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Trump Expected to Push for Ukraine-Russia Peace Agreement Involving Land Deal, Security Guarantees

After last Friday's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, U.S. President Donald Trump appears poised to push for a peace agreement during a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Monday afternoon. Since the summit with Putin, Trump has pivoted away from seeking a ceasefire and is instead echoing Putin's demands for a "land swap," with Putin adamant that Russia take over Ukraine's eastern Donbas region. In a Sunday night social media post, Trump also said Ukraine would need to give Crimea to Russia and abandon plans for NATO membership in exchange for a peace deal.

Today's talks will include a session on security guarantees for Ukraine, which European leaders and Zelenskyy view as essential for the potential peace agreement. Putin has previously opposed such security agreements, but last week's summit signaled a major shift, with Russia <u>agreeing</u> to security guarantees for Ukraine from Europe and the U.S., with the arrangement acting as an alternative to <u>NATO's Article 5.</u>

Zelenskyy is not traveling to the U.S. alone. Multiple European leaders, <u>including</u> French President Emmanuel Macron, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and <u>NATO Secretary</u> <u>General Mark Rutte</u>, are accompanying him to show a united front and to dispel the <u>specter</u> of Zelenskyy's last heated White House meeting.

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U.S. Targets Latin American Drug Cartels as Mexico Extradites Key Mexican Cartel Figures

In a strategic escalation to combat Latin American 'drug cartels,' the United States is reportedly <u>deploying</u> air and naval forces to the southern Caribbean for months of intelligence and surveillance operations. While specific targets remain undisclosed, the deployment aligns with a directive reportedly signed in secret by U.S. President Donald Trump authorizing military action against cartels <u>designated</u> as 'terrorist organizations,' with most groups on the list primarily based in Mexico. Despite this, the administration is not planning to send U.S. troops into Mexico, with U.S. officials <u>reportedly</u> favoring drone or naval strikes, according to the <u>Washington Post</u>.

In response to recent escalations by the United States, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum rejected U.S. military presence on Mexican soil, emphasizing sovereignty and cooperation. Last week, Mexico extradited 26 high-profile cartel operatives to the United States, including key figures from the Sinaloa Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), and Los Zetas, marking the country's second major extradition effort this year. Mexican Secretary of Security Omar Hamid García Harfuch highlighted that these individuals posed a risk to national security and emphasized that extraditions respected Mexico's sovereignty. Security analyst David Saucedo warns that the extraditions could trigger violent retaliation from cartels in Mexico. He also anticipates additional extraditions and expects new lists of high-profile cartel targets as the U.S. intensifies its efforts to dismantle criminal operations in the region.

Hurricane Erin to Produce Life-Threatening Coastal Hazards in the Carolinas

Hurricane Erin became the first hurricane of the 2025 Atlantic Season late last week, just behind the climatological average date for the first hurricane formation. From Friday into Saturday, Hurricane Erin rapidly intensified from a Category 1 hurricane with 75mph winds into an extremely powerful Category 5 hurricane with 160mph winds. While tracking north of Puerto Rico this weekend, Erin underwent an eyewall replacement cycle that caused the storm to drastically increase in size. Outer rain bands led to localized flooding and over 170,000 power outages in Puerto Rico.

As of this morning, Hurricane Erin is restrengthening to the north of Turks and Caicos. While the storm is not expected to make direct landfall, **tropical storm watches and warnings** have been raised for Turks and Caicos and the southeast and central Bahamas. Through Tuesday, flooding and tropical-storm-force winds will likely lead to transportation disruptions and locally dangerous hazards across the islands. Erin is expected to continue northwards and pass between the Carolinas and Bermuda on Wednesday and Thursday before shifting towards the northeast. While landfall is not expected, the storm will be large

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enough to cause significant coastal flooding, <u>rough surf</u>, and rip currents along the U.S. Coast from Monday through at least Thursday. <u>Local states of emergency</u> have been issued in <u>Dare</u> and <u>Hyde</u> counties in North Carolina, with mandatory evacuations in effect for Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands as exit roads are expected to become impassable.

