

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

RT

JULY 13, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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GLOBAL SECURITY STRAINED BY
US-IRAN KINETIC ESCALATION,
STRAIT OF HORMUZ TRANSIT
CRISIS, AND INTENSIFYING
RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN ATTRITION

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

July 13, 2026, is characterized by a dangerous convergence of regional conflicts into a potentially unmanageable global crisis. The primary driver is the collapse of diplomatic efforts in West Asia, where the [United States has launched its third consecutive night of strikes](#) against Iranian targets. This escalation has effectively neutralized the April 8th ceasefire and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with both sides accusing the other of [cheating and bad faith](#). The conflict has moved beyond symbolic gestures to a direct threat to global energy stability, as Iran and the US engage in a narrative and physical battle for control of the [Strait of Hormuz](#), with the Trump administration proposing controversial transit fees and blockades.

Simultaneously, the war in Ukraine has evolved into a deep-strike drone campaign, with [Ukrainian UAVs causing civilian fatalities in the Moscow region](#) and Russia responding

with high-precision strikes on Ukrainian logistics hubs. Internal pressures within Ukraine are mounting, evidenced by a [significant government reshuffle](#) and increasingly desperate forced mobilization efforts that now include [pressuring EU nations](#) to return military-age refugees. These events, combined with the death of US Senator [Lindsay Graham](#), highlight a volatile shift in American foreign policy from traditional interventionism to an unpredictable mix of kinetic aggression and economic nationalism.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Direct US-Iran Kinetic Conflict:** The US Pentagon has confirmed strikes against [Iranian military targets](#) to degrade their capabilities, while Iran has retaliated by targeting [US assets in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Jordan](#).
- **Strait of Hormuz Closure and Toll Crisis:** The Trump administration has announced a plan to be the ["Guardian of the Strait,"](#) proposing a 20% reimbursement fee on all cargo, while Iran has [declared the waterway closed](#) to hostile forces.
- **Ukrainian Deep-Strike Campaign:** Over [340 Ukrainian drones](#) were intercepted over Russian regions overnight, with some crashing in residential areas and causing civilian deaths, prompting Russian [retaliatory strikes](#) on the port of Chirnamorsk.
- **Ukrainian Domestic Upheaval:** Prime Minister [Julius Veridenko has resigned](#) amid a wider cabinet reshuffle, as the Kiev regime faces internal crises over [forced mobilization and corruption](#).

- **Death of Senator Lindsay Graham:** The veteran lawmaker's death from [aortic dissection](#) has triggered a polarized debate over his legacy of supporting global conflicts and the [future of Republican foreign policy](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The expansion of the "Raffa model" of [systematic destruction](#) of villages is being discussed for use in southern Lebanon.
- Reports confirm the use of [FPV high-explosive fragmentation drones](#) with incendiary components in sabotage attempts inside Russia.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- The failure of the [Versailles MOU](#) suggests a breakdown in the ability of the US to conduct traditional diplomacy, with analysts calling the current administration ["diplomatically incompetent."](#)
- International law regarding [refugee asylum](#) is being challenged as EU nations consider ending protection for military-age Ukrainians.

Energy & Critical Minerals

- Brent Crude prices have [climbed to \\$79 per barrel](#) following the escalation in the Persian Gulf, with only [22 ships](#) passing through the Strait of Hormuz compared to a daily average of 130.
- Saudi Arabia is reportedly shifting [7 million barrels of oil](#) daily to the Red Sea to bypass the Persian Gulf closure.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk

- The US is facing a potential [constitutional crisis](#) as President Trump continues military strikes without congressional authorization.
- Controversy surrounds the restitution of Congolese artifacts from [Belgian museums](#), framed as an admission of colonial "crimes."

