

The Daily Scoop

THE DAY'S NEWS, IN FULL

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TOP STORY

US Tightens Sanctions on Iran as Trump Claims Authority Over Hormuz

WASHINGTON — The United States imposed a new round of economic sanctions on Iran this week, and Iran's foreign ministry answered by calling the measures a "declaration of war on all nations." Tehran's objection is not primarily that the sanctions are severe. It is that they are extraterritorial: because they penalize companies in third countries for trading with Iran, Iran argues Washington is asserting sovereignty over independent United Nations member states.

President Trump escalated separately, telling reporters he regards "the Strait of Hormuz as an American territory right now." The strait is a narrow shipping channel between Iran and Oman through which a substantial share of the world's seaborne oil passes. Trump also said Iran "would love to make a deal, but they're not ready to make the right deal in my opinion," which suggests negotiations are stalled rather than finished.

The claim over Hormuz is a statement of policy, not a legal finding. No treaty grants the United States sovereignty there, and the strait's territorial waters belong to Iran and Oman. Whether the phrase describes naval control on the water or is meant as a bargaining position is not clear from the remarks themselves, and the administration has not elaborated.

Iran and Oman held separate talks this week about shipping through the strait. That channel is one of the few still open.

BACKGROUND

The war began on February 28, 2026, when the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran. An early ceasefire collapsed, fighting spread into Lebanon, and Iranian attacks on shipping have kept traffic through Hormuz far below normal. The Houthi movement, Iraq, and Yemen have been drawn in. The underlying dispute traces back to the collapse of the 2015 nuclear agreement and to the network of Iranian-aligned armed groups across the region.

Why it matters: Sanctions aimed at third countries only bite if those countries comply. China's response, more than Iran's, will determine whether this round changes Tehran's calculations or simply raises the price of oil for everyone else.

What to watch: Whether China and other large buyers of Iranian crude cut purchases in September, and whether the Oman channel produces any formal negotiation.

Source: Al Jazeera, CNN, ABC News, Britannica

NATION & WORLD

US Imposes 50% Tariffs on Canadian Goods After Talks Collapse

WASHINGTON — Trade negotiations between the United States and Canada broke down Friday night, and at 12:01 a.m. Saturday the United States began collecting 50% tariffs on roughly \$20 billion of Canadian goods, about 5% of Canada's exports. Reported categories include electronics, industrial machinery, dairy, steel, lumber, automobiles, alcohol, cement, and hockey equipment. Energy, potash, and critical minerals were carved out.

The legal basis is unusual. The administration invoked Section 338 of the Tariff Act of 1930, a provision that, according to Axios, no president has used since it was enacted. That novelty makes a court challenge likely, and it comes after a February Supreme Court decision stripped the president of tariff authority under a different statute.

Prime Minister Mark Carney said the United States introduced terms late in the process that were "uneconomic, unfair and undermined the net benefits for Canada," and accused Washington of trying to limit Canada's ability to negotiate independently with other countries. He called the tariffs a miscalculation and said Canada "will match those tariffs dollar for dollar to protect our workers and businesses." US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer countered that "Canada declined to finalise the trade deal under the terms agreed earlier this week."

Trump had postponed the same tariffs on Tuesday, saying at the time that the two governments had a deal.

BACKGROUND

US-Canada trade totaled \$376 billion in the first half of 2026, roughly double US-China trade and second only to Mexico. The two economies are unusually integrated, particularly in automobiles, where components can cross the border several times before a finished vehicle is sold. A border tariff in that system is charged repeatedly along the same supply chain.

Why it matters: Tariffs are paid by the importer, not by the exporting country, so the first cost lands on American firms buying Canadian inputs. How much reaches consumers depends on how much of it those firms decide to absorb.

What to watch: September 8, when Canada's retaliatory tariffs on US steel, dairy, appliances, and agricultural machinery are scheduled to take effect, and any lawsuit testing Section 338.

Source: Al Jazeera, Axios, NBC News

GOVERNMENT

Federal Judge Vacates Visa Ban Covering 75 Countries

NEW YORK — US District Judge Jeannette Vargas vacated a State Department policy on Saturday, calling it "patently unlawful." The policy had suspended immigrant visa processing for people from 75 countries. It took effect in January 2026 and covered Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, Somalia, Brazil, Colombia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and dozens of African, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean nations. The plaintiffs were eleven individuals and two nonprofit groups.

