

# TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

## CBCNEWS

AUGUST 18, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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### NORTH AMERICAN TRADE STABILITY COLLAPSES AMIDST TRUMP-CARNEY BRINKMANSHIP AND SUSTAINED MIDDLE EASTERN CONFLICT

#### DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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August 18, 2026, marks a critical inflection point for North American economic and security architecture. The day is dominated by the 24-hour countdown to the implementation of [50% tariffs](#) by the Trump administration on \$28 billion worth of Canadian exports. Prime Minister Mark Carney and President Donald Trump have engaged in multiple leader-level calls, yet negotiators remain deadlocked on key sectors, specifically automotive requirements and provincial bans on American alcohol. This trade volatility is unfolding against the backdrop of a six-month-old war between the United States and Iran, which has defied initial predictions of a swift victory following the [assassination of the Iranian Supreme Leader](#). The conflict continues to pressure global energy markets, with oil futures exceeding \$90 per barrel and domestic inflation in Canada reaching 3%.

Domestically, the Canadian government is attempting to project long-term stability through the announcement of the [Churchill Falls expansion](#), described as the largest clean energy investment in North American history. However, this project faces immediate political risk from upcoming provincial elections in Quebec and unresolved Indigenous land claims. Simultaneously, the social fabric is under strain as evidenced by the demolition of the Tumbler Ridge high school following a mass shooting and the intensification of [cultural polarization](#) surrounding the WNBA's debut in Canada. The convergence of these events suggests a government struggling to manage immediate economic threats while attempting to secure a sovereign energy and social future.

The information environment is characterized by high levels of uncertainty and fear-driven economic behavior. Small businesses in both Canada and the U.S. report [laying off staff](#) and suspending operations in anticipation of the tariff deadline. The U.S. posture, as interpreted through Canadian media, appears indifferent to the urgency felt in Ottawa, with American news cycles dominated by the domestic war effort and the upcoming mid-term elections. This disconnect underscores a significant erosion in the traditional "Special Relationship," further exacerbated by a [public petition](#) to expel U.S. Ambassador Pete Hoekstra for interference in Canadian internal affairs.

#### MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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The day's events highlight a fracturing of the post-KUSMA trade order and the systemic

impact of prolonged kinetic conflict in the Middle East.

- **Trade Brinkmanship:** The Carney administration is balancing intense [sectoral negotiations](#) with the threat of retaliatory counter-tariffs, as the U.S. demands increased dairy market access and the lifting of alcohol restrictions.
- **Energy Transition Risks:** The [Churchill Falls deal](#) aims to triple capacity but remains vulnerable to the Quebec election and the Innu Nation's demands for equity ownership.
- **The Iran War Quagmire:** Six months into the conflict, U.S. military assumptions regarding [Iranian capitulation](#) have been proven wrong, with Iran utilizing underground missile bunkers and explosive drones to maintain resistance.
- **Big Tech Accountability:** A coalition of 29 U.S. states has brought [Meta to trial](#), alleging the company deliberately designed addictive platforms for children and improperly harvested youth data.
- **Resource Scarcity:** A record-breaking [water crisis](#) in the U.S. Southwest has left Lake Mead at historic lows, threatening the water supply for 40 million people and signaling imminent federal intervention in state water rights.

## KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

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**Diplomacy & Statecraft** The diplomatic relationship between Ottawa and Washington has deteriorated to a state of defensive maneuvering. The [petition against Ambassador Pete Hoekstra](#), which has garnered over 100,000 signatures, reflects a growing nationalist sentiment in Canada against perceived U.S. overreach and "51st state" rhetoric. Prime Minister Carney's

"elbows up" strategy is being tested as he attempts to negotiate a [reduction in existing tariffs](#) on steel and aluminum while fending off new levies. The use of leader-level calls between Carney and Trump suggests that standard diplomatic channels have been bypassed in favor of high-stakes personal negotiation.

**Macroeconomics & Trade** The threat of [50% tariffs](#) targets \$28 billion in goods, representing approximately 5% of Canadian exports, yet its concentrated impact on the automotive and furniture sectors poses a systemic risk to Ontario and Quebec. Inflation is being driven by [oil price volatility](#), with gasoline costs rising 25%. Canadian producers are also facing "adulteration" issues in the olive oil market, prompting a shift toward domestic alternatives like camelina oil to secure [supply chain integrity](#).