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The End of "Forever War" Diplomacy

There is a visible shift from the era of protracted diplomatic engagement to one of transactional kineticism. The Trump administration's treatment of the MOU with Iran as ["dust"](#) and the pursuit of [unilateral maritime tolls](#) signals an abandonment of the post-WWII liberal rules-based order. This is mirrored by Russia's refusal to negotiate without ["substantial compromises"](#) from the West, indicating that both major powers are now prioritizing total victory or strategic degradation over compromise.

Weaponization of Civilian Populations

Across multiple theaters, civilian populations are being integrated into military strategies. In Ukraine, the government is [requesting the forced return](#) of citizens from abroad to sustain its front lines, while the Russian side highlights the [death of infants](#) in drone attacks to justify its retaliatory infrastructure strikes. In Lebanon, the discussion of the ["plow" strategy](#)—systematically destroying villages to remove Shiite "outposts"—indicates a shift toward ethnic cleansing as a military tactic.

Fragmenting Western Alliances

Tensions within NATO are surfacing, particularly regarding the [defense of maritime straits](#) and the funding of Ukrainian resistance. Trump's public criticism of NATO members for not "[paying enough for security](#)" while simultaneously demanding they follow his lead against Iran is creating a friction point that Russia and Iran are actively seeking to exploit through diplomatic overtures to countries like [Hungary and Slovakia](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

United States: Polarization and Rhetorical Extremism

- The administration is leveraging [anti-communist rhetoric](#), using the word "communism" over 80 times in two weeks to target domestic political opponents and mobilize an older electorate.
- Social instability is evidenced by [139 shootouts on the 4th of July](#), a statistic used by foreign media to contrast the "American Dream" with a "zombie apocalypse" on the streets.
- The upcoming [mid-term elections](#) in November are heightening the pressure on the administration to control energy prices, which is driving the aggressive policy in the Persian Gulf.

Ukraine: Institutional Collapse and Forced Loyalty

- The resignation of Prime Minister [Julius Veridenko](#) after only one year indicates a lack of confidence in the civilian government's ability to manage the war effort.

- Widespread corruption in [conscription offices](#) and among medical staff is undermining the state's legitimacy, as citizens reportedly bribe officials to avoid the draft.

Iran: National Unity through Grief

- The funeral of the supreme leader, described as [the most attended in history](#) (12 million people), is being utilized by the regime to project a unified front of "revenge and justice" against the West.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The Axis of Resistance and Russian Support

Iran is positioning itself as a leader of a regional "[Axis of Resistance](#)," bolstered by diplomatic support from Russia, whose officials (like Dimitri Medvedev) have visited Tehran and described the closure of straits as "[nuclear weapons](#)" for the global economy. This suggests a deepening of the Russia-Iran-Houthi security architecture aimed at degrading US regional hegemony.

EU Realpolitik and Refugee Repatriation

European nations are shifting from a posture of "unconditional support" for Ukrainian refugees to one of [facilitating repatriation](#) for military service. This indicates a fatigue in the EU's humanitarian commitment and a pragmatic realization that Ukraine cannot continue the war without a significant influx of personnel, even if this violates [international asylum norms](#).

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The global economic climate is entering a phase of extreme uncertainty, with energy markets reacting sharply to the kinetic conflict in the Persian Gulf. The transition from \$79 per barrel toward higher peaks seems inevitable if the "toll" and "blockade" narratives persist.

Key Economic Vectors

- **Energy Volatility:** Brent Crude at [\\$79 per barrel](#); cargo traffic in the Strait of Hormuz has plummeted by [over 80%](#).
- **US Domestic Housing Crisis:** Only [40% of millennials](#) own homes; 89% of adults under 40 believe it is harder to own a home than it was for their parents.
- **Supply Chain Chokepoints:** The potential for a [simultaneous closure](#) of the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb represents a threat to 15-20% of global resources.
- **Military Economic Policy:** The US proposal for a [20% transit fee](#) on commercial shipping is being framed as an illegal act of maritime piracy by rivals.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day saw a high volume of senior-level shifts, particularly within the Ukrainian state, signaling a move toward more radical or direct military governance.