The ruling turns on who Congress gave the decision to. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, consular officers judge each applicant one at a time against grounds written into statute. A blanket ban by nationality, Vargas found, "represents a direct abrogation of this statutory scheme." It refuses visas "to eligible applicants without any basis in law."

The State Department had defended the policy on public-charge grounds. It cited data that more than 30% of immigrant households from the covered countries received some form of government aid. The department said it was "protecting the American people by upholding the highest standards of screening and vetting." The stronger version of that argument is not about any single applicant. It is that Congress handed the executive branch broad discretion over entry, a claim courts have sometimes accepted.

One word in the ruling matters. The policy was vacated, not enjoined. It is struck down rather than paused. The department has not said whether it will appeal to the Second Circuit.

BACKGROUND

Immigrant visas are the category used by people joining relatives already in the United States, so the eight-month suspension mostly separated families rather than reducing arrivals across the board. A separate travel ban covering 39 countries and a pause on diversity visas were not part of this case and remain in place.

Why it matters: *If the ruling stands, it narrows how far a president can act by nationality alone. If it is reversed, the opposite is true. Either outcome will shape immigration policy long after this administration.*

What to watch: *Whether the Justice Department files a notice of appeal, and whether consulates begin working through the backlog while any appeal is pending.*

Source: PBS NewsHour, Al Jazeera, NPR

MONEY & WORK

Gas Hits a Record August Price as Shoppers Pull Back

WASHINGTON — The national average price of regular gasoline reached \$4.10 a gallon on Thursday, three cents higher than a week earlier and roughly 97 cents above where it stood a year ago, according to AAA. It is the highest price ever recorded on that calendar date, and August 2026 is tracking as the most expensive August in the data. Crude oil near \$80 a barrel is the immediate cause, and the cause of that is diminished traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

The consequences surfaced in Walmart's quarterly results the same day. US comparable sales rose 2.6% excluding fuel, well below the 3.8% analysts anticipated and the slowest quarterly increase in six years, while foot traffic growth slowed to 1.5% and spending per trip to 1.1%. Chief Financial Officer John David Rainey attributed the retreat to the pump: "When fuel prices increase and get above \$4, perhaps there's a psychological impact to that." Walmart shares fell 9.6% even though profit exceeded estimates, an indication that investors were reading consumer behavior rather than earnings.

Walmart is pushing against the trend, having collected roughly \$2.9 billion in tariff refunds after the Supreme Court invalidated tariffs imposed under emergency powers, and it directed that money into price reductions on 11,000 items in July.

The labor market is quiet rather than healthy. Initial jobless claims fell to 206,000 last week and layoffs remain historically rare, but hiring has nearly stopped: monthly job gains average 61,000 this year against 166,000 in 2023 and 2024, and employers cut a net 23,000 jobs in July.

BACKGROUND

In February the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act does not authorize tariffs, invalidating those duties and obligating the government to refund roughly \$166 billion to importers. About \$100 billion had been refunded by early August. The administration replaced the struck-down duties with a surcharge imposed under a different trade statute.

Why it matters: *An economy where almost nobody is fired but almost nobody is hired looks stable in the unemployment rate and feels dismal to anyone trying to land a first job.*

What to watch: *The August jobs report in early September, the last major labor reading before the Federal Reserve's September 16 decision. July inflation ran at 3.4%, still above the Fed's 2% target.*

Source: AAA, Walmart Q2 FY27 release, PBS NewsHour, Bloomberg

TERM TO KNOW

vacate

In court, to wipe out a rule or ruling entirely rather than pausing it while a case continues.

Used in a sentence: A judge who vacates a policy is saying it never had legal force, so agencies must act as though it was never issued.

SCIENCE & TECH

Astronomers Find the Fastest Known Star in the Milky Way

GARCHING, GERMANY — A star orbiting the supermassive black hole at the center of our galaxy is moving at about 25,000 kilometers per second, roughly 8% of the speed of light, making it the fastest star ever measured in the Milky Way. The European Southern Observatory announced the discovery of the star, designated S301, on August 19, with the results published in *Nature*.