**Armed Conflict & Militarization** The war with Iran has entered a phase of attrition. Despite the U.S. claiming to have destroyed [90% of Iran's ballistic missiles](#), underground bunkers allow for continued strikes against Israel and Gulf targets. The threat to the Strait of Hormuz remains a primary economic leverage point for Tehran, with the potential for [suicide speedboats](#) and drones to incinerate tankers. Concurrently, the Israeli-Gaza conflict remains stalemated, with Prime Minister Netanyahu refusing to withdraw until Hamas is fully disarmed, despite U.S. pressure for a [pre-midterm peace deal](#).

**Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk** Meta's trial in Oakland, California, represents a significant regulatory challenge to the business models of [Silicon Valley](#). The demand for \$200 billion in damages and mandated product changes (e.g., ending infinite scrolling) could redefine tech liability. In Canada, the [trial of Bradley Gibbs](#), a police

officer and hockey camp instructor, has exposed a lack of mandatory background check legislation for summer camps, prompting a sudden [policy shift](#) from the Premier's office.

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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### The Weaponization of Interdependence

Trade is no longer viewed as a mutually beneficial endeavor but as a primary tool of coercion. The U.S. administration is leveraging [broad-spectrum tariffs](#) to "flush Canada out" and force concessions on specific domestic policies, such as the provincial booze bans. Canada, in turn, is preparing [retaliatory lists](#) that target U.S. electoral vulnerabilities. This trend signifies a shift from the rule-based KUSMA framework to an era of tactical economic warfare where even small businesses, such as [Michigan furniture makers](#), become collateral damage.

### Resilience Through Energy Sovereignty

The Carney government's focus on the [Churchill Falls investment](#) is a strategic move to "Trump-proof" the Canadian economy by securing clean energy independence. By tripling capacity and integrating wind power, the government hopes to attract [international investment](#) through the promise of energy stability. However, the reliance on provincial cooperation (Quebec and Newfoundland) and Indigenous consent remains a critical bottleneck that could derail this long-term vision.

### Miscalculation and Intelligence Failures

A recurring theme across the Iran war and the trade negotiations is the concept of [strategic miscalculation](#). U.S. negotiators underestimated the Iranian regime's "will to fight" and their ability to operate without a

Supreme Leader. Similarly, the U.S. may be underestimating the political cost Carney is willing to pay to avoid a [bad deal](#). The transcripts suggest a pervasive "mirror imaging" where both sides assume the other will capitulate under economic or military pressure, leading to prolonged stalemates.

## INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

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In Canada, the Carney government is attempting to maintain a [united front](#) with the premiers, but regional fissures are appearing. Western provinces, specifically Alberta, are resistant to energy-based retaliation against the U.S., while British Columbia and Ontario demand aggressive defense of their forestry and auto sectors. The [demolition of the school](#) in Tumbler Ridge serves as a poignant symbol of a nation dealing with the trauma of mass violence, suggesting that domestic security and mental health are becoming as central to the national discourse as trade.

In the United States, the [Meta trial](#) and the water crisis in the Southwest indicate significant institutional stress. The 29-state coalition suing Meta suggests that state-level governments are filling a regulatory void left by the federal government. Furthermore, the [water shortages at Lake Mead](#) are creating a climate of "genuine fear" that may soon translate into civil unrest or interstate legal battles over resource allocation. The impending mid-term elections are driving the Trump administration's desire for "wins," potentially leading to more erratic policy decisions.

## EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

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The global system is portrayed as a fracturing multipolar arena where traditional alliances are under extreme pressure. The U.S. is projecting power through [threats against allies like Oman](#) and the reimposition of blockades against Iran. Canada is responding by seeking to diversify its trade toward [European markets](#) to leverage existing free trade agreements. This pivot, while necessary, is described as not being on "solid footing," as the U.S. remains the indispensable, albeit volatile, partner.

The "Outside World" is increasingly framed as a source of cascading risks, from [Ebola outbreaks in the DRC](#) to tropical storms in Hawaii. The international forces preparing to oversee the [Trump peace plan](#) in Gaza reflect a continued, if strained, U.S. attempt to lead global conflict resolution, even as its domestic attention is diverted by trade wars and kinetic operations in Iran.

## THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

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Economic indicators suggest a period of stagflation and high uncertainty. Inflation remains stubbornly high, job growth is meager, and [energy costs](#) are a primary driver of household stress. Markets are pricing in the risk of a full-scale trade war, with businesses [suspending sales](#) to the U.S. until tariff clarity is achieved.

- **Inflation:** Hit [3% in July](#), with gas prices up 25%.
- **Energy:** Oil futures jumped [more than 2%](#) to over \$90 a barrel.

- **Unemployment:** Automotive hubs like Windsor, Ontario, have the [highest unemployment](#) in the country due to existing tariffs.
- **Trade Exposure:** Nearly [\\$28 billion](#) in Canadian exports at risk; 70% of U.S. softwood lumber sourced from Canada.
- **Retail Sector:** Australian beef is being used as a [loss leader](#) in Canadian grocery stores, retailing for half the price of Canadian beef.

## LEADERSHIP CHANGES

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The transcripts detail several leadership transitions and factional maneuvers within both governments and corporate entities.

- **Mark Carney:** The Canadian Prime Minister is facing his first major [economic trial](#), attempting to transition from an "advisory" style to a combatant role against Trump.
- **Dwayne "Keffy D" Davis:** The former gang leader is on trial for [orchestrating the killing](#) of Tupac Shakur 30 years ago, representing a high-profile pursuit of historical justice.
- **Mark Zuckerberg:** The Meta CEO is expected to [testify in person](#), placing the company's founder directly in the line of legal fire.
- **Innu Nation Grand Chief:** Newly elected, she is a [key gatekeeper](#) for the Churchill Falls project, demanding specific details on ownership.
- **Pete Hegseth:** U.S. Defense Secretary recently emphasized the goal of [permanently ending](#) the Iranian nuclear program through military force.

## EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

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The network displays a dual-track hierarchy. The **Lead Stories** are domestically focused and fear-driven, centering on the [tariff deadline](#) and its impact on everyday products like hockey sticks and honey. The **Iran War** is treated as a persistent, high-gravity background story, with a focus on U.S. miscalculations and the humanitarian/economic cost. **Buried Stories** include the [Ebola outbreak](#) in the DRC, which is now the deadliest on record but receives minimal airtime compared to trade disputes. The emotional tone is one of **anxious resilience**, designed to prepare the Canadian public for economic hardship while asserting national competence through energy projects.

## GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

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The subtext reveals a world of "strongmen" leaders clashing with "principled technocrats," with the Carney-Trump dynamic serving as the primary case study.

### COUNTRIES and LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as a volatile, [unpredictable bully](#) who "prides himself in conducting many deals all at once" but is domestically "weak." Quotes describe his tactics as "straight out of his playbook."
- **Mark Carney:** Framed as a [sovereign defender](#), "not weak on the home front," but facing a "fine line" between economic reality and political promises.
- **Iran:** Depicted as a [resilient and proud](#) civilization that is "built to survive" and will "fight to the end."

- **Benjamin Netanyahu:** Portrayed as a leader [entrenched in political survival](#), unwilling to compromise on Gaza despite pressure from the U.S. administration.
- **Oman:** Framed as a [threatened ally](#) caught between U.S. aggression and Iranian proximity.

### NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **Meta (Zuckerberg):** Framed as a [deceptive predator](#) that "deliberately designed" dangerous products for children.
- **Hamas:** Portrayed as a [militant obstacle](#) to peace, refusing to disarm until Israeli withdrawal is guaranteed.
- **Innu Nation:** Depicted as a [sovereign stakeholder](#) whose support is necessary for national energy goals, not just a passive observer.

## INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

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Narrative seeding is evident in both the U.S. and Canadian contexts. The Trump administration is using "338 tariffs" as a [negotiating tactic](#) to flush Canada out, while U.S. media minimizes the trade conflict to maintain domestic support for the Iran war. In Canada, the Carney government is seeding the narrative that ["no deal is better than a bad deal"](#) to prepare the public for the failure of negotiations. A delta exists between the U.S. claim of destroying [90% of Iranian missiles](#) and the reality of continued strikes, suggesting a significant propaganda effort to maintain the perception of military success.

## HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

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- **The "11th Hour" Extension:** Given the high stakes for the U.S. auto industry and the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce's](#) intervention, a 30-day "negotiating extension" is more likely than a total trade collapse at midnight.
- **Iranian Escalation:** As the U.S. blockade tightens, Iran will likely deploy [explosive drones](#) against a major Gulf oil refinery to force a global economic crisis that undermines Trump before the mid-terms.
- **Canadian Political Realignment:** If Carney accepts significant [dairy concessions](#), the Bloc Québécois will likely withdraw support for his minority government, triggering a snap election.

## STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

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**Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Immediate implementation of retaliatory [counter-tariffs](#) by Canada if a deal is not reached; mass layoffs in the furniture and plastics sectors in Ontario and Quebec; spikes in the cost of [aluminum-canned goods](#).

**Medium Term (1-6 Months):** Federal takeover of water allocation in the [U.S. Southwest](#); conclusion of the Meta trial with potential for global regulatory precedents; a shift in the Iran war toward [ground troop](#) discussions as bombing fails to achieve surrender.

**Long Term (1-5 Years):** Completion of the [Churchill Falls power line](#), fundamentally shifting Quebec's energy dependency; a structural decoupling of the U.S.-Canada integrated supply chain as businesses "Trump-proof" their operations.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

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- **Trade War Contagion:** The risk of 50% tariffs leading to a full economic decoupling between Canada and the U.S. **Triggers:** Failure of Carney-Trump call; immediate [retaliatory tariffs](#) from Ottawa. **Likelihood:** Moderate-High. **Impact:** Catastrophic for North American supply chains. **Mitigations:** Short-term negotiating extension; sectoral carve-outs for KUSMA-compliant goods.
- **Iranian Energy Sabotage:** Kinetic strike on Strait of Hormuz shipping. **Triggers:** Expiration of the [ceasefire MOU](#); increased U.S. blockade. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Oil price surge to \$150/barrel. **Mitigations:** U.S. Navy escorting tankers; re-opening of [Oman-led negotiations](#).
- **Big Tech Financial Collapse:** Meta faces liabilities that threaten its solvency. **Triggers:** \$200B [damage award](#) in California. **Likelihood:** Low-Moderate. **Impact:** Systemic shock to the NASDAQ and digital advertising markets. **Mitigations:** Settlement for significantly lower amount; spin-off of Instagram.
- **Canadian Regional Fracture:** Internal dispute over trade retaliation leads to political crisis. **Triggers:** Ottawa [sacrificing dairy](#) for auto; Alberta refusing to turn off energy taps. **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Loss of federal government mandate; surge in Western separatism. **Mitigations:** National trade council including all premiers; direct federal compensation for impacted sectors.

- **AI-Driven Child Exploitation:** Surge in deepfake content overwhelms law enforcement. **Triggers:** Widely available [nudification apps](#); 33% of RCMP investigations now involving AI. **Likelihood:** Already occurring/Rising. **Impact:** Breakdown of youth safety online; erosion of trust in digital media. **Mitigations:** Mandatory watermarking of AI content; criminalization of hosting AI-generated abuse material.

## GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

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- **Oman's Specific Position:** Transcripts mention Trump [threatening to bomb](#) this ally, but lack detail on Oman's specific mediating role or their internal stability.
- **KUSMA's Legal Status:** It is unclear if the [50% tariffs](#) legally violate the existing KUSMA agreement and why the U.S. feels entitled to ignore it.
- **Indigenous Power-Sharing:** The federal government's offer to make the Innu Nation [part owners](#) of the Churchill Falls project lacks a specific percentage or financial structure.
- **Iran's Internal Leadership:** Following the [Supreme Leader's death](#), there is no mention of the specific individuals now leading the Iranian Revolutionary Guard or the civilian government.

## CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

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- **Desperate Strength:** The U.S. tariff threat is not a sign of strength but a [desperate attempt](#) to secure a "win" to mask the failure of the Iran war. If Canada holds firm, the U.S. may be forced to back down first due to domestic [Michigan businesses](#) pressure.
- **The Energy Stalling Tactic:** The [Churchill Falls deal](#) is a political theatrical piece designed to bolster Carney's domestic approval during the trade crisis, with little intent of actually overcoming the [Quebec election](#) hurdle.
- **Black Swan Event:** A [Deadpool event](#) at Lake Mead, where water physically stops flowing over the Hoover Dam, occurring before the mid-terms, triggering a mass migration event from the U.S. Southwest into Northern states and Canada.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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### For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Prioritize the [vulnerable sectors background checks](#) legislation to restore public trust in child safety systems.
- Develop a formal [national energy security plan](#) that integrates Churchill Falls capacity with Western energy resources to present a united front to the U.S.
- Engage [European and TPP partners](#) immediately for emergency market access for steel and aluminum should the U.S. border close.