- **Julius Veridenko:** Resigned as [Prime Minister of Ukraine](#) amidst a broad cabinet purge including ministers of industry, justice, and environment.

- **Senator Lindsay Graham:** Deceased. His passing creates a high-stakes [special primary election](#) in South Carolina, which will be a litmus test for "MAGA" vs. "Traditional Republican" influence.
- **Mitch McConnell:** Mentions of his ["sudden disappearance"](#) alongside Graham's death suggest a generational clearing of the old Republican guard.
- **German Ambassador to Russia:** Reported to be ["heading home,"](#) following a breakdown in diplomatic relations over "Nazi-style" information campaigns.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial hierarchy prioritized the **imminent threat of a regional Middle Eastern war** and the **failure of Western interventionism**. Lead stories were dominated by kinetic exchanges in Iran and Yemen, framed through a lens of US/Saudi aggression and Iranian/Houthi "legitimate defense." Significant airtime was also given to the **Ukrainian drone campaign against Moscow**, emphasizing civilian casualties and the "terrorist nature" of the Kiev regime. Buried stories included a [mass casualty fire in Thailand](#), which was minimized in favor of war coverage. The tone was consistently nationalistic and skeptical of Western motives, particularly focusing on the **hypocrisy of NATO** and the "death of shame" regarding [Lindsay Graham](#). Conspicuous omissions include any detailed reporting on Iranian internal dissent or civilian casualties resulting from Iranian retaliatory strikes in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as an unpredictable, aging, and [diplomatically erratic](#) power whose leadership prioritizes "ego" over stability. Quote: "The US is diplomacy, incompetent and incapable."
- **Iran:** Framed as a [disciplined and resilient](#) defender of its sovereignty with the capability to bring the world economy to its knees. Quote: "Iran has been the guardian of the straight and will remain so forever."
- **Ukraine:** Depicted as a [failing state](#) mired in corruption and desperate mobilization, dependent on "Nazi" elements. Quote: "Nobody right now in Ukraine with the literal clean state."
- **Germany:** Characterized as [hypocritical and aggressive](#), Slipping back into "Nazi-era propaganda."

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as a ["narcissist"](#) who uses the military for "transactional" goals. Quote: "Trump comes first before anybody."
- **Vladimir Putin:** Framed as a [rational actor](#) following a policy of "mirroring" strikes. Quote: "Responses will always be reciprocal."
- **Volodymyr Zelensky:** Portrayed as a [panicked figurehead](#) losing control of his cabinet and territory. Quote: "Mr. Zelensky is panicking because no one's going to want to give him any missiles."

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **The Houthis (Ansar Allah):** Portrayed as a [well-organized military group](#) capable of ending regional de-escalation. Quote: "Not easy to eliminate them."
- **The "Deep State" (CIA/FSB):** CIA is framed as [overstretching its boundaries](#) in Mariupol, while the FSB is shown as an efficient [prevention force](#) against sabotage.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The network is heavily seeding the idea that Ukraine is a ["neo-Nazi organization"](#) and that the West is ignoring [war crimes](#) committed by mercenaries.
- **Domestic Psy-Ops:** The focus on ["false flags"](#) (referencing the USS Liberty) is used to condition the audience to expect an imminent staged attack to justify a full US invasion of Iran.
- **Delta from Reality:** While the network portrays the US as "losing" the war, the ground truth of US military presence in the Gulf suggests a massive [superiority in strike capability](#), regardless of diplomatic setbacks.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Total Maritime Blockade:** If Yemen and Iran [jointly shut down](#) the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb, a global economic depression exceeding the 2008 crisis is likely within 3-6 months.