S301 completes an orbit around Sagittarius A* in 8.7 years, the shortest period recorded for any star there. At its closest approach it passes within roughly 1.7 billion kilometers of the black hole, about 20% farther out than Saturn orbits the Sun. The star itself is unremarkable, a Sun-like main-sequence star of about 1.1 to 1.5 solar masses.

The observation was possible because of interferometry. The GRAVITY+ instrument on the Very Large Telescope Interferometer in Chile combines light from four 8-meter telescopes, producing roughly fifteen times the resolution of any single one. The galactic center is crowded and choked with dust, and stars this close to Sagittarius A* had been essentially impossible to isolate before. The team, led by doctoral student Felix Mang at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics, first noticed S301 in 2023 imagery and pinned down its orbit using archival data reaching back to 2017.

What the discovery does not yet deliver is the prize the team is after. The black hole's spin has not been measured. Spin should drag and twist S301's orbit in a way general relativity predicts, but confirming that requires tracking at least two complete orbits, another ten to fifteen years of observation.

BACKGROUND

Spin matters because spin and mass together fully describe a black hole in general relativity. The mass of Sagittarius A* has been known for years, and the work establishing it earned Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez a share of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics. Spin, by contrast, has only ever been inferred from models, never measured directly from a stellar orbit.

Why it matters: *A single star, tracked patiently enough, can test general relativity in a gravitational field no laboratory can produce. That is an argument for funding instruments whose payoff arrives decades after the money is spent.*

What to watch: *S301's next close approach in 2031, and whether independent groups confirm the orbital solution.*

Source: European Southern Observatory, *Nature*, Science News, Sci.News

SPORTS

New England Bows Out as Little League World Series Narrows to 12

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, PA. — Bridgewater, Massachusetts, the New England region's representative at the Little League World Series, was eliminated Saturday in a 10-0, four-inning loss to Hamilton, Ohio. Ohio pitchers Josiah Infante and Leo Feltner combined for a no-hitter, only the second thrown by an Ohio team in series history and the first since another Hamilton West Side club did it in 1993. Ohio scored seven runs in the third inning. Bridgewater finished 0-2, having lost 2-1 to Bayonne, New Jersey on August 19.

Bridgewater reached Williamsport by winning the New England regional final 8-0 over Gray, Maine, which was this state's representative. The team's social media post after the loss read, "You gave Bridgewater a summer that will never be forgotten."

Saturday's other elimination games sent home Australia, the Dominican Republic, and Bonita, California. Twelve teams remain, eight of them undefeated: Henderson, Nevada; Tacoma, Washington; Bayonne, New Jersey; and Davenport, Iowa in the US bracket, with Tijuana, Mexico; Leon, Nicaragua; Seoul, South Korea; and Willemstad, Curacao internationally.

Pitching has dominated the tournament. Three combined no-hitters were thrown across two days: Davenport over Bonita, Curacao over Tokyo, and Hamilton over Bridgewater.

Sunday's games were moved earlier so players and families could attend the ninth MLB Little League Classic, in which the Atlanta Braves face the Milwaukee Brewers at Bowman Field. The championship game is August 30.

BACKGROUND

The 20-team field is a double-elimination bracket split evenly between ten US regions and ten international regions, which is why two losses ended a Bridgewater summer that began with district play in June. New England sends a single team; Maine's Gray squad lost to Bridgewater in the regional final, so no Maine team reached Williamsport this year.

Why it matters: *Every roster in Williamsport is drawn from a chartered local league run by volunteer coaches and an elected board, which is the same structure York Little League operates on.*

What to watch: *Monday's elimination games: Boerne, Texas versus Hamilton, Ohio at 3 p.m. ET, and Phenix City, Alabama versus West Chester, Pennsylvania at 7 p.m. ET, both on ESPN.*

Source: Little League International, NBC Boston, Hamilton Journal-News

OUR TEAMS

Yankees Lost 4-3 to Toronto on Saturday

Record 73-56, second in the AL East. Play Toronto again Sunday, then host Houston Aug. 25-27.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY**1989**

On August 23, 1989, roughly two million people in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined hands in a human chain stretching about 420 miles across the three Soviet republics. The date marked 50 years since the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the secret agreement that had assigned the Baltic states to the Soviet Union. All three declared independence within two years.

