

# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

## TELESUR

FEBRUARY 23, 2026

THE G D E L T P R O J E C T

### GLOBAL INSTABILITY PEAKS: NORTH AMERICAN SECURITY, TRADE CRISES, AND ANDEAN-CARIBBEAN DISPLACEMENT

A SYNTHESIS OF MAJOR GLOBAL TRENDS, GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS, AND STRATEGIC FORESIGHT - FEBRUARY 2026 REPORT

#### NORTH AMERICAN SECURITY BREAKPOINTS

**MEXICO: CJNG LEADERSHIP NEUTRALIZED & ASYMMETRIC BACKLASH**



**EL MENCHO**



**INFODEMIA**

Operation in Tapalpa decapitates CJNG. Retaliation: 85 roadblocks, 25 National Guard killed, tech-driven urban paralysis. Fragmented cartel war imminent.

REGIONAL STABILITY THREAT

**US: CONSTITUTIONAL & TRADE CRISIS ESCALATION**



**EXECUTIVE ORDER: 15% GLOBAL TARIFFS (SECTION 122)**



**EU, INDIA HALT DEALS**

Executive bypasses Supreme Court on trade. Emergency powers used for 15% tariffs. Global economic uncertainty & institutional breakdown fears.

GLOBAL ECONOMIC VOLATILITY

#### GEOPOLITICAL DIVIDE & SYSTEMIC SHOCKS



**WESTERN-ALIGNED ORDER (CRISIS OF CREDIBILITY)**

**WEAPONIZATION OF TRADE & ENERGY COMMODITIES**

**MULTIPOLAR COALITION (RESISTANCE & PIVOT)**


**BRICS**

**CUBA ENERGY SIEGE**

**EU ENERGY VULNERABILITY**

#### ANDEAN-CARIBBEAN: DISPLACEMENT & ENERGY WARFARE


**ECUADOR: SYSTEMIC DISPLACEMENT & "ZONES OF SACRIFICE"**



**CRIME-CONTROLLED NEIGHBORHOODS**

Record 316k internally displaced. State retreat creates cartel-run zones. Institutionalized crime vs. "narrative of war".

**CUBA: ENERGY SIEGE & INNOVATION FOR SURVIVAL**



**FUEL SHIPMENT BLOCKADE**

**RUDIMENTARY METHODS**

**RENEWABLE TRANSITION**

Severe blackouts due to US "energy genocide". Forced innovation in basic services, pivot to solar energy with allies.

**VENEZUELA: SOVEREIGNTY, DETENTION & MULTILATERAL RESISTANCE**



**MADURO/FLORES DETENTION**

**NON-RENTIER ECONOMY**

UNHRC platform used to denounce "global tyranny". Demand for leaders' release. Focus on local production to mitigate blockade.

#### STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & PATHWAYS FORWARD

**SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS):**  
INTRA-CARTEL WAR, TARIFF HIKES, LEGAL CHALLENGES.



**MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS):**  
VENEZUELA AMNESTY TEST, CUBA'S RENEWABLE SHIFT, EU ENERGY STRAIN.



**LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS):**  
PERMANENT DISPLACEMENT ZONES, NUCLEAR RE-STATIONING RISKS, MULTIPOLAR INFRASTRUCTURE.



**POLICY ACTION:**  
Multilateral Energy Corridors, UNHRC Reform on Tech Aggression, Monitor Baltics Nuclear Risk.

**PRIVATE SECTOR:**  
Diversify Supply Chains, Avoid Volatile Zones, Invest in Polar Logistics/Rare Earths.

Source: Global Intelligence Report, February 23, 2026. Illustrated Explainer Poster.

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GLOBAL INSTABILITY PEAKS AS MEXICO NEUTRALIZES A TOP CARTEL LEADER, THE US ENTERS A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS OVER TRADE, AND THE ANDEAN-CARIBBEAN REGION GRAPPLES WITH SYSTEMIC DISPLACEMENT AND ENERGY WARFARE.

## DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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February 23, 2026, marks a watershed moment in North American security and global trade relations. In Mexico, a high-impact military operation led to the [death of Nemesio Ocegüera Cervantes](#), alias "El Mencho," the leader of the *Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación* (CJNG). The subsequent retaliatory violence, involving 85 roadblocks and multiple attacks on civil infrastructure across several states, has forced the Mexican government into a state of total mobilization to maintain the appearance of [absolute coordination and governability](#). While the neutralization of one of the world's most wanted criminals is a tactical win, the resulting fragmentation of cartel structures poses an immediate threat to regional stability and the safety of the civilian population.

