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Introducing another week of Future Trends — *tracking current global news stories that provide insight into the future.*

Here's what you need to know: Ukraine trains 40,000 storm brigade troops for counter-offensive, vast carbon market reform adopted by EU lawmakers, Interpol says 14,000 arrested in Latin America gun raids, Chile plans to nationalize its vast lithium industry, Germany quits nuclear power, closing its final three plants, German magazine fires editor over fake AI interview with Michael Schumacher.

SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Ukraine refugee situation. The UN says there have been more than [20.4 million border crossings out of Ukraine](#) since Russia invaded the country on February 24, 2022.

Ukraine trains 40,000 storm brigade troops for counter-offensive. The [new brigades](#), drafted by the Interior Ministry, will fight alongside regular army units bolstered by new Western battle tanks and thousands of fresh troops trained by allied armies outside Ukraine.

Top Kremlin critic convicted of treason, gets 25 years. A Russian court convicted top opposition figure [Vladimir Kara-Murza Jr.](#) of treason for publicly denouncing Moscow's war in Ukraine and sentenced him to 25 years in prison as part of the Kremlin's relentless crackdown on critics of the invasion.

POLITICS

Vast carbon market reform adopted by EU lawmakers. The EU Parliament has adopted sweeping climate measures aimed at massively cutting EU greenhouse emissions, including the introduction of a [carbon border tax](#) on imports. The legislative step crystallises an ambitious plan to reform Europe's carbon market.

Swiss charge Gambia ex-minister with crimes against humanity. Gambia's [ex-interior minister](#), Ousman Sonko, is accused of having supported, participated in and failed to prevent systematic and generalized attacks. This was part of the repression

carried out by the Gambian security forces against all opponents of the regime for the decade to 2016.

Mexico's president accuses Pentagon of spying, increasing tensions with US.

Mexican President Obrador ratcheted up the political infighting with the US by saying his country has been a [target of espionage](#) by the Pentagon.

Why Beijing has halted its trade war with Australia. China relies on Australia for [fundamental war materials](#), including iron ore. Additionally, the bans on Australian coal underpinned major blackouts in China in winter two years ago. The dynamics may change if China can commence production from its Simandou iron project in Guinea, West Africa.

Mexico's army control of the National Guard ruled unconstitutional. Mexico's Supreme Court ruled that last year's transfer of the newly created National Guard from civilian to [military control](#) was unconstitutional, dealing a blow to President Obrador who created the security force in 2019.

CONFLICT

Interpol says 14,000 arrested in Latin America gun raids. Over 14,000 people have been arrested and 8,000 weapons seized in an [anti-firearms operation](#) across Central and South America. The raids also swept up over 200 tons of cocaine and other drugs worth US\$5.7 billion, as well as 370 tons of drug precursors (chemical ingredients).

Sudan violence forces up to 20,000 to flee to Chad. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) said that between [10,000 and 20,000 people have fled Sudan's western Darfur region](#) in the past few days, seeking refuge in neighboring Chad, as the battle between the country's military and strongest paramilitary group rages on.

Rebel group in Mali attack Airport and military base. Multiple explosions targeted an airport and adjoining military base in central Mali on Saturday, killing at least 9 civilians and injuring over 60 others. The [military base](#) was believed to house the Wagner mercenary group.

Belarus units complete training on Russian tactical nuclear missile systems. Units from Belarus returned home from Russia after training on how to use the [Iskander tactical missile system](#) to launch nuclear weapons, the Belarusian defense ministry said.

Philippines, China to set up more lines of communication to resolve maritime issues. Talks between the countries' key officials in Manila mark the latest in a series of high-level meetings of the Philippines with leaders of the US and China as the two compete for [strategic advantage in the Indo-Pacific](#).

ECONOMICS

Chile plans to nationalize its vast lithium industry. Chile, is the world's [second largest producer](#) of the metal. This follows Mexico nationalizing its lithium deposits last year, and Indonesia banning exports of nickel ore, a key battery material, in 2020.

Zambia close to finalizing its debt restructuring plan for China and other countries. The country is close to concluding its [restructuring plan](#). They are seeking \$8 billion debt relief. Failure to achieve this will impact the tough fiscal reforms the government has been undertaking.

Alphabet CEO Pichai received over \$200 million in 2022 amid cost-cutting. The CEO earns more than 800 times the median employee's pay, the company said. The parent company of Google, has been cutting jobs globally, having announced plans to cut 12,000 jobs, equivalent to [6% of its global workforce](#).

Russian billionaires see wealth rise to over half a trillion dollars. Russia's richest people added [\\$152 billion to their wealth](#) over the past year, buoyed by high prices for natural resources and rebounding from the huge loss of fortunes they experienced just after the Ukraine war began.

EY cuts 3,000 jobs in US, blaming overcapacity. Accounting giant [Ernst & Young](#) is cutting 3,000 jobs in the US, citing overcapacity in parts of the company. The announcement comes days after the firm called off plans to break up its auditing and consulting divisions.

