

## MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS - US Daily Brief 15-01-26

by Adam Burrowes

### The White House *(times subject to change)*

11:00 ET 16:00 GMT	President Trump receives his Intelligence Briefing, Oval Office
12:30 ET 17:30 GMT	President Trump participates in a lunch meeting with María Corina Machado
13:00 ET 18:00 GMT	Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt
16:00 ET 21:00 GMT	President Trump meets 2025 Stanley Cup Champions, the Florida Panthers

### Key Dates:

- ❖ *Jan. 30: Government funding expires*
- ❖ *Jan 31: Texas Special Election*
- ❖ *April 16: New Jersey Special Election*
- ❖ *March 10: Georgia Special Election*

### Washington

President Donald Trump will receive an intelligence briefing in the morning before holding a lunch meeting with the Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner, María Corina Machado, at 12:30 ET 17:30 GMT. Later in the afternoon, Trump will meet with members of the Stanley Cup winning Florida Panthers.

- At 13:00 ET 18:00 GMT, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt will brief reporters for the first time this week.

The Trump administration announced yesterday it is suspending visa processing for people from 75 countries, including states which have been subject to regular visa restrictions like Somalia, Haiti, Iran and Eritrea, but also important partners like Brazil, Egypt, and Thailand.

- State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott said in a statement Wednesday, “Immigrant visa processing from these 75 countries will be paused while the State Department reassess immigration processing procedures to prevent the entry of foreign nationals who would take welfare and public benefits.”
- A State Department official told Politico that the pause isn’t expected to directly affect tourist visas — or visas for people planning to come to the U.S. for upcoming sporting events, including the World Cup, later this year.

### Iran

President Trump appeared to indicate that he has put the military action against the Iranian government on the back burner, after Tehran postponed the execution of a 26-year-old protester and reined in its violent suppression of protests. Crude markets responded with an unwinding of risk premium.

- Trump told reporters in the Oval Office that the US had been “notified” that “the killing in Iran is stopping, has stopped, and there’s no plans for executions.” He added that multiple executions had been scheduled and stayed.

- Trump's comments came after troop and materiel movements in the Middle East yesterday appeared to suggest that some form of military action could be imminent, including drawdowns from the Al Udeid air base in Qatar, the biggest U.S. base in the Middle East.
- "All the signals are that a US attack is imminent, but that is also how this administration behaves to keep everyone on their toes. Unpredictability is part of the strategy," a Western military official told Reuters on Wednesday.

NBC News [reported](#) yesterday that Trump told his national security team that he would want "any US military action in Iran to deliver a swift and decisive blow to the regime and not spark a sustained war that dragged on for weeks or months."

- According to the report, "Trump's advisers have so far not been able to guarantee to him that the regime would quickly collapse after an American military strike, the U.S. official and two people familiar with the discussions said, and there is concern that the U.S. may not have all the assets in the region it would need to guard against what administration officials expect would be an aggressive Iranian response."

While Trump's comments appear de-escalatory, there will still be concerns in Tehran. Immediately before the joint Israeli-US strikes on Iranian military and nuclear sites in June 2025, Trump had indicated that negotiations could take place, catching the regime off guard.

- Politico summarises: "The Pentagon is moving a carrier strike group from the South China Sea toward the Middle East, NewsNation's Kellie Meyer reports. And the NYT quotes a senior US official who says Trump is awaiting Iran's next move as he considers a range of military targets, including ballistic missile sites and Iran's domestic security apparatus. "Any attack is at least several days away," unnamed officials tell the NYT. And so we wait."

## **Congressional Business**

The House is IN

The Senate is IN

**Committee Schedule –**

## **Banking**

Trump's call for a 10% cap on credit card interest rates is weighing on major US banks. Semafor reports that Trump, "populist push — which comes as banks reported mixed earnings Wednesday — threatens a blistering stock rally, as investors eye possible threats instead of celebrating the prospect of limitless gains."

- Semafor adds, "Citigroup's CFO warned of a "deleterious impact on the economy," while Bank of America's CEO cautioned over "unintended consequences." At least one firm is heeding Trump's call: Bilt, known for offering rewards on rent payments, unveiled new cards with a 10% interest rate cap."