- **Ukrainian Front-Line Collapse:** The cabinet reshuffle and the [extension of martial law](#) suggest that Ukraine is preparing for a defensive collapse or a total lack of civilian administrative control by winter 2026.
- **Iranian "Sacred Defense" 2.0:** The rhetoric from the [funeral processions](#) suggests Iran is preparing for a "sacred defense" period, meaning they will endure significant infrastructure damage rather than capitulate to US demands.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a ["major attack"](#) from Yemen against Saudi airports or oil fields in retaliation for the Sanaa airport strikes. Domestic US political pressure will mount as gas prices [cross the \\$80/barrel equivalent](#).

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The South Carolina Senate primary will likely lead to a [victory for a candidate](#) even more isolationist than Graham, signaling the end of the traditional neocon wing of the GOP. EU nations will begin [active deportation](#) of military-age Ukrainian men.

Long Term (1-5 Years): A permanent [shift in global trade routes](#) may occur if the US attempts to maintain a permanent "Guardian of the Strait" toll system, leading to the creation of alternative, non-Western maritime security blocs.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current risk profile is dominated by the potential for a catastrophic miscalculation in

the Persian Gulf, where narrative games are being played with live ammunition.

- **Risk: Global Energy Supply Collapse.** Triggers: Iranian/Houthi joint closure of both primary chokepoints. Likelihood: High, given current [escalation phases](#). Impact: Catastrophic; global recession and breakdown of just-in-time logistics. Mitigations: Immediate de-escalation of kinetic strikes and a return to the neutral [status quo](#) regarding the Strait.
- **Risk: Tactical Nuclear Escalation in Russia/Ukraine.** Triggers: Deep strikes into [Moscow or St. Petersburg](#) hitting critical command infrastructure. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Existential. Mitigations: Restriction of [US weaponry](#) use inside Russian territory.
- **Risk: US Constitutional Crisis.** Triggers: Continued [unauthorized strikes](#) lead to a federal court injunction ignored by the executive. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High; breakdown of civilian control of the military. Mitigations: Congressional [War Powers Resolution](#) enforcement.
- **Risk: Zaporogia Nuclear Disaster.** Triggers: Ukrainian drone strike on [spent fuel storage](#) at the plant. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High; radiological fallout across Europe. Mitigations: International atomic [political pressure](#) on both combatants.
- **Risk: Regional Middle East War Expansion.** Triggers: Saudi [ground invasion](#) of Yemen. Likelihood: Low, but increasing with airport strikes. Impact: High; decade-long destabilization of energy hubs. Mitigations: Non-aggression pact mediated by [Qatar or Oman](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The broadcast fails to address the **actual status of the Iranian leadership** following the funeral of the Supreme Leader; a potential succession struggle would change the risk of "miscalculation."
- The **military efficacy of the US "Guardian" blockade** is taken as a rhetorical fact, but the logistics of collecting a 20% toll from [non-compliant vessels](#) is not explained.
- The **internal Russian reaction** to the high volume of intercepted drones ([342 overnight](#)) is not explored; sustained civilian anxiety could force a more aggressive Russian posture than the current "mirroring."

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **Scenario: The "Strait Toll" as Diplomatic Stall.** The Trump administration's "toll" proposal might not be a serious economic plan but a [negotiating tactic](#) designed to force Gulf allies (Saudi/UAE) to take a firmer stance against Iran or pay the price themselves. If so, a diplomatic "pivot" might be imminent once a new security burden-sharing agreement is reached.
- **Scenario: Ukrainian Reshuffle as Coup Prevention.** The resignation of Veridenko and the [purge of the cabinet](#) may not be about corruption but about Zelensky removing potential rivals before a forced mobilization decree leads to civil unrest.

