbolic gestures like offering cookies to children. Greenland officials remain open to discussing security cooperation with the U.S., but strongly oppose any form of annexation or outside pressure.

### **Canada Strengthens Arctic Ties With Nordics Amid Trump Pressure** ([Reuters, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2026](#))

Canada is deepening Arctic defence cooperation with Nordic countries as concerns grow over Donald Trump's threats toward Greenland and fears of Russian activity in the region. Prime Minister Mark Carney is pushing closer military and diplomatic ties with Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland to reduce reliance on the U.S., which many now see as a less reliable partner. The countries recently agreed to expand defence cooperation, increase military production and improve Arctic security. Greenland and Denmark are also working with Canada to develop a local Arctic ranger-style force. While Canada still considers its partnership with the U.S. important, officials say the country is now focusing more on alliances with "middle powers" to strengthen regional stability and Arctic defence.

### **Trump Threatens Troop Cuts in Germany Amid Iran War Dispute** ([NBC News, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2026](#))

President Donald Trump said the U.S. is reviewing a possible reduction of American troops in Germany after German Chancellor Friedrich Merz criticised Washington's handling of the Iran war and said the U.S. was being "humiliated" by Iran. Trump accused Germany of weak leadership and renewed complaints about NATO's lack of support in the conflict. The dispute

comes as Europe faces economic pressure from the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which has disrupted global energy supplies. Despite tensions, Merz said Germany remains on good terms with the Trump administration and wants the conflict resolved quickly.



## About the Author

**Nomita Chandola** is a budding researcher in International Relations, with a strong academic foundation and a passion for understanding complex global issues. She completed her master's degree in International Relations from the University of Leeds, where she focused on modules such as global governance and climate security. Prior to this, she completed her bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Economics from Kamla Nehru College, University of Delhi. Currently, Nomita is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, where she delves into critical issues of strategic affairs and geopolitical dynamics.

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