Climate and Natural Hazards

- Devastating Monsoon Kills Hundreds in Pakistan: Severe floods and landslides have been reported across Northern Pakistan since last Friday, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as the monsoon intensified over the region. As of Monday evening (local time), over 375 deaths have been reported by local media, and more than 150 people have been injured, prompting a State of Emergency. Over 200 deaths occurred in Buner, the most affected district. Widespread road closures, building damage, water supply disruptions, and school closures have been reported. The risk for additional flooding and landslides remains high as above-average rainfall is forecast through Tuesday.
- Spain and Portugal Facing Historic Wildfire Season: A prolonged heat wave over the Iberian Peninsula is finally expected to come to an end. Wildfires over the last two weeks have exploded in Spain and Portugal, leading to thousands of evacuations as firefighters raced to protect homes. In Spain, fires have already devastated more than 340,000ha in 2025, including over 167,000ha in the last week alone. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez will visit Extremadura on Tuesday to discuss the progress of the Jarilla Fire. In Portugal, the Arganil Fire is the most concerning development as it spread out of control towards Pampilhosa de Serra.
- Tropical Depression to Impact North Vietnam, South China: Tropical Depression 17W formed
 within the last 24 hours over the Gulf of Tonkin, between Hainan, China, and North Vietnam. The
 system, while relatively weak and disorganized, will pose a significant flood and landslide threat
 over the next 48 hours or so as it moves inland over North Vietnam and Guangxi, China.
 Localized evacuations may be issued in vulnerable areas.
- Portions of New South Wales, Australia at Risk for Severe Flooding: An upper-level weather
 disturbance is expected to trigger widespread heavy rain from southeast Queensland along the
 coast through New South Wales. The latest forecast model guidance shows a strong signal for
 rainfall totals up to four to six inches, mainly between Wednesday and Friday. The highest rainfall
 amounts are expected along the immediate coast, especially from the Gold Coast through
 Sydney. Flooding could lead to significant travel disruptions and localized evacuations.
- Monitoring Southern Japan for Potential Tropical Development: Invest 92W lies east of Taiwan as of late Monday (local time). The system remains widely disorganized, but a decrease in

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wind shear should allow further consolidation and strengthening over the next 24-48 hours. While the threat for intensification into a typhoon is very low, a tropical depression or tropical storm could form and move northwards over Okinawa and southern Kyushu, Japan, through about Thursday. Localized flash flooding will likely be the main hazard.

Worldwide

- Indian Opposition Accuses Ruling Party of Manipulating Voter Rolls: Allegations that India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) "manipulated" voter registrations across the country to its benefit in the 2024 parliamentary elections are growing louder ahead of elections expected in Bihar state no later than November 2025. Opposition figures, including the Indian National Congress (Congress) party leader Rahul Gandhi, are highlighting the issue. Gandhi is planning a 12-day march across the state. This follows a revision of voter rolls in the state, which critics say is aimed at disenfranchising voters. With a similar review in store for the rest of India's nearly one billion registered voters, a successful effort to manipulate voter rolls in the BJP's favor could consolidate the party's political power across the country.
- General Strike Disrupts Daily Life Across Israel: Business activity and travel were disrupted across much of Israel on Sunday, August 17, during a one-day general strike joined by hundreds of thousands of Israelis to protest the further extension of the country's war in Gaza. Disruptive demonstrations were noted to be impacting key roadways across the country and in cities, especially Tel Aviv, where authorities canceled various activities due to the strike and unrest. Demonstrations also took place in Haifa and the Be'eri Kibbutz. While the day of action remained largely peaceful, authorities clashed with demonstrators in some locations, leading to nearly 40 arrests. The families of the remaining hostages have called for a second nationwide strike on Sunday, August 24.
- Noboa Declares New Emergency as Record Violence and Mass Shootings Grip Ecuador: Ecuador President Daniel Noboa has <u>declared</u> a 60-day State of Emergency in four provinces and proposed a referendum to amend the constitution as the country faces escalating violence, fueled by rivalries between <u>gangs</u> such as Los Choneros and Los Lobos. <u>Another</u> mass shooting took place yesterday in Santo Domingo, where at least seven people were killed inside a pool hall. It was one of three recent <u>mass shootings</u> during what has become the country's most violent semester on record. From January to June 2025, Ecuador recorded 4,619 homicides, a 47% surge from 2024, averaging more than one murder per hour, according to <u>national media</u> citing the Ecuadorian Observatory of Organized Crime, as the country appears on track to set a new annual record for homicides.