- **Black Swan Event:** The [assassination of a high-profile US official](#) while on a diplomatic plane (modeled after the Trump/Turkey plane switch rumors) could trigger an immediate World War III scenario before any intelligence verification occurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Prepare for the permanent militarization of commercial maritime routes in the Persian Gulf.
- **Economic:** Strategic oil reserves must be bolstered as the [chokepoint crisis](#) is unlikely to resolve within the next quarter.
- **Diplomatic:** Shift focus to neutral mediators like [Oman and Pakistan](#) to salvage a "limited ceasefire" before the mid-term elections.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Diversify away from dependencies on Red Sea/Persian Gulf transit immediately; prioritize the [Northern Sea Route](#) or terrestrial alternatives.
- **Regulatory:** Companies with large footprints in Ukraine must prepare for **immediate labor shortages** due to the [repatriation of military-age men](#).
- **Capital Allocation:** Reassess risk for investments in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which are no longer "safe havens" from [Houthi/Iranian kinetic response](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The day's legislative focus was centered on the emergency mobilization of resources for war and the dismantling of previous

diplomatic frameworks. Key policy shifts involve both domestic mobilization and international maritime law.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Ukrainian Martial Law & Mobilization Extension:** New bills submitted by Zelensky to [extend martial law](#) and expand the categories of military-age persons required to return to the front.
- **US Russian Sanctions Bill:** A version [supported by the White House](#) designed to increase the lethality of the Ukrainian military while targeting the Russian energy sector.
- **EU Temporary Protection Revisions:** Proposed changes to [ending protection](#) for refugees whose home countries require them for military service.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Oval Office Address Announcement:** Trump scheduled for [Thursday](#) to discuss the status of the Iranian conflict and the "Strait Toll."
- **NATO Ankara Summit Debrief:** Discussions regarding ["respect and love"](#) in the room vs. the public obsession with member security payments.
- **"Everything for Victory" Forum:** Vladimir Putin [addressing veterans](#) and volunteers, reinforcing a "no compromise" stance.

KEY STORIES

- **Strait of Hormuz Toll Proposal:** Donald Trump announces a plan to charge [20% on all cargo](#) as the "Guardian of the Strait," which Iran rejects as a [violation of international waters](#).
- **Ukrainian Drone Campaign Fatalities:** 342 drones intercepted; [civilian deaths in Moscow region](#) villages including Pianerssky. Russia retaliates against [logistics hubs](#) in Chinamorsk.
- **Ukrainian Government Reshuffle:** Prime Minister [Julius Veridenko resigns](#); wide-scale cabinet purge amid a deepening political and conscription crisis.
- **Death of Senator Lindsay Graham:** Graham dies of [aortic dissection](#) after a Ukrainian tour; his [legacy of war advocacy](#) is fiercely debated by RT hosts.
- **Houthi Threat to Red Sea:** Houthis vow to [blockade the Red Sea](#) to harm Saudi Arabia economically after strikes on Sanaa airport.
- **EU Refugee Repatriation Policy:** Germany and EU consider [returning military-age men](#) to Ukraine, raising questions about [Geneva Convention violations](#).
- **Russian Historical Documentary:** A feature on the [Kuril landing operation](#) emphasizes Russian sovereignty over islands lost in the 19th century and regained in 1945.
- **Belgian Colonial Restitution:** The Africa Museum in Belgium [re-evaluates its origins](#) and faces pressure to return Congolese artifacts amid talk of "colonial crimes."
- **Thailand Bar Fire:** At least [27 people killed](#) in a fire at a crowded bar in Bangkok; blocked exits are suspected.
- **Persian Gulf Kinetic Escalation:** The US and Iran continue a cycle of [exchanged strikes](#) targeting military assets in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Jordan. Brent Crude [rises to \\$79](#).

- **Zaparogia Power Plant Security:** Rosatom reports [Ukrainian drone attacks](#) near the nuclear plant, wounding four people.
- **Mali Terrorist Re-capture:** Malian military [recaptures Ifis](#) from Al-Qaeda linked groups; reports of "mercenaries" trained in Ukraine.
- **South Carolina Senate Race:** special primary set for [August 11th](#) to replace the late Senator Graham.

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.

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.

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