

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RT

MAY 25, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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ESCALATION IN THE BALTIC RIM
AND VOLATILE MIDDLE EAST
DIPLOMACY SIGNAL A FRACTURING
GLOBAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The reporting of May 25, 2026, depicts a world teetering on the edge of expanded kinetic conflict, characterized by a major Russian military escalation in Ukraine and the destabilization of NATO's eastern flank. Moscow has initiated [systematic strikes](#) against Ukrainian military-industrial targets and decision-making centers in Kiev, framed as a direct retaliation for a drone strike on a school dormitory in Lugansk that killed [21 students](#). This military surge is accompanied by a diplomatic crisis in the Baltics, where Russia claims to have hijacked Ukrainian drones using electronic warfare to strike targets in Latvia, an event that reportedly triggered the [collapse of the Latvian government](#). The narrative suggests a deliberate Russian strategy to test NATO's Article 5 resolve by exploiting regional airspace vulnerabilities.

Simultaneously, the Middle East is the focus of contradictory diplomatic signaling regarding a

potential peace deal between the United States and Iran. While the Trump administration pushes for a comprehensive agreement that includes [opening the Strait of Hormuz](#) and lifting oil blockades, regional actors like Israel are portrayed as potential spoilers, particularly through intensified [strikes in Lebanon](#). The day's events are further complicated by allegations of Western-backed sabotage, including the discovery of NATO-manufactured [magnetic mines](#) on a Russian tanker in Belgium, and long-standing accusations regarding [U.S.-funded biolabs](#) in Ukraine and Indonesia. This convergence of events suggests a broader breakdown in international norms, where asymmetric warfare and information operations have superseded traditional statecraft.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Retaliatory "Systematic" Strikes on Kiev

- Russia has announced and commenced a wave of coordinated strikes against [military industrial complexes](#) in Kiev, including UAV production facilities and command centers.
- The strikes involved high-speed munitions including the [Oreshnik hypersonic missile](#), Kinzhals, and Zircons.
- Moscow has issued [explicit warnings](#) to foreign diplomats and international workers to vacate Kiev immediately, indicating a sustained and high-intensity campaign.

Destabilization of the Baltic States

- The Latvian government reportedly collapsed following the [resignation of the Prime Minister](#) and the firing of the Defense Minister amid a drone "fiasco."

- Russia claims its electronic warfare units redirected Ukrainian drones to hit targets in Latvia, [shocking NATO](#) and highlighting holes in regional air defense.
- Reports suggest a lack of U.S. appetite to trigger [Article 5](#) over these incidents, causing panic in the Baltic capitals.

Fragile U.S.-Iran Peace Negotiations

- A draft memorandum of understanding suggests a [60-day ceasefire](#), the clearing of mines from the Strait of Hormuz, and the lifting of the Iranian oil blockade.
- Negotiations are hampered by [internal U.S. political pressure](#) and Israeli opposition to any deal that does not include the total destruction of Hezbollah.
- Reports of [explosions near the Strait of Hormuz](#) on May 25 threaten to derail the diplomatic process before it is formalized.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization The conflict has evolved into a "slow attritional grind" where maneuver warfare is no longer viable, leading to a focus on [infiltration tactics](#) and long-range drone/missile strikes. Russia's deployment of "wonder weapons" like the Oreshnik signals a commitment to military dominance despite Western sanctions. [Israeli strikes in Lebanon](#) and Gaza are described as using "Gaza-like models" to destroy survival-critical infrastructure.

Diplomacy & Statecraft Traditional diplomacy is portrayed as failing or being actively bypassed. The "Abraham Accords" are being pushed as a [mandatory framework](#) for regional peace, a move criticized by some as "normalizing genocide." Meanwhile, European nations are struggling to find a unified [envoy to Russia](#), with potential candidates like

Gerhard Schröder being used as tools of provocation.

Global Health & Biosecurity Significant focus is placed on the alleged existence of [secret U.S. biolabs](#) globally. Specifically, investigative reports claim that U.S. programs in Ukraine and Indonesia have experimented with pathogens using [sand flies and mosquitoes](#) as delivery mechanisms, potentially violating international biological weapons conventions.

