

The US-Iran 60-Day Negotiation Window Expires

The 60-day negotiation window under the US-Iran memorandum of understanding expired on 17 August with no substantive progress over the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has set a deadline of several weeks for the US to fully implement the memorandum and has announced a shift in its policy “from defensive to full-scale offensive.” President Trump stated the US will not seek to extend the memorandum, saying, “I have no timetable, I’m not in a hurry.” Trump also threatened to attack Oman if it “hinders” US efforts to reopen the Strait. Iran’s foreign ministry said it will not adjust its policy under “pressure, ultimatums or time limits.”

Arab Condemnations of Israel Ring Hollow as Gaza Deaths Mount

Foreign ministers from Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia issued a joint statement on 16 August strongly condemning ‘Israel’s’ rejection of the US-backed Gaza peace plan, declaring that ‘Israel’ bears “direct and full responsibility” for the consequences. Yet within 48 hours, warplanes struck a café in Gaza City’s western port area, killing six Palestinians including a child and wounding 14 others. The Jewish entity’s military said it targeted Hamas commanders. US envoy Kushner met with Netanyahu on 17 August, with Washington reportedly allowing the Jewish entity to “temporarily” continue targeted strikes, and Arab capitals that serve Western interests continue to issue empty statements.

Trump Orders Drastic Reduction of US-South Korea Drills

On 16 August, President Trump posted that he had instructed Defense Secretary Hegseth to “drastically reduce” the US-South Korea joint military exercise. The “Ulchi Freedom Shield” drills had begun on 17 August as scheduled. Following an emergency meeting on 18 August, US and South Korean militaries agreed to cut the exercise schedule by roughly half, cancelling the second-phase counterattack drills and ending the exercise this week instead of 27 August. South Korean officials said they were not informed of Trump’s decision beforehand. The unprecedented mid-exercise truncation has raised concerns in Seoul about the wartime operational control transition process. Trump cited the high cost borne by the US and noted that South Korea “does not help” with Iran. The decision, made without consulting the ally, underscores Washington’s unilateral control over the alliance.

US Sends NATO Allies “Loyalty” Questionnaire

The US has circulated a questionnaire to NATO members assessing their “loyalty” to Trump administration policies before deciding on potential cuts to military support. The document asks whether each country has “been publicly supportive” of US foreign policy, what “restrictions” it has placed on US military base access,

whether it buys from US defense contractors, and whether it has opposed “made in Europe” policies. Specific questions reference US military campaigns in Iran and the Western Hemisphere. US allies have balked at what they see as an attempt to coerce ideological alignment in exchange for US protection. The questionnaire arrives weeks into a six-month review of US military presence in Europe, expected to conclude by December.

Over 220,000 Canadians Petition to Expel US Ambassador

More than 223,000 Canadians have signed a parliamentary petition demanding the expulsion of US Ambassador Pete Hoekstra. The petition accuses Hoekstra of repeatedly making remarks that damage bilateral relations and interfere in Canadian internal affairs, including “normalising” Trump’s threats to annex Canada as the “51st state.” It calls on the government to declare Hoekstra persona non grata and launch an inquiry into US “diplomatic interference.” The petition is one of the most-signed in the history of Canada’s e-petition system. While analysts note the government is unlikely to actually expel the ambassador, the petition sends an unmistakable signal of popular anger. Trump’s second-term policies, which include high tariffs on Canadian goods and repeated annexation threats, have driven a sharp deterioration in relations, and Canadian travel to the US has declined significantly, reflecting a growing “stay away from America” sentiment.

US Expands Military Campaign on Land in Latin America

The Trump administration is expanding its military campaign in Latin America from maritime strikes to ground operations in allied nations including Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras. Over the past year, US forces have bombed boats accused of drug trafficking off Caribbean and Pacific coasts, killing hundreds of people. Now Washington seeks to put US troops on the ground across the region. Defense Secretary Hegseth announced the expansion during a visit to Panama last week, where he observed US-sponsored multinational military exercises. The operations, conducted under the rubric of counter-narcotics, represent the contemporary iteration of the Monroe Doctrine under which the US unilaterally imposes its will by military force across the hemisphere.