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- Colombia's FARC Dissidents Accused of Targeting Conservative Politicians: Following the August 11 death of Colombian presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay, just over two months after he was shot at a political rally, concerns are growing about a supposed plot by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) dissident group to assassinate conservative leaders in the country. A new report alleges that the FARC has allocated approximately U.S. \$8 million to the campaign, which would have targeted high-profile politicians in the country, including Medellín Mayor Federico Gutiérrez and Councilwoman Claudia Carrasquilla. Authorities have responded by increasing security for potential targets, but the potential plot raises concerns about the safety of political opponents of President Gustavo Petro, whose work to reduce violence by these groups may also be strengthening them.
- Additional U.S. States to Deploy Guard to Washington, D.C.: Three states—West Virginia,
 Ohio, and South Carolina—are planning to send hundreds more National Guard troops to
 Washington, D.C., to aid in the federal government's crackdown on crime, illegal immigration,
 and homelessness in the nation's capital. In addition to the added personnel, the Wall Street
 Journal reports that some Guard members may be permitted to carry weapons after Defense
 officials initially indicated that they would not be armed. Hundreds demonstrated against the
 deployment and accompanying takeover of the police force over the weekend, with further
 demonstrations, both planned and unplanned, expected in the coming days, including one this
 afternoon at 3 pm. The first week of the deployment has significantly impacted foot traffic in
 parts of Washington, D.C., leading to reported drops in restaurant reservations and bar
 activity.

Cyber and Regulatory

- Norwegian Police Suspect Russian Hackers Behind April Cyberattack on Dam: Norwegian police believe Russian hackers were behind an April cyberattack on a dam that temporarily altered water flows without posing a danger to the surrounding area. Authorities say the incident is part of a broader campaign of disruptive actions across Europe attributed to Russia since its invasion of Ukraine, ranging from vandalism to attempted assassinations. The Norwegian Police Security Service warned that such attacks are increasingly aimed at creating fear and unrest in Western nations. A video of the dam's control panel, marked with the name of a pro-Russian cybercriminal group, was shared on Telegram shortly after the incident.
- Taiwan Tightens Immigration Regulation Following Leak at TSMC: Taiwan is tightening its
 immigration rules following a significant <u>case</u> of suspected <u>espionage</u> at the world's largest
 semiconductor chip manufacturer, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC). The

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government <u>plans</u> to roll out new rules for long-term residency, specifically for citizens from Hong Kong and Macau, both of which are Chinese territories, to prevent infiltration attempts by Beijing. The proposed changes would require Hong Kongers and Macanese seeking residency in Taiwan to provide proof of renunciation of Chinese passports and household registration. Additionally, the government <u>proposed</u> a rule that would refuse to restore Taiwanese citizenship to Taiwanese who obtained Chinese identity documents.