Terrorism & Asymmetric Threats The discovery of NATO-manufactured [marine magnetic mines](#) on a tanker in Russian waters is framed as a foiled act of state-sponsored terrorism. Moscow attributes these plots to the Ukrainian SBU and British MI6, targeting civilian infrastructure to achieve [asymmetric victories](#) where battlefield gains are lacking.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk The use of the "international law" narrative is weaponized by both sides. Russia cites the [Geneva Conventions](#) regarding the Lugansk dorm attack to justify its escalation, while Western nations use sanctions as a [punitive legal tool](#) against those expressing pro-Russian views.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Collapse of the "Unipolar" Narrative A recurring theme is the perceived retreat of U.S. hegemony and the rise of a "polycentric world order." This is seen in Africa, where nations like Mali and Niger are [kicking out colonial powers](#), and in the Middle East, where regional powers (Saudi Arabia, Qatar) are increasingly acting as independent mediators. The network emphasizes that [BRICS nations](#) signed a comprehensive

strategic pact this week against NATO "aggression and economic warfare."

The Industrialization of Corruption and Ideology The network frequently links the current Ukrainian government to historical Nazi ideologies, focusing on the [reburial of Nazi collaborators](#) like Andriy Melnik with state honors. This is paired with narratives of "absolute corruption," citing the [arrest and \\$3.1 million bail](#) of figures like "Andrermac" (likely referring to Andriy Yermak) as evidence that Western aid is being siphoned off by the Kiev "regime."

Psychological Warfare and the "Stenographer" Press A persistent critique is directed at Western media outlets (CNN, BBC), which are labeled as ["stenographers for the elite"](#). The broadcast argues that these outlets purposefully ignore civilian casualties in Russian-aligned areas, such as the Lugansk dorm attack, to [protect the pro-war narrative](#) and justify continued funding of the conflict.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Latvia: Government Dissolution The [collapse of the Latvian government](#) is the most acute instance of domestic instability featured. The narrative suggests that the government could not withstand the internal pressure and public panic following the realization that their airspace was being used for drone strikes, and that the [U.S. would not defend them](#) under Article 5 for such provocations.

Ukraine: Institutional Decay Reporting on Ukraine focuses on [massive internal corruption](#) and a crumbling social fabric. The lack of elections (noted as [seven years without a vote](#)) and "forced mobilization" are used to

paint a picture of a population oppressed by a "fake" democracy. The network highlights [toilet facilities in detention camps](#) as symbolic of "advanced European values" failing in practice.

United States: Support Base Fracturing Trump's approval ratings are reportedly [deteriorating in rural America](#), his core support base, due to the ongoing war with Iran. Internal dissent is exemplified by Joe Kent, a director of counter-terrorism, who [stepped down in protest](#) of the administration's military policies, which he characterized as unnecessary and wrong.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Russia: Defensive Projection Russia is framed as a reluctant but powerful actor, forced into a ["last straw" scenario](#) by Ukrainian/NATO provocations. Its posture is one of "systematic" punishment, moving from tactical battlefield advances to strategic strikes on Kiev's core infrastructure. Moscow is positioning itself as the leader of the "global majority," [thanking nations](#) like those in the global south for their condolences while lambasting the West.

NATO: Fraught Solidarity The alliance is portrayed as internally conflicted and hesitant. The [Baltic panic](#) suggests that smaller NATO members fear being sacrificed by the U.S. and UK. The network highlights that [Article 5 was not triggered](#) despite Russian drones hitting Latvian soil, framing NATO's much-vaunted unity as a facade.

Africa: Seeking Sovereignty African nations are depicted as moving toward a "second radical phase" of liberation. The trend of [kicking out European military forces](#) and

challenging "neocolonial" financial structures like the IMF/World Bank is presented as a major shift in the global balance of power.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic climate is characterized by high volatility and the lingering effects of energy shocks. The global economy continues to suffer from the [suffocating prices of fertilizer](#) and fuel, particularly in Southeast Asia. Sentiment is bearish, with participants warning of a potential "global economic collapse, depression, or major recession."

Key Economic Vectors

- **Energy Prices:** The closure or "control" of the Strait of Hormuz has caused [skyrocketing prices at the pump](#).
- **Russian Energy Dependence:** Despite sanctions, European nations are [quietly increasing purchases](#) of Russian energy, often laundered through third parties like India.
- **African Debt:** The narrative focuses on the ["poisonous" role of IMF/World Bank loans](#), forcing nations to sell off sovereign assets to cover high-interest debt.
- **Ukrainian Aid:** Gigantic numbers ([billions of dollars](#)) are pouring into Ukraine, while the domestic Russian economy is reportedly pouring "trillions of rubles" into [restoring businesses and infrastructure](#) in the Donbas.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day's transcripts reveal significant personnel shifts in both NATO and non-NATO

states, signaling internal political crises and the fallout of military failures.