## For Private Sector/Investors:

- Diversify [supply chains](#) away from the Strait of Hormuz; transition to long-term storage or alternative routes given the sustained Iran conflict.
- Monitor the [Meta trial](#) for immediate impacts on digital marketing regulations; prepare for stricter age-gating requirements.
- Assess exposure to [U.S. Southwest water risks](#); divest from water-intensive industries in Arizona and Nevada.

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

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The legislative agenda is currently reactive, responding to external trade threats and domestic safety failures. Press events indicate a high-pressure environment where policy is being made via leader-level negotiations and public petitions.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**
  - **Camp Background Check Legislation:** A new proposal by the [Ontario government](#) to mandate vulnerable sector checks for all summer camp staff.
  - **Dual Practice Healthcare Model:** Alberta's new model allowing physicians to practice in both [public and private systems](#), currently under federal review for Health Act violations.

## • HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Carney-Trump Phone Calls:** High-stakes executive [trade negotiations](#) conducted outside standard diplomatic channels.
- **Hoekstra Expulsion Petition:** A formal [parliamentary petition](#) gathering 100,000+ signatures to declare the U.S. Ambassador persona non grata.
- **Meta Trial Opening Statements:** A [federal court hearing](#) in Oakland addressing social media's impact on youth.

## KEY STORIES

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- **U.S.-Canada Trade Deadline:** Negotiators are in a last-ditch effort in [Washington](#) to avoid 50% tariffs on \$28B in goods; key sticking points include autos and alcohol.
- **War with Iran:** Six months in, the conflict is stalemated; [assassination of Khamenei](#) failed to end resistance; U.S. Navy accompanies tankers in the Strait.
- **Churchill Falls Expansion:** A historic deal to [triple clean energy capacity](#) in Labrador; faces risks from Quebec's election and Innu land claims.
- **Meta Youth Safety Trial:** 29 U.S. states sue [Meta](#) for \$200B, alleging deliberate addiction and illegal data collection from kids.
- **Lake Mead Water Crisis:** 40 million Americans face [water shortages](#) as the Colorado River reaches historic lows; federal intervention looming.
- **Tumbler Ridge Demolition:** The high school where a [mass shooting](#) occurred is being torn down to spare residents a constant reminder of the tragedy.

- **Hayden Panettiere Death:** The actress died at [age 36](#); police investigating a potential overdose; remembered for her roles in "Heroes" and "Nashville."
- **Tupac Shakur Trial:** Former gang leader [Dwayne Davis](#) faces trial 30 years after the hip-hop star was gunned down in Las Vegas.
- **Ebola Outbreak:** Deadly outbreak in the [DRC](#) kills 2,300+ people, becoming the deadliest on record.
- **Caitlin Clark WNBA Debut:** The superstar's arrival in [Toronto](#) is overshadowed by culture wars over race, gender, and physical play in the league.
- **Australian Beef in Canada:** [Loblaws](#) is selling Australian beef at half the price of Canadian beef, hurting local cattle producers.
- **Olive Oil Fraud:** CFIA reports one in three [olive oil bottles](#) are mislabeled or tampered with; farmers pitch domestic camelina oil as a substitute.
- **Oman Bombing Threat:** Donald Trump threatens to [bomb Oman](#) if it interferes with U.S. talks with Iran.
- **Hawaii Storm Damage:** [Hurricane Lala](#) causes widespread power outages and roof damage on the Big Island.
- **Tumbler Ridge Hockey Camp Scandal:** A lead instructor continued working with kids after [pleading guilty](#) to assaulting children; leads to mandatory background check calls.
- **B.C. Wildfires:** The [Bald Range wildfire](#) continues to threaten Summerland, with 150 structures damaged and 500 properties evacuated.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

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**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.

For questions or suggestions, please contact [kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com](mailto:kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com). To learn more or subscribe to our free daily newsletters, visit <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/announcing-our-new-daily-todays-trends-on-capitol-hill-todays->

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Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.