- Argentina's Large-Scale Investment Incentive Attracts Several Ventures: Argentina's Regime of Incentives for Large Investments (RIGI) program, launched in 2024 by President Javier Milei, is beginning to attract foreign investment. The program, which locks in 30 years of tax and regulatory stability, among other incentives, has resulted in official approvals for seven major domestic and foreign ventures so far, from Rio Tinto's \$2.7 billion lithium project in Salta to Southern Energy's nearly \$7 billion joint liquefied natural gas venture in the Gulf of San Matías. The incentives are also sparking fresh international alliances. Canadian giant Barrick Gold and China's Shandong Gold have recently announced plans for a \$400 million expansion at the Veladero mine. Despite its economic benefits, the investment program has sparked controversy among environmental activist groups who argue that the program is hyper-extractivist in nature and lacks proper environmental safeguards.
- South Korea Launches Sweeping Safety Crackdown Amid Increased Industrial Accidents:
 Facing mounting workplace fatalities, South Korean President Lee Jae-myung has declared a "war on industrial accidents," calling for sweeping reforms across safety regulation and enforcement. Lee denounced repeated, preventable incidents as "murder by willful negligence," and demanded punitive measures including immediate reporting of fatal incidents to the president himself, revocation of licenses, bans on public bidding, financial restrictions, and punitive damages for offending firms. Simultaneously, the government is weighing amendments to increase maximum fines under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, potentially raising caps from one billion to as high as 10 billion won, or up to 3% of annual revenues.

Infrastructure and Supply Chain

Cargo Theft a Growing Problem in the United States: The rising and increasingly violent
"strategic theft" of cargo is impacting supply chains across North America, with U.S. authorities
noting a 33% increase in Q2 2025 figures over the same period of 2024. Most U.S. cases were
concentrated in the Los Angeles and Long Beach areas of California, but cases were also noted in
Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas in the southwest (especially along I-10 and I-40). Illinois,
Pennsylvania, and Tennessee were hot spots in the eastern U.S. The concentration of cases in the

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southwest and California could stem from the heavy freight traffic entering the U.S. from Mexico, which grew throughout Q2 due to U.S. buyers "frontloading" shipments to avoid the impact of new tariffs. Despite this, most of Mexico's cargo theft is concentrated in central Mexico, rather than the U.S. border region.

- Terror Attacks Cutting Gas Supplies to Pakistan's Punjab Province: On Wednesday, August
 13, attackers targeted a pipeline supplying gas to Punjab, Pakistan, the latest in a series of
 similar attacks that have disrupted natural gas supplies to the country's most industrialized
 province. Two similar attacks were reported in June, and two others in July, all targeting pipelines
 that carry gas from distant areas like the Bettani gas field to Punjab. With natural gas accounting
 for about a third of Pakistan's energy mix and consumption noted to be rising in Punjab,
 disruptions to pipeline flows could have significant impacts on electricity supplies in cities like
 Lahore and Rawalpindi, potentially disrupting business activity or critical services.
- Chinese Manufacturers Turning to Indonesia for Future Growth: The ongoing surge in Chinese manufacturers seeking to expand or reshore their operations abroad to avoid hefty U.S. tariffs appears to be <u>especially prevalent in Indonesia</u>. Chinese manufacturers initially targeted countries like Thailand or Vietnam for expansion due to their strong trade with the U.S. However, Indonesia's huge domestic market—which accounts for roughly 40% of the combined population of the 11 members of ASEAN— makes it a more appealing option in a market where most exports to the U.S. will face tariffs regardless of where they are made. The shift is likely helping fuel Indonesia's better-than-expected economic growth, which exceeded 5% in Q2 2025.
- U.S. Development Deal Nested Within Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Agreement Could Irk Russia: The peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan grants the United States "exclusive...development rights to a strategic transit corridor through the South Caucasus" by allowing U.S. authorities to sublease Armenian territory—under Armenian jurisdiction—to an infrastructure consortium. That company will then develop a trade corridor connecting Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhchivan to the country's mainland, a key demand of Azerbaijani negotiators. In addition to supporting development in the region, the deal marks an increase in U.S. influence in Caucasus affairs, which could be poorly received by Russia amid a cooling off in relations between U.S. President Trump and Russian President Putin.
- Brazil Unveils \$5.5 Billion Stimulus Package to Counter Impact of U.S. Tariffs: Brazil has
 <u>rolled out</u> a 30 billion-reais (\$5.5 billion) stimulus package to shield exporters from steep U.S.
 tariffs that <u>took effect</u> August 6. The "Sovereign Brazil" plan offers tax payment deferrals, 5
 billion reais in tax credits for small and mid-sized firms through 2026, expanded insurance for
 canceled orders, and <u>incentives</u> for domestic buyers of goods blocked from U.S. markets. The
 stimulus measures take effect immediately and will remain in place for at least the next four