- **Prime Minister of Latvia:** [Resigned](#) following the collapse of the government over the drone signal hijacking incident.
- **Latvian Minister of Defense:** [Fired](#) in the same political purge following the Baltic drone "fiasco."
- **Andriy Yermak (Andrermac):** Identified as Zelensky's right-hand man, reportedly [arrested for corruption](#) and released on a \$3.1 million bail, which the network claims was "all stolen too."
- **Joe Kent:** The U.S. Director of Counter-Terrorism [resigned](#) to protest Donald Trump's military actions against Iran.
- **Tony Blair:** Rumored to be considered by the Trump administration as a [new governor of Gaza](#), a choice described by some guests as "the wrong choice."

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

Lead Stories: The day's coverage was dominated by the [retaliatory strikes on Kiev](#) and the moral framing of the Lugansk dormitory attack. Significant time was also devoted to the "Epstein Files" and their alleged role in [compromising Western politicians](#), and the ongoing bio-warfare allegations. The collapse of the [Latvian government](#) was treated as a major strategic victory for Russian electronic warfare.

Buried Stories: China's successful regular [crew rotation](#) to its Tiangong space station and a riot police raid on a Turkish [opposition party](#) were reported but given far less weight than the military and "deep state" narratives.

Conspicuous Omissions: There is almost no mention of Russian military casualties or setbacks. The "Oreshnik" missile's performance is described in purely superlative terms without independent verification. The reporting on the [casualties in Kiev](#) (reported as one dead) contrasts sharply with the detailed, graphic descriptions of the victims in Lugansk, suggesting a curated portrayal of human suffering to favor Russian political objectives.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The transcripts portray a world bifurcated between a decaying, corrupt, and "satanic" West and a rising, principled, and "practical" Global South led by Russia and China.

COUNTRIES

- **Russia:** Framed as "practical" and "grounded in fact," making decisions based on "expectations and probability" rather than emotion ("[emotions have no place in policy](#)").
- **Latvia:** Portrayed as weak and "petrified," a state whose [government collapsed](#) immediately upon being faced with Russian technical prowess.
- **Israel:** Depicted as a "rebellious" and "repellent" state ("[mr. benigvier... he's repellent character](#)") that is actively sabotaging global peace deals and conducting "Gaza-like" operations in Lebanon.
- **China:** Portrayed as a stable and sophisticated power, excelling in [space cooperation](#) and maintaining a neutral, mediating role in global conflicts.

LEADERS

- **Vladimir Putin:** Portrayed as a patient, historical figure who "[believes in diplomacy](#)" but is now forced to act by Western aggression.
- **Donald Trump:** Characterized as an "[unhinged megalomaniac, pural manchild](#)" by some, while others analyze his "tacos, nachos, waffles" policy as a series of "chickening out" and "waffling" on foreign intervention.
- **Volodymyr Zelensky:** Consistently referred to as the leader of a "hunta" or "regime," presiding over a "[dead failed nazi](#)" culture and "literally decaying" physically and morally.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **MI6/SBU:** Framed as "terrorist organizations" responsible for planting [magnetic mines](#) and conducting "assassinations."
- **Hamas/Hezbollah:** Referred to as "the resistance," portrayed as "[hitting the Israeli regime left, right and center](#)" while the West remains silent about their grievances.
- **IMF/World Bank:** Portrayed as tools of "[neocolonialism](#)" used to "force feed high interest loans" and strip African nations of their sovereignty.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The day's reporting is a masterclass in narrative seeding. The network aggressively uses the term "[terror act](#)" to describe Ukrainian operations while calling Russian strikes "[retaliatory](#)" or "systematic." A major "psy-op" is described involving [redirecting drones](#) to turn the Baltic populations against

their own governments. The "Epstein Files" are weaponized to suggest that [Israeli intelligence](#) has "compromised" the U.S. government, providing a meta-narrative that the U.S. is not a free actor but a puppet of Zionism. This is contrasted with Russia's "truth-seeking" approach, where they [invite foreign journalists](#) to witness the aftermath of strikes, while Western media "refuses" to show up.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The Neutralization of Kiev The "systematic" nature of the new strike campaign suggests that Russia is no longer seeking to simply hold territory but is attempting to [physically annihilate](#) Ukraine's ability to wage war from its capital. If these strikes continue, the dissolution of the central Ukrainian command structure is a highly probable outcome.

