

## **U.S. Intensifies Iran Air Campaign as Trump Threatens Nuclear Sites and Tehran Warns of Regional Escalation**

The United States launched its 11th consecutive night of airstrikes against Iran from July 21 into July 22, with Iranian media reporting attacks on multiple locations, including Tehran, where air defence systems were activated repeatedly. U.S. Central Command said the strikes were intended to further weaken Iran's military capabilities linked to operations around the Strait of Hormuz, a critical global energy route. The escalation deepened after President Donald Trump warned on July 21 that the United States "may soon" target Iran's underground Fordow nuclear facility. Iran's Khatam al-Anbia Central Headquarters responded on July 22 that any attack on nuclear sites would represent a major expansion of the conflict, making U.S., allied and supporting interests potential targets. Iranian precision strikes on U.S. military positions across the Middle East since July 7 have injured nearly 100 American service members, while 17 U.S. troops have been killed since fighting began on February 28.

## **A New UK Prime Minister Take Office Amid a Water Crisis**

The new UK Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, has inherited an immediate political test after Thames Water announced a hosepipe ban affecting more than 10 million customers across the London area. The restrictions, announced on 21 July and taking effect on 23 July, were attributed to exceptionally low rainfall and soaring demand during the summer heat. However, increasingly dry summers have been long known, and the UK's population has grown by about 12 million since the last major reservoir was opened in 1992 and no new reservoirs in the Thames Water area since it was privatized 1989. Large reservoirs take 10 to 20 years to go from planning to completion, and this time scale does not fit with yearly maximization of yearly shareholder profit payouts. The ban has intensified scrutiny of Britain's largest water company, which remains burdened with around £20 billion of debt while continuing to lose substantial volumes of treated water through leaking infrastructure. The company has also faced years of criticism over sewage pollution and underinvestment, leaving customers to question why they are being asked to conserve water while the network itself wastes so much of the resource. Burnham has indicated that Thames Water could be placed into temporary public ownership if a private rescue fails. The combination of a financially distressed monopoly, a hosepipe ban and growing public frustration has turned Thames Water into a powerful symbol of why access to water should be treated as a public good rather than a commercial asset.

## **Environment Minister Resigns After France Reinstates Banned Pesticides**

France's Environment Minister, Monique Barbut, resigned on July 22 after parliament approved an emergency agriculture bill that temporarily restores the use of two controversial neonicotinoid pesticides, acetamiprid and flupyradifurone. Both substances are banned under French law because of concerns over their impact on pollinators and biodiversity, although they remain authorised under European Union regulations. The measure is intended to provide relief for farmers facing mounting economic pressure,

particularly producers of sugar beets, apples, hazelnuts and cherries, who argue they cannot compete with imports produced under less restrictive rules. Supporters describe the legislation as a pragmatic response to an agricultural crisis, while environmental groups warn it weakens long-standing protections and risks setting a precedent for further rollbacks. Announcing her resignation, Barbut said she no longer had the means to pursue the government's environmental agenda because "the forces opposing these goals have become so powerful." She also criticised the government's decision to block parliamentary debate on removing the pesticide provision from the bill.

## **Canada Cancels Joint Bridge Celebration as Trump Tariff Threats Strain U.S. Alliance**

Canada canceled a planned joint celebration with the United States for the \$4.7 billion Gordie Howe International Bridge on July 21, citing President Donald Trump's latest tariff threats against Canadian goods. The decision came after Trump announced 50% tariffs on a broad range of Canadian imports, escalating a trade dispute between two countries whose economies are deeply integrated. A spokesperson for Canadian Infrastructure Minister Gregor Robertson said it would be "inappropriate to proceed with a celebratory event between the two countries" while Washington was imposing new trade barriers. The planned ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 24 will now be replaced by a separate Canadian event, although both governments remain committed to opening the bridge to traffic on July 27. The 2.4-kilometer bridge, which connects Detroit, Michigan, with Windsor, Ontario, represents one of the largest cross-border infrastructure projects in North America and was designed to strengthen economic links between the two countries. The diplomatic fallout reflects a broader transformation in Trump's approach to international relations. His administration has increasingly treated economic ties as instruments of leverage rather than as foundations of strategic partnership, using tariffs and trade restrictions to pressure allies as well as rivals.

## **Ukraine President Zelensky Dismisses Army Chief Amid Protests, as Czech Leader Questions EU Bid**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed army commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrskyi on July 21, following six days of protests triggered by the removal of popular Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov. Syrskyi, seen as a Soviet-school commander, was replaced by General Mykhailo Drapatyi, a younger, battle-hardened officer. In his farewell address, Syrskyi insisted he was leaving an army "that is not only holding the line but is advancing". The domestic upheaval coincided with a sharp rebuke from Czech Parliament Speaker Tomio Okamura, who on July 22 voiced strong opposition to Ukraine joining the EU and NATO. Okamura accused Kyiv of officially recognizing a military unit linked to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which he said committed mass killings of Poles, Jews, and Czechs during World War II. While Western media overwhelmingly portrays Ukraine as a unified, democratic bulwark that is winning against Russian aggression, such narratives ignore Russia's capacity to outlast and outproduce in this war of attrition and downplay the uncomfortable historical baggage that ought to complicate Ukraine's integration into Europe.