- The policy proposal, which will likely need legislation to enforce, has been received poorly in Congress, with both Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) and House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) indicating limited support for the measure.

**Figure 1: One-year Stock Performance**



Source: Semafor

## Government Funding

The Senate is expected to pass a three-bill appropriations minibuss today, taking the total number of completed FY2026 funding bills to six. Senate appropriators are expected to release another package covering Defense, Transportation-HUD and Labor-HHS-Education over the weekend.

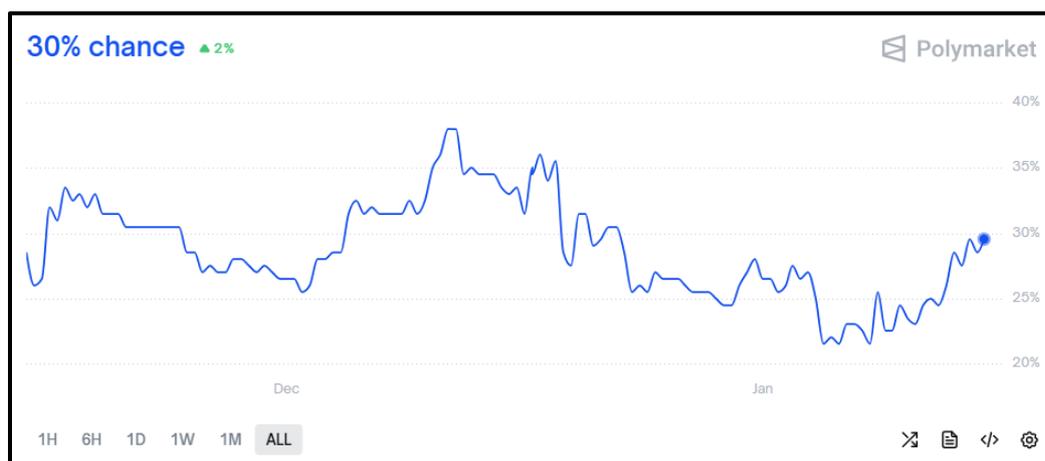
- Politico notes Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) said that senators are “keeping their options open for how to process the six remaining funding bills once they return from next week’s recess. But senators probably won’t be able to clear multiple funding packages in just one week before the Jan. 30 deadline, which means they would need to merge all the leftover bills into one unless they can cut a deal to dramatically speed up the chamber’s work.”

Despite uncharacteristically bipartisan progress on regular appropriations, a major confrontation is building over the Department of Homeland Security bill, with Democrats moving en masse to oppose the bill, which provides funding for ICE, in light of two recent shootings in Minnesota.

- While ICE is already funded to the tune of USD\$170 billion via the GOP’s ‘One Big Beautiful Bill’ (that’s more than the militaries of Spain, Turkey, Iran, and Mexico) Democrats are unwilling to be seen as authorising the DHS bill without some guardrails to govern the behaviour of ICE agents, for example installing bodycams and removing facemasks.

- In light of the DHS standoff, the risk of a government shutdown on January 31 has ticked up to 30%. A likely solution to the standoff would be a short-term funding measure to keep the lights on at DHS without increasing funding. If a shutdown does take place, it would be limited to DHS and have little impact on markets as funding for the remaining agencies will likely be competed ahead of the deadline.

**Figure 2: Government Shutdown by January 31**



Source: Polymarket

## Healthcare

Bipartisan negotiations to revive lapsed premium enhanced Obamacare subsidies appear to have collapsed amid a dispute over federal funding for abortions.

- Punchbowl News notes, “Senators involved in bipartisan health care talks are struggling to reach agreement among themselves. Even if they can, the group would need to build consensus among senators on both sides of the aisle in order to pass a bill, somehow push the measure through the House and then convince President Donald Trump to sign it.”
- As Punchbowl notes, “Senators would restart open enrollment for Obamacare plans through March 1 as part of the already agreed-upon bipartisan framework. But every day that goes by shrinks that window. It may already be too late to change 2026 enrollment all that much. Initial Obamacare enrollment is way down.
- “Senate Majority Leader John Thune has already said that any Obamacare deal would need to get done before the end of January. The recess next week, paired with the need to use the following week to pass the remaining FY2026 funding bills, makes it exceedingly difficult to meet that timeline.”