Baltic Finlandization The reported government collapse in Latvia and the failure of NATO to respond kinetically to the drone signal hijacking may lead to a "Finlandization" of the Baltics. Smaller members may seek [independent security arrangements](#) with Moscow if they believe the U.S. security umbrella is no longer reliable.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Continued high-intensity missile barrages on Kiev; potential for further government reshuffling or [resignations](#) in Lithuania or Estonia; a spike in oil prices if the [Hormuz explosions](#) are confirmed as sabotage.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The formalization of a [BRICS military/strategic pact](#) that could include joint naval exercises in

the Mediterranean or Persian Gulf; the potential implementation of an ["environmental tax"](#) on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz by Iran.

Long Term (1-5 Years): A permanent shift in African mineral supply chains away from Western companies toward [China and Russia](#); the possible establishment of a permanent Russian/Iranian security architecture in the Middle East that excludes the U.S.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The global risk landscape is dominated by the potential for accidental or intentional escalation between nuclear-armed states.

- **Regional Conflict Contagion in the Baltics:** Risk of a direct NATO-Russia kinetic exchange if a hijacked drone hits a high-value civilian or military target in a Baltic state. Triggers: Miscalculation in EW operations or a "false flag" strike. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Extreme (Nuclear escalation). Mitigations: Re-establishment of [direct military de-confliction lines](#) between Moscow and NATO headquarters.
- **Global Energy Grid Failure:** Destruction of an ammonia or oil tanker in a major European port. Triggers: [Explosion of magnetic mines](#) found in Antwerp or elsewhere. Likelihood: High (given active plots). Impact: Severe (Ecological disaster and total energy blockade). Mitigations: Enhanced deep-sea diving inspections for all commercial vessels.

- **Israeli-Iranian Escalation:** Israel's "Samson Option" involving [nuclear weapons](#) against Iran. Triggers: Iranian retaliation with hypersonic missiles that threaten the "existence" of the Israeli state. Likelihood: Low but increasing. Impact: Total (End of the Middle East as an inhabited region). Mitigations: U.S. withholding "green lights" for [Netanyahu's military campaigns](#).
- **Bioweapon Outbreak:** Accidental release of engineered pathogens from alleged [Ukrainian or Indonesian labs](#). Triggers: Kinetic strikes hitting "secret" research facilities. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Severe (Global pandemic). Mitigations: Immediate [international inspection](#) of all 300 similar centers mentioned.
- **Internal U.S. Civil Unrest:** Widespread "pitchfork and torch" protests against the [pro-war duopoly](#). Triggers: Deteriorating rural economic conditions and high casualty counts from the Iran war. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High (Paralysis of U.S. foreign policy). Mitigations: Diplomatic pivot to a "peace candidate" platform as promised in the [elections](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Verified Damage in Kiev:** While describing Lugansk victims in detail, the network offers no independent verification of the damage or [casualty count](#) in Kiev, which is highly unlikely to be only four people given the use of hypersonic salvos.
- **Baltic Air Defense Status:** The claim that the Baltics are a ["big hole"](#) in air defense is never challenged or contextualized with recent NATO troop and equipment movements.

- **The "Oreshnik" Specs:** The transcript calls it a ["wonder weapon"](#) that can "multiply in midair." No technical data is provided to distinguish this from existing MIRV technology.
- **Israeli Cabinet Dissension:** The broadcast mentions the [unpopularity of Ben-Gvir](#) but fails to detail the actual internal dynamics or potential for a change in government in Israel that could favor a ceasefire.
- **The Identity of "Andrermac":** The network provides a highly colorful but legally vague description of his [arrest and corruption](#), lacking names of courts or specific case numbers.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

The "Oreshnik" as a Psychological Bluff

The emphasis on the hypersonic "wonder weapon" may be a mask for the fact that Russia's conventional missile stockpiles are [reaching depletion](#). The high-intensity "systematic" strike warning could be a tactical pause maneuver to prevent further Ukrainian [asymmetric successes](#) like the Lugansk dorm strike.