SOUTHERN MAINE

Kittery Moves to Severe Water Restrictions as Maine's Drought Deepens

KITTERY — Kittery's water district imposed Level 3 restrictions on Monday, the most severe tier available to it, with no end date announced. Outdoor watering is now confined to the hours between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m., odd-numbered addresses may water on Mondays and Thursdays, even-numbered addresses on Tuesdays and Fridays, and nobody may water on weekends. A first violation draws a written warning, a second a \$100 penalty, and a third a \$500 penalty plus termination of service. The district's ponds are sitting at levels it would ordinarily expect in late autumn.

The conditions are regional rather than local. Approximately 886,000 Mainers, well over half the state's population, are now experiencing at least moderate drought, and the coastal band running from Cumberland County through southern Hancock County has deteriorated into severe drought. Southern and western Maine have received roughly half their normal rainfall, and about 73% of York County residents live in an area classified as in drought.

The pattern is not new. The current drought began in the summer of 2025, peaked statewide in late October, eased through the spring, then intensified again beginning in July. National Weather Service meteorologist Cameron Barker summarized the problem simply: the region "needed to receive additional rainfall to keep heading in the right direction. Unfortunately, we have not done that."

BACKGROUND

Much of coastal York County draws drinking water from surface reservoirs and shallow aquifers that refill from rainfall rather than from deep groundwater. A dry summer therefore shows up in supply within months rather than years, which is how a district goes from normal operations to Level 3 restrictions inside a single season.

Why it matters: Restrictions are a rationing tool, not a supply fix. If the fall stays dry, the question stops being when residents may water lawns and becomes whether towns need to interconnect systems or buy water outright.

What to watch: The US Drought Monitor release each Thursday, and whether neighboring York County districts follow Kittery into mandatory restrictions.

Source: Portland Press Herald, Maine Public, US Drought Monitor

GOOD NEWS

A River Otter Returns to the Bronx After a Century

BRONX, N.Y. — The Wildlife Conservation Society announced on August 19 that a river otter had been photographed along the Bronx River, the first documented in the borough in roughly 100 years. A motion-activated camera captured the animal, apparently a juvenile, on June 23. The images were reviewed and verified before the announcement. RJ Hawkins, the Bronx Zoo scientist who has run camera traps on the river since 2024, said he "could hardly believe" what he was seeing.

River otters disappeared from the Bronx River in the early twentieth century because of pollution, habitat destruction, and unregulated trapping. For decades it was among the most degraded waterways in the region. The Bronx River Alliance, city and state agencies, and volunteers have spent years hauling out debris, rebuilding banks, and improving water quality. Beavers returned in 2007 after an absence of more than two centuries.

Otters are a harder test than beavers. Beavers eat bark and vegetation, while otters need clean water and a fish population healthy enough to support a predator. Their presence is evidence about the whole food web, not merely the water chemistry.

Researchers are careful about what a single photograph proves. The otter's sex is unknown. It may live on the river or it may have been passing through. No second animal has been documented, and one sighting is not a population.

BACKGROUND

The Bronx River runs from Westchester County down through the borough to the East River and was heavily industrialized for more than a century. The Bronx River Alliance, formed to coordinate cleanup work with city and state agencies and volunteers, has run a restoration effort measured in decades. That timeline is why the beaver in 2007 and the otter now read as milestones rather than surprises.

Why it matters: Ecological restoration is usually argued for on projected benefits nobody alive will live to verify. This is one of the rare cases where the projection came true on a human timescale, in a place most people had written off.

What to watch: Repeat sightings on the camera network, particularly a second animal or a female with pups, which would be the first real evidence of a breeding population.

Source: Wildlife Conservation Society, CBS New York, Gothamist, NY1

WORTH ARGUING ABOUT

1. Judge Vargas ruled that Congress gave individual visa decisions to consular officers, so a president cannot suspend an entire nationality. Where should the line sit between executive discretion over entry and the rules Congress writes? Test your answer against a case where you would want a president to act fast.

2. Walmart used \$2.9 billion in tariff refunds to cut prices on 11,000 items. Is that a company passing savings to customers, or a company buying market share at a moment smaller competitors cannot match? Does your answer change what you think of the tariffs themselves?

3. The Bronx River absorbed decades of public money before one otter showed up, and one otter is not a population. How should a city decide when a restoration project has actually worked?