## Crypto

The Senate Banking Committee has postponed a markup today for its landmark crypto regulation bill, scheduled by Committee Chair Tim Scott (R-SC) without clear support, as noted in previous editions of this newsletter.

- The legislation, which would overhaul the structure of the financial system to incorporate digital assets, collapsed after Coinbase CEO Brian Armstrong

announced his opposition to a rewrite of the bill, citing concerns about the potential for amendments that would crack down on “rewards” from stablecoins — a flashpoint between crypto firms and traditional banks, which see them as threats to old-school savings accounts, per Politico.

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), the ranking Democrat on the committee, said: “Evidently, the industry writes the bill and if anybody in Congress has the nerve to slightly amend it, the industry says that the whole thing is off and they have canceled the law. These are folks who think that when they’ve bought themselves a Congress, then they expect it to behave the way they say.”

- It is unclear where the bill goes from here. Scott said yesterday: “I am hopeful that it will be a bipartisan victory. But at the end of the day, it’s time for us to come and say where we are on the underlying issues.”

## Latin America

Trump will hold a highly anticipated first meeting with Venezuela opposition leader María Corina Machado today. The meeting comes as the White House continues to sideline the official opposition in favour of working with ousted Nicolas Maduro’s former Vice President, Delcy Rodríguez, on reforming the state from within.

- Indeed, Trump wrote on Truth Social yesterday, “This morning I had a very good call with the Interim President of Venezuela, Delcy Rodríguez. We are making tremendous progress, as we help Venezuela stabilize and recover. Many topics were discussed, including Oil, Minerals, Trade and, of course, National Security. This partnership between the United States of America and Venezuela will be a spectacular one FOR ALL. Venezuela will soon be great and prosperous again, perhaps more so than ever before!”

Colombian Defense Minister Pedro Sanchez downplayed the prospect of a similar military operation targeting Bogota, despite hardline Trump rhetoric directed at leftist leader Gustavo Petro in recent weeks.

- Sanchez told Politico that while Colombia sees transnational criminals, terrorist groups, insurgent outfits and drug cartels as threats, the US is not on that list: “Relations with the United States have been extremely strong and continue to strengthen.”
- Politico notes, “His response highlights the awkward position Sanchez is in as he tries to defuse tensions between the two countries ahead of a meeting between Trump and [Petro].”

## War Powers

Trump and Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) successfully flipped two dissenting Republicans, Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Todd Young (R-IN), to quash a Venezuela war powers resolution that was advanced last week with the help of five Republican senators.

- Axios notes, “It’s a big win for Trump and Senate GOP leaders, who mounted a last-minute pressure campaign to avoid another rebuke of the administration’s actions in Venezuela.”

The move came after Secretary of State Marco Rubio wrote in a letter to Senate Foreign Relations Chair James Risch (R-ID) stating that there are no US troops currently on the ground in Venezuela, and Congress would be informed of any future military action in the country.

- That letter, and potentially [polling from the country](#) suggesting strong support for the US operation, appears to have helped sway the two Republicans.
- Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA), the co-sponsor of the Venezuela resolution, said Democrats plan to force votes on military action in Greenland, Iran, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Cuba, after Republicans derailed the Venezuela war powers measure. Politico notes, “Kaine sees a Greenland war powers resolution as having the potential to clear the two-thirds majority needed to override a Trump veto.”

## Semiconductors

Bloomberg [reports](#), “The US imposed a 25% tariff on imports of certain advanced semiconductors, a key step in an agreement blessed by [Trump] allowing Nvidia Corp. to ship Taiwan-made H200 artificial intelligence processors to China.

- Bloomberg notes, “Under an order Trump signed on Wednesday, the government would collect the duty on the chips as they’re brought to the US before final shipment to Chinese customers and other foreign markets.”
- Trump told reporters, “It’s not the highest level, but it’s a very good level. And China wants them, and other people want them, and we’re going to be making 25% of the sale of those chips, basically.”