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- months. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva condemned the 50 percent tariffs but **stopped short** of announcing retaliatory measures.
- Novel Cost-Pooling Program Proposed to Offset Impacts of U.S. Tariffs in South Africa: A new proposal from South Africa's Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition seeks to offset the impact of new 30% tariffs on the country's exports to the United States by allowing exporters to share in various business costs and investments without risking an antitrust violation. Authorities hope this will shield some of the country's most important sectors, such as agriculture or the auto industry, from the brunt of tariff impacts. The South African government is simultaneously preparing a new offer to present to U.S. officials in an ongoing effort to lower the tariff rate further, with as many as 30,000 jobs lower the tariff rate further, with as many as 30,000 jobs threatened if the current rate is maintained.

Health

- COVID-19 Cases Growing U.S. Amid Questions Over Vaccine: COVID-19 levels are rising in 34 states across the U.S., according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), driven largely by the XFG variant (also known as "stratus"). States with particularly high test positivity rates include Arizona, California, Hawaii, and Nevada. This summer's surge comes amid questions over when an updated vaccine will be made available and to what populations. The federal committee that typically recommends the new vaccine isn't set to meet until mid-September, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has previously said that they plan to narrow the approval of the vaccine to those 65 and older or who are at high risk, potentially leading to added costs and access restrictions for others looking to access the shots.
- Dengue, Chikungunya Rising Across Several Countries: Several countries are contending with a rise in mosquito-borne illnesses as cases of dengue and chikungunya tick up worldwide.

 Bangladesh has <u>recorded</u> over 100 deaths from dengue so far this year, with more expected, while Korean officials have <u>introduced</u> new registration requirements for arrivals from Australia due to the presence of dengue. Several locations across <u>Oceania</u> have declared emergencies as they see their highest levels of dengue infections in over a decade. Meanwhile, <u>many</u> of <u>China's neighbors</u> and close trading partners are increasing surveillance efforts as Beijing works to contain a chikungunya outbreak in Guangdong Province. The U.K. has <u>noted</u> a rise in chikungunya cases in returning travelers, while Italy and France have recorded <u>local cases</u>.

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- Legionnaires' in NYC Sickens Around 100, Kills Four: At least four people have <u>died</u> and around 100 have become ill following an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. Health officials <u>identified</u> a dozen cooling towers that have tested positive for Legionella bacteria, including Harlem Hospital and a popular retail center, all of which have been remediated. Authorities have instructed those who live and work in the affected zip codes to seek medical assistance if they experience symptoms. The outbreak has brought greater attention to safety concerns associated with cooling towers, especially as <u>inspections</u> for Legionnaires' dropped to near-record-low levels ahead of this outbreak. NYC's health department has <u>proposed</u> more stringent rules for testing the towers.
- California Experiencing Increase in Valley Fever, Flea-Borne Typhus: Cases of Valley fever—a disease spread by spores from the fungus *Coccidioides*—are on pace to reach a record high this year, eclipsing the previous record of nearly 12,500, set last year. The disease primarily affects people and pets who are active outdoors in the Central Valley and Central Coast regions, although cases have been reported elsewhere as well. Further south, health officials are urging people and pet owners to take steps to prevent exposure to ticks after they reported an outbreak of fleaborne typhus in Long Beach.
- Draft of MAHA Report Avoids Strict Crackdown on U.S Agriculture, Food Industries: A leaked draft report of the "Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy"—which is not likely to be publicly released for weeks—refrains from proposing widespread restrictions on the use of pesticides and foods, although it will seek to define ultra-processed foods and increase public confidence in the regulations of pesticides. If the final contents of the report align with the draft's findings, it will likely come as a relief to food and agriculture companies, who have feared the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr. would seek to more aggressively regulate their industries. The primary spot where the draft report calls for more forceful regulations is around marketing, including direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs and the direct marketing of some unhealthy foods to children.