Simultaneously, the United States has entered a profound constitutional conflict. Following a Supreme Court ruling that declared his previous tariff policies illegal, President Donald Trump unilaterally escalated the trade war, raising [global tariffs to 15%](#) by invoking emergency powers. This move signals a total breakdown in the separation of powers and has triggered immediate economic uncertainty, with international partners like the European Union and India [halting trade agreements](#) and questioning the reliability of US institutional stability. The global economy is now bracing for a period of extreme protectionism and retaliatory measures from major trading blocs.

In the multilateral arena, the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has become a theater for a "Southern Bloc" resistance. Venezuela and Cuba have utilized the platform to denounce what they characterize as a [global tyranny led by the US](#). Venezuelan officials are demanding the release of President Nicolás Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores, who have allegedly been [arbitrarily detained since January 3, 2026](#). Meanwhile, Cuba faces a catastrophic energy crisis, exacerbated by a naval blockade, forcing the population to revert to [charcoal and firewood](#) for survival. These developments underscore a deepening geopolitical divide between the Western-aligned order and a burgeoning multipolar coalition led by Russia and China.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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- **Neutralization of CJNG Leadership:** Mexican special forces and the National Guard executed an "operation of high impact" in Tapalpa, Jalisco, resulting in the [death of Ruben/Nemesio N. alias El Mencho](#). The cartel responded with asymmetric warfare, including 27 attacks on authorities and [85 federal highway blocks](#) across states like Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Veracruz. [25 members of the National Guard](#) were killed in the clashes.
- **US Constitutional and Trade Escalation:** Defying a Supreme Court defeat, President Trump increased global tariffs to 15% via [Section 122 of the Trade Act](#). The executive is leveraging the "International Emergency Economic Powers Act" to bypass legislative and judicial checks, sparking fears of a [domestic power conflict](#) and global market volatility.
- **Ecuadorian Humanitarian Crisis:** The country reports a record [316,000 internally displaced persons](#) in the last 24 months. Cartel extortion and "vaccination" (protection rackets) have created "zones of sacrifice" where the [state has retreated](#), leaving criminal structures to exercise local governance.
- **Cuban Energy Siege:** Following an executive order to block fuel shipments, Cuba has entered a [period of severe blackouts](#). Educational and food sectors have been forced to [innovate with rudimentary methods](#) (charcoal cooking) to maintain basic social services amidst an "energy genocide."

- **Nuclear Brinkmanship in Iran and Estonia:** Iran signaled it would [not cede to military pressure](#) regarding its nuclear program but remains open to diplomacy in Geneva. Conversely, Russia warned Estonia that it would be considered a [nuclear target](#) if it agreed to host NATO nuclear assets.

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

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### AI, Technology Policy & Digital Sovereignty

- Experts warn that algorithmic ecosystems are [prioritizing engagement over depth](#), eroding critical analysis in younger generations. There is a call for "ludic reading" to combat [algorithmic imposture](#).
- The use of [AI to seed panic](#) and "infodemia" was observed during the Mexican cartel violence, prompting calls for deeper cyber-forensic investigations into criminal propaganda accounts.
- The emergence of [AI-generated political candidates](#) in Colombia (e.g., "Gaetana") highlights a new era of digital influence that bypasses traditional reality.

### Energy Security

- Cuba is accelerating its [transition to solar energy](#) through parks fotovoltaicos with the support of allied nations to bypass the US fuel blockade.
- European gas reserves are [declining below 25%](#) in six countries, including Germany and France, maintaining high vulnerability to supply shocks.
- Hungría is [blocking military aid to Ukraine](#) (9 billion Euros) until the Druzhba oil pipeline resume Russian supply, illustrating energy-based leverage within the EU.

## Economic Security & Trade

- China has overtaken the US as [Germany's primary trading partner](#), with a trade volume of 251.8 billion Euros, reflecting a strategic pivot in the Eurozone.
- The US faces [rising delinquency in personal debt](#) (9.5%), with citizens increasingly using credit cards for basic food necessities due to inflation and stagnant wages.
- Venezuela is promoting a ["non-rentier" diversified economy](#), focusing on local production and communal commerce to mitigate blockade effects.

## Domestic Stability & Civil Unrest

- The Mexican government deployed [2,500 additional troops](#) to Jalisco to deter further cartel reactions following the CJNG leadership vacuum.
- In Ecuador, the "narrative of war" used by the Noboa administration is criticized for [justifying budgets without cooling the streets](#), where crime has become institutionalized.
- Peru's interim president, José María Balcázar, faces a [63% disapproval rating](#), with 81% of the population believing the situation will not improve under his leadership.

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

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Legislative activity centered on the use of emergency powers in the US, amnesty processes in Venezuela, and cultural protection laws in Central America. Press events were dominated by the Mexican security cabinet's efforts to project control following a massive cartel decapitation operation.

## BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **US Tariff Executive Order (Section 122):** A move to [raise global tariffs to 15%](#) using emergency economic statutes to bypass the Supreme Court's prior rejection of tariff foundations.
- **Venezuelan Amnesty Law for Democratic Coexistence 2026:** A mechanism aimed at ["healing the hatred"](#) and reintegrating political actors while ensuring "no repetition" of the violence seen between 2002 and 2019.
- **Guatemala Film Law (Initiative 5906):** Legislation that has [passed its second reading](#) to create the Guatemalan Institute of Cinema, aiming to protect local identity from being a mere service provider for Disney and Netflix.

## HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Mexican Security Cabinet Presser (Mañanera):** President Sheinbaum and Secretary García Harfuch confirmed the [identification of Mencho's body](#) and defended the "fortress of the Mexican State" while acknowledging significant casualties among security forces.
- **UN Human Rights Council (Session 61):** Venezuelan Foreign Minister Iván Gil and Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez held [bilateral meetings and addressed the council](#), demanding an end to "asymmetric" technological warfare and illegal detentions.
- **Miraflores Victim Encounter:** Acting President Delcy Rodríguez met with families of [victims of political hate crimes](#) to discuss the implementation of the new Amnesty Law and restorative justice.

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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### The Weaponization of the Global Commons

- A significant trend is the increasing weaponization of trade and energy as tools of geopolitical coercion. The US "[energy siege](#)" on Cuba and the Hungarian [leverage of oil pipelines](#) within the EU demonstrate that basic commodities have replaced traditional diplomacy. This shift towards "resource lawfare" is driving smaller nations to prioritize [internal self-sufficiency](#) (soberanía alimentaria/energética) over international cooperation, further fragmenting global supply chains.

### Cartel Decapitation and Asymmetric Backlash

- The neutralization of El Mencho follows a historical pattern where decapitation leads to immediate, extreme [civilian-facing violence](#). However, the 2026 context is marked by the cartel's use of [advanced tech \(drones with explosives\)](#) and AI-driven disinformation to cause urban paralysis. The state's response—deploying massive troop reinforcements—highlights that the "War on Drugs" has evolved into a [protracted urban insurgency](#) where governability is measured by the ability to clear roadblocks rather than dismantling the underlying criminal economy.

### Hegemonic Crisis and the Multipolar Pivot

- The reports suggest a severe credibility crisis for the US-led international order. From [defying its own Supreme Court](#) to the [alleged detention of a foreign head of state](#) (Maduro), the US is increasingly viewed by the Global South as an "arbitrary hegemon." This is accelerating the [multipolar pivot](#), as nations like Russia and Mexico increase [solidarity shipments](#) to Cuba and BRICS-related nations like India expand domestic infrastructure projects to [reduce Western dependency](#).

## STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

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**Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect a surge in intra-cartel warfare in Mexico as CJNG factions and rivals like the Sinaloa Cartel move to [reoccupy territory](#) vacated by El Mencho's inner circle. In the US, the 15% tariff hike will likely trigger [legal challenges from major importers](#) and immediate price hikes for consumer goods, further straining the already fragile domestic economic sentiment.

**Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The Venezuelan Amnesty Law will be a litmus test for [domestic social cohesion](#); however, the ongoing detention of its leadership remains a primary obstacle to full normalization. Cuba's [transition to renewables](#) will reach a critical mass, potentially creating a new model for "blockade-resilient" infrastructure that other sanctioned nations might emulate.

**Long Term (1-5 Years):** The persistent internal displacement in Ecuador (over [300k people](#)) will lead to a demographic shift and long-term "governance criminal" zones that may necessitate [international humanitarian intervention](#). The US-Russia nuclear rhetoric over the Baltics could lead to a [permanent re-stationing of nuclear assets](#) in Eastern

Europe, ending the post-Cold War security architecture.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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### For International Policy:

- Establish multilateral "energy corridors" for sanctioned nations to prevent [catastrophic humanitarian collapses](#) that drive mass migration.
- Reform the UN Human Rights Council to address ["asymmetric technological aggression"](#) as a formal human rights violation.
- Monitor the [Estonian-Russian nuclear standoff](#) as the primary flashpoint for potential NATO-Russia escalation.

### For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Risk:** Diversify away from US-based logistics hubs if [protectionist tariff escalation](#) continues to destabilize predictable cost modeling.
- **Security Volatility:** Avoid long-term capital investments in Jalisco and neighboring Mexican states until the [CJNG leadership succession](#) is resolved and violence levels stabilize.
- **Investment Opportunity:** Significant growth potential exists in [Antarctic logistics and "rare earth" exploration](#) as Argentina and others move to affirm sovereignty in resource-rich polar regions.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

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**Today's Media Trends** is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend

analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

### No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

For questions or suggestions, please contact [kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com](mailto:kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com). You can also learn more about the GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.