## Critical Minerals

Trump signed a [Proclamation](#) yesterday holding off on new tariffs targeting imports of critical minerals and ordering the US Secretary of Commerce and US Trade Representative to jointly negotiate agreements on critical minerals with trading partners to safeguard national security.

- Bloomberg notes, “The president is floating price floors on imports — not just traditional percentage-based tariffs — to develop the supply chains for those materials that run through US-aligned nations.”
- Bloomberg adds, “The absence of any immediate tariffs is a signal that the administration is seeking to avoid destabilizing a trade truce Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to last fall, under which the sides pledged to lower import-tax rates and ease export controls.”
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- USTR Jamieson Greer said in a statement, “It’s no secret we need more resilient supply chains for critical minerals. By negotiating with interested parties to create an economically viable market for critical minerals, we can promote demand for and boost the supply of critical minerals at home and with partner countries. Securing our minerals supply chains is a top priority for President Trump, and I look forward to bringing home a good deal.”

Axios [reports](#), “A bipartisan group of lawmakers will introduce new legislation Thursday to establish a \$2.5 billion “Strategic Resilience Reserve” (SRR) for critical minerals,” with a goal

“to create something akin to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which was established in 1975 in response to the Arab oil embargo.”

- Axios notes, “The SRR wouldn't just be a mineral version of the petroleum reserve. The long-term strategy would be to establish a domestic market for critical minerals, bolster U.S. production capacity and ensure a stable and long-term supply for U.S. companies.”

## Democratic News

A Democrat-gerrymandered Congressional map is expected to remain in place for California at November's midterm elections, after a panel of federal judges in Los Angeles yesterday rejected a Republican challenge. The map is expected to create an additional five Democratic seats.

- The New York Times notes, “Two judges in a three-judge panel in Los Angeles sided with Gov. Gavin Newsom [D-CA] and fellow Democrats in Congress, who argued that the maps were drawn purely to give their party an advantage, in reaction to a similar gerrymander by Texas Republicans.”

## Russia

President Trump told [Reuters](#) yesterday that Ukraine - not Russia - is holding up a potential peace deal. "I think he's ready to make a deal," Trump said of Russian president Vladimir Putin. "I think Ukraine is less ready to make a deal."

- Reuters notes, “Trump's comments suggested renewed frustration with the Ukrainian leader. The two presidents have long had a volatile relationship, though their interactions seem to have improved over Trump's first year back in office.”
- Trump told Reuters he was not aware of a potential upcoming trip to Moscow by Witkoff and Kushner, which Bloomberg [reported](#) earlier on Wednesday and said he would meet Zelenskyy at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, next week, but implied no plans were set.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov told reporters this morning, per Tass, that the Kremlin agrees with Trump that Zelenskyy is holding up the peace process and called on the Ukrainian leader to "take responsibility for making decisions that promote peace".

- Ahead of the expiration of the last remaining US-Russia nuclear arms treaty (New START) on 5 February, Peskov said that Russia is still awaiting a US response to Putin's proposal for its extension for another 12 months. He added that a new 'more beneficial' treaty is needed, but it will be a “complex and lengthy process.”
- Peskov added that the US desire to include China in the arms control treaty means that the nuclear potential of the entire West (including French and British nuclear arsenals) should be taken into account.

## Greenland

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen told reporters yesterday that a meeting with US Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Greenlandic Foreign Minister Vivian Motzfeldt did not resolve a “fundamental disagreement” with the over Greenland's future.

- Rasmussen said, “We didn’t manage to change the American position. It’s clear that the president has this wish of conquering over Greenland. We made it very very clear that this is not in the interest of the Kingdom.”
- Politico notes, “Coming out of the meeting, the US, Denmark and Greenland agreed to convene high-level working groups to figure out a way forward on the issue. Rasmussen cast doubt on whether that was possible, saying that demands that would violate Denmark and Greenland’s sovereignty are “totally unacceptable.””
- Ahead of the meeting, Trump renewed his demand for US sovereignty over the island, claiming on Truth Social that he needs the territory for his Golden Dome missile defence project and to prevent Russia or China from taking control.