Crisis in Madagascar over hundreds of tons of unsold vanilla. Madagascar's scheme to impose a minimum price of \$250 per kilogram for the past three years, to guard against a sudden collapse of the [vanilla market](#) has resulted in gridlock. With seven months to go before the elections, President Andry Rajoelina has admitted his pricing policy has failed.

DEVELOPMENT

Germany quits nuclear power, closing its final three plants. Germany's final three [nuclear power plants](#) have closed, marking the end of the country's nuclear era that has spanned more than six decades.

Latvia releases Russian fertilizer as UN looks to save Ukraine grains deal. A first batch of [Russian fertilizer](#) which Latvia seized last year is being shipped to Kenya by the World Food Programme. Russia has cited the seizure as a key stumbling block to its continued participation in a Black Sea grains deal that allows Ukraine to export grains.

Norway's oil fund to vote against proposed climate resolution at BP. Norway's \$1.4 trillion sovereign wealth fund, one of the world's largest investors, said it will vote

against a resolution calling on British oil major BP [to adopt tougher greenhouse gas targets](#).

Argentina battles major dengue outbreak with atomic radiation. Argentina is fighting one of its worst outbreaks of dengue in recent years, by sterilizing mosquitoes [using radiation that alters their DNA](#) before releasing them into the wild. This year the country recorded over 41,000 cases.

EU parliament backs world's first comprehensive rules for crypto assets. The EU Parliament overwhelmingly backed the EU's first set of rules to [regulate crypto asset markets](#). Parliament voted by 517 in favor and 38 against to approve the world's first comprehensive set of regulations for issuing and trading crypto assets.

Afghanistan's economy likely to go into free-fall. Afghanistan's economy will contract after an anticipated 30% due to a [drop in foreign aid](#) this year, according to a report by UNDP. Afghanistan is the world's largest per capita recipient of humanitarian aid.

SOCIAL

German magazine fires editor over fake AI interview with Michael Schumacher. The publishers of a German magazine that ran an 'interview' with Michael Schumacher generated by [artificial intelligence](#) have sacked the editor and apologized to the Formula One great's family.

Scientists discover mysterious warm liquid spewing from Oregon seafloor, off US west coast. A study discovered seeps of warm, chemically distinct liquid shooting up from the seafloor about 50 miles off Newport, Oregon. Their research, published in the journal Science Advances, describes the [unique underwater spring](#) the researchers named Pythia's Oasis.

Fossilized animal urine gives insights into ancient climate change. It trapped pollen grains and charcoal, telling scientists when particular plants grew and wildfires raged. It also [preserved chemical isotopes](#) indicating precipitation and temperature.

Carnivorous plants use scent to attract insects. The research team learnt that the smells emanating from the different [Asian pitcher plant](#) species attracted different kinds of insects which they then digest in their enzymes trapped in the stems of the plants.

Never-seen-before 'crystal-like' matter is probably new material. A potentially brand new mineral may have been discovered in Florida. The [fossilized lightning chunk](#), or fulgurite, was created when lightning struck a tree near New Port Richey.

PEACEBUILDING

A delegation of six factions of the community-based [Mai Mai militia groups recently decided to end hostilities](#) and join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration, and Stabilization Program (P-DDRCS). The signing of this act of commitment was witnessed by political, administrative, and military authorities, as well as community representatives. The breakthrough came after two days of consultations, as part of an initiative currently funded by the European Union and implemented by a consortium consisting of [Interpeace](#), [Action for Peace and Concord](#), the [Pole Institute](#), and the [Center for International Cooperation of New York University](#).

Descendants of enslaved and enslavers from the former plantation at Arlington House recently [gathered for reconciliation talks](#) and a ceremony to honor their ancestors. More than 100 descendants of all the families listened to songs, read the names of their ancestors and heard of plans for a patchwork quilt that would include each of their handprints. They called on the country to rename the site, which is currently known as the Robert E. Lee Memorial National Historic Site, by dropping Lee's name. Arlington House, which is located in Arlington National Cemetery, is maintained by the US National Park Service.

[SaferWorld](#), the [Emergent Justice Collective](#) and the [International Commission of Jurists](#) have launched the [Arms Trade Litigation Monitor](#) – a [website that documents legal proceedings](#) that seek accountability for arms transfers linked with armed conflict and humanitarian crisis globally. Currently the Monitor covers 19 legal cases in nine countries, filed between 2016 and 2022. Most of these cases concern international arms transfers linked to the conflict in Yemen.

Mongolia's Khan Bank is issuing [a \\$60 million five-year bond to support the country's climate transition](#). Proceeds from the bond will go toward supporting renewable energy, energy efficiency, green buildings, pollution prevention, water treatment, sustainable agriculture, and clean transportation. The investment funds have come from the [World Bank's International Finance Corporation](#), [the Dutch development finance institution FMO](#), and [DAI Capital's asset management arm MicroVest](#). Khan Bank aims to increase Mongolia's green lending from its current level of 1.4 percent to 10 percent of its banking sector lending by 2030.