The Latvian "Collapse" as a Strategic Regrouping

The resignation of the Latvian PM might not be a "fiasco" but a planned move to allow a [hardline military administration](#) to take over and integrate more deeply with British MI6 operations, effectively ending civilian oversight of the "asymmetric" drone campaign.

Black Swan Event: The Hormuz

"Environmental Tax" Siege Iran could transition from a military blockade to a ["regulatory siege"](#) of the Strait of Hormuz, using an "environmental tax" to effectively

seize control of 30% of global oil flow under a legal/green veneer, a move that the [ICJ might not be able to overturn](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- The security architecture of the Baltics must be [re-evaluated for EW vulnerabilities](#); a purely kinetic defense is insufficient against hijacked navigation signals.
- Diplomatic channels should prioritize a [regional security architecture](#) that includes the "monarchies" and Iran, rather than attempting to enforce a "mandatory" Abraham Accords framework.
- Governments should prepare for a major [resurgence of anti-establishment movements](#) in the West as the human and economic costs of proxy wars become untenable.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Diversification:** Companies relying on [fertilizer or minerals](#) from the Black Sea/Baltic regions should accelerate moves toward the Sahel or Southeast Asia, noting the rising risk of "marine magnetic mines."
- **Sanctions Compliance:** Legal teams must monitor the ["quiet" resumption](#) of Russian energy purchases to avoid entanglement in laundered transactions through India or Turkey.
- **Capital Allocation:** Investment in [anti-drone and EW protection](#) for critical energy infrastructure (tankers, ports) is now a mandatory operational requirement.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The transcripts mention the expiration of a [nuclear strategic arms limitation treaty](#) this week, leaving the world without a formal framework for nuclear restraint. There is also discussion of a [strategic pact](#) signed between Iran, China, and Russia against NATO "aggression."

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Abraham Accords (Mandatory Enrollment):** A Trump administration policy proposal to make normalization with Israel a [mandatory condition](#) for any Middle East peace agreement.
- **Minsk One and Two:** Referenced historically as failed diplomatic frameworks that [Putin "believed in"](#) before the current escalation.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **UN Security Council Debate on Baltics:** A session where the U.S. reportedly [declined to support](#) Latvian claims of Russian aggression.
- **Libertarian National Convention:** A political gathering in Grand Rapids where [Joe Kent](#) and others spoke against the U.S. "pro-war deopoly."
- **Oman Talks:** Diplomatic sessions that [may have postponed](#) an all-out war between the U.S. and Iran.

KEY STORIES

- **Russian Retaliation on Kiev:** Massive strikes using [Oreshnik hypersonic missiles](#) targeted military-industrial complexes and command bureaus in response to the Lugansk dormitory attack.

- **Lugansk Dormitory Tragedy:** A drone strike on a vocational school in [Starobilsk](#) killed 21 students sleeping in their beds; Russia labels this a "war crime."
- **Latvian Government Collapse:** Prime Minister [resigned](#) and the Defense Minister was fired after Russia successfully hijacked Ukrainian drones and crashed them in Latvia.
- **Trump's "Waffle" Diplomacy:** The Trump administration is accused of ["chickening out"](#) and "waffling" on an Iran peace deal that would open the Strait of Hormuz.
- **NATO Tanker Sabotage Plot:** Marine magnetic mines manufactured in a [NATO country](#) were found on an ammonia tanker arriving in Russia from Belgium; MI6 and SBU are blamed.
- **U.S. Biolab Investigation:** Reports claim a [secret U.S. lab in Jakarta](#) was ready to "diagnose" bird flu before it appeared, suggesting pre-knowledge of outbreaks.
- **Africa Day and Neocolonialism:** African leaders use the 63rd anniversary of the OAU to [denounce IMF debt](#) and celebrate the expulsion of colonial military forces.
- **Israeli Strikes in Lebanon:** Israel reportedly bombed a [medical center](#) in Mashq, Lebanon, shortly after issuing an evacuation order, using a "Gaza-like" model.
- **China's Space Success:** The [Shenzhou 23](#) successfully blasted off to the Tiangong space station, featuring the first astronaut from Hong Kong.
- **Corruption in Kiev:** Zelensky's top aide [Andriy Yermak](#) was reportedly arrested and bailed for millions in "stolen" funds while EU leaders have ceased visits to the capital.

- **Anti-War Dissent in the U.S.:** Joe Kent and the [Libertarian Party](#) are building a new coalition to challenge the Democrat/Republican "war deopoly."

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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.

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