## Gaza

Special Envoy Steve Witkoff said in a [statement on X](#) yesterday that ‘Phase Two’ of the US-led peace plan for Gaza has been initiated, with the establishment of a “transitional technocratic Palestinian administration in Gaza.” Witkoff noted that Phase Two would begin, “the full demilitarization and reconstruction of Gaza, primarily the disarmament of all unauthorized personnel.”

- He added that the US “expects Hamas to comply fully with its obligations, including the immediate return of the final deceased hostage,” and warned that, “Failure to do so will bring serious consequences...”

There are a significant number of unanswered questions regarding the timing of the move to phase two. While the coordinator of the Board of Peace, former Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nickolay Mladenov, has been identified, its other members have not yet been made public (UK PM Sir Keir Starmer is a potential inclusion).

- There has also been no confirmation of the identities of the countries that will contribute to the International Stabilization Force, with potential inclusions raising concerns about perceptions of being an occupying force and their troops being vulnerable to potential Hamas attack. It is also unclear how the disarmament of Hamas can or will be conducted.
- The Wall Street Journal [reported yesterday](#) that the issues regarding Hamas’ disarmament have led “current and former officials [to say it stymies] Gaza’s reconstruction as well as efforts to establish a viable governance structure outside of the group’s influence.”

## Taiwan

Bloomberg News [reports](#) that, “Top Taiwanese officials are traveling to Washington to advance a long-stalled agreement to lower US tariffs on the self-governing island’s exports and boost investment in America, according to people familiar with the matter.”

- Bloomberg notes, “It’s unclear which US officials will participate in the meetings and whether Trump plans to become personally involved, the people said. Whether a deal will be finalized during the visit also remains uncertain. Still, the trip marks the latest signal that months of negotiations between Washington and Taipei are entering their final stages.”

- The Bloomberg report appears to support previous reporting that the deal will bring tariffs on Taiwanese exports from 20% to 15%, on par with the rates applied on exports from Japan and South Korea, and include a commitment from Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. to significantly increase investment in US chip manufacturing.

Nikkei Asia [reports](#), “Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. will raise its capital spending to a record level of up to \$56 billion for 2026,” with CEO CC Wei saying TSMC will continue to accelerate construction of cutting-edge chip plants in Arizona.

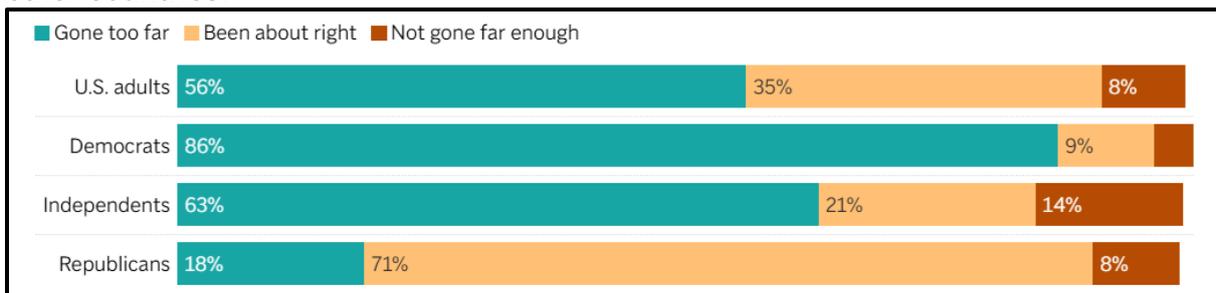
- According to Nikkei the company, “will start installing chipmaking tools at its second plant in the desert state and push ahead the production schedule to the second half of 2027. It is also constructing a third plant and waiting for permits to start building a fourth plant and a first advanced packaging plant. The chipmaker recently secured an additional large piece of land for further expansion in Arizona.”

### Chart of the Day

According to a new [AP-NORC poll](#), More than half of US adults believe President Donald Trump has “gone too far” in using the U.S. military to intervene in other countries.

- “The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research was conducted Jan. 8-11, after Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro’s capture. It found that 56% of U.S. adults think Trump has overstepped on military interventions abroad, while majorities disapprove of how the Republican president is handling foreign policy in general and Venezuela in particular.”

**Figure 3: “Percent who say Trump has \_\_\_ in using the U.S. military to intervene in other countries:”**



Source: AP-NORC

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