Demonstrations and Industrial Action

Serbian President Promises State Response to Unrest: Security personnel in Serbia clashed
with students last week and throughout the weekend, signaling an escalation after nearly nine
months of student-led demonstrations against Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and the ruling

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Serbian Progressive Party. Violence broke out last week between student demonstrators and government supporters, and has since become widespread, **resulting** in hundreds of injuries, dozens of arrests, and damage to political party offices in cities across the country. On Sunday, President Vucic vowed to "**undertake tougher steps**" in response to the demonstrations, though it remains unclear what security measures will be taken. In addition to the hotspots of Belgrade, Nis, and Novi Sad, demonstration activity has centered on Valjevo in recent days after security personnel were **filmed** beating demonstrators.

- Air Canada Strike Continues Despite Government Orders, Hundreds of Flights Canceled:
 Today, August 18, the strike by 10,000 Air Canada flight attendants, declared <u>illegal</u> by the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB), continues to disrupt travel, forcing the cancellation of 240 flights and affecting 130,000 passengers daily. Despite a government order for binding arbitration under Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) <u>defied</u> the mandate, demanding fair wages and compensation for unpaid groundwork. Air Canada has <u>delayed</u> resuming flights until Monday evening.
- United Kingdom Demonstrations Continue Over Immigration: Cities across the United Kingdom will continue to see demonstrations over immigration this week. Liverpool will see opposing gatherings this coming Saturday, with the activist group Stand Up to Racism planning a counterdemonstration against the U.K. Independence Party's (UKIP) next stop on their "Mass Deportations Tour." UKIP was met by hundreds of counterdemonstrators at a previous tour stop in Glasgow, and social media engagement suggests Saturday's gathering will be well-attended by both sides. Meanwhile, demonstrations outside hotels have continued for another week, with Metropolitan Police reporting six arrests during a demonstration on Sunday in London's Canary Wharf.
- India Farmers Push Demands With Upcoming Rallies in Jalandhar and Delhi: Indian farmers' organizations are gearing up for significant rallies in August to amplify their demands. On August 20, the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, led by Sarwan Singh Pandher, will hold a major <u>rally</u> in Jalandhar, urging the Punjab government to pass an assembly resolution formally repealing its withdrawn land pooling policy and halting plans for new electricity meters. The farmers are also pressing for a sugarcane price of Rs 500 per quintal. On August 25, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) will <u>mobilize</u> in Delhi to oppose the proposed India-U.S. trade agreement and advocate for a legally guaranteed Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops, reinforcing their call for economic justice and agricultural reform.

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Heightened Pro-Palestine Demonstration Activity Over Israel's Plan to Occupy Gaza City:

There has been an increase in calls to action in support of Palestine in response to the Israeli government approving a plan to occupy the Gaza Strip. Several prominent activist groups have called for a Global Strike for Gaza on Thursday, August 21, and all Thursdays afterwards, though concrete actions have yet to emerge. In Germany, pro-Palestine activist groups are organizing a march to the Leipzig/Halle International Airport on Saturday, August 23, to protest the export of military equipment to Israel. On Sunday, more than 20 cities across Australia will see demonstrators take part in a Nationwide March for Palestine, with a march planned over Brisbane's Story Bridge.

Upcoming Events

- August 21: Ninoy Aquino Day (Philippines)
- August 22: Thaksin Shinawatra Lese Majeste Ruling (Thailand)
- August 23: Second Recall Vote (Taiwan)
- August 24: Independence Day (Ukraine)
- August 25: U.S.-ROK Summit (United States)
- August 25: Day of Songun (North Korea)
- August 27: Ganesh Chaturthi (India)
- August 29: Constitutional Court Ruling for Removal of Paetongtarn Shinawatra (Thailand)
- August 29: General Elections (Samoa)
- September 1: Labor Day (United States)
- September 1: General Elections (Guyana)
- September 3: General Elections (Jamaica)
- September 4-5: Mawlid (Global) Dates may vary
- September 8: Parliamentary Elections (Norway)
- September 9: Opening of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (New York City, NY)
- September 14: Legislative Elections (Macau)