

UN experts cite possible U.S. war crimes in Iran strikes; Fed hikes interest rates for first time in 3 years; OpenAI flags “concerning” AI behavior

Drop Site Daily: September 17, 2026

Yemen

- **Saudi-led coalition strikes Yemen as fighting intensifies near Bab al-Mandab:** Saudi-led coalition warplanes [struck](#) three telecommunications towers in Yemen’s Taiz province, damaging homes and injuring two, according to Ansarallah-run Al-Masirah. Two coalition strikes also [hit](#) Abs in Hajjah province, killing one person, wounding another, destroying four vehicles, and damaging a house, the outlet reported.
- Meanwhile, fighting continued around the strategic Kahbub mountains overlooking the Bab al-Mandab Strait and Mayyun Island. Yemeni Saudi-backed forces claimed they repelled Ansarallah infiltration attempts, including on the Al-Mudaraba front, with support from the UAE-backed Southern Giants Brigades, Al Jazeera reported.
- **AP: Saudi Arabia running low on missile interceptors, seeks foreign air-defense support:** Saudi Arabia is [running low](#) on missile interceptors and has asked France, Britain, Pakistan, and Egypt to deploy air-defense support against Ansarallah missiles and drones, two regional officials told the Associated Press.
- One official said Riyadh sought assistance because the United States, its main arms supplier, has also seen its interceptor stockpiles dwindle during the six-month war with Iran.
- CENTCOM told Al Jazeera it was “closely monitoring” the Saudi-Ansarallah conflict and pointed to its longstanding military relationship with Riyadh.
- **Bloomberg: Saudi Arabia seeks to restore half of East-West oil pipeline capacity “within days”:** Saudi Arabia is [seeking](#) to restore roughly half the capacity of its East-West oil pipeline “within days,” Bloomberg reported. No firmer timetable was provided.

- Half of the pipeline's 7 million-barrel-per-day capacity would be about 3.5 million barrels per day.
- AP previously reported that damage to a major pumping facility could take three to five weeks to repair, although partial operations could resume during that period.
- Bloomberg's report suggests substantial flows may return well before full repairs are completed, easing fears that export stocks at Yanbu would run dry which Reuters said had only 5-7 days of stored crude.

Iran

- **Trump claim U.S. "towards the end" of Iran war; Tehran says it does not trust**

Washington: President Donald Trump said Wednesday he hopes the war with Iran is nearing an end and that Tehran "want[s] to make a deal," adding that he had heard from Iran "directly" without elaborating.

- Iran's Supreme National Security Council Secretary Mohsen Rezaei reiterated Tehran's distrust of Washington, saying: "We in no way trust the United States. They must take practical actions and gain our trust."

- **U.S.-contracted vessel carrying American personnel struck in Iranian attack near Strait of Hormuz, Fox News reports:** A "U.S.-contracted vessel" carrying American personnel was **struck** during an Iranian attack near the Strait of Hormuz earlier this week, Fox news reported.

- The report appears to publicly confirm that U.S. personnel are directly involved in the "dark" shuttle operation through Hormuz's southern lane, either aboard oil tankers or vessels accompanying them. Washington has used the covert transits to keep regional energy flows averaging at least 16 million barrels per day, about two-thirds of prewar exports.
- The attack reportedly involved four drones and at least one missile. One projectile struck the vessel, causing minor injuries, including smoke inhalation. The wounded are being treated in an unnamed Gulf country.
- Joe Kent, the former National Counterterrorism Center director who resigned over the Iran war, **warned** that U.S. warships and contracted vessels are "sitting ducks" and that a mass-casualty attack is only a matter of time. Kent urged Washington to withdraw its ships and bases, and then offer Iran sanctions relief and access to frozen funds in exchange for reopening the Strait.

- **South Korea says no decision on Strait of Hormuz military deployment:** South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun [said](#) Thursday that Seoul has not decided whether to deploy military assets to the Strait of Hormuz, as the government weighs a potential contribution to securing the waterway amid U.S. pressure.

- First Vice Foreign Minister Park Yoon-joo said discussions are focused on safe navigation, energy security and protecting South Korean nationals rather than relations with Washington, adding that Seoul remains in an “internal deliberation and review stage.”

- Iran has opposed foreign military involvement in the Strait and warned Seoul of “serious consequences.” Cho is expected to discuss regional and global issues with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington on Friday.

- **Global oil market short 5 million barrels a day as China’s crude prices hit record**

high: The global oil market is now [short](#) an estimated 5 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude and refined fuels, the Financial Times reported.

- Chinese crude futures have surged to hit a record \$129 a barrel as of Wednesday, up 14% since attacks forced Saudi Arabia to close its East-West pipeline. Oil for immediate delivery has become even more expensive—spot Brent reached \$146 and ultra-low-sulfur diesel hit a record \$221.

- China had cushioned the global shock by cutting crude imports by nearly 5 million bpd in June while drawing down stockpiles. But imports have rebounded toward 9 million bpd in September as those buffers shrink and refiners return to the market, analysts said.

- China’s gasoline, diesel and jet-fuel stocks are also falling rapidly, raising speculation that Beijing may again restrict fuel exports, the report said.

- **UN inquiry finds grounds to believe U.S. committed war crimes in Iran strikes:** The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran [said](#) it found reasonable grounds to believe the United States committed war crimes in two February 28 airstrikes that killed at least 178 civilians, including women and children.

- The mission said a U.S. Tomahawk strike hit the Shajareh Tayyebbeh Primary School in Minab, killing more than 150 people, including around 120 children. A separate U.S. strike using Precision Strike Missiles dispersed tungsten pellets over a sports complex and residential area in [Lamerd](#), killing 22 civilians.

- The report also found that Iran's repression of the 2025–2026 protests involved gross human rights violations, many amounting to crimes against humanity, including murder, imprisonment, and torture.
- **Iran expels Swedish diplomat following Stockholm's expulsion of Iranian diplomat:** Iran [ordered](#) a Swedish diplomat to leave the country within 48 hours Thursday in retaliation for Sweden's decision to expel an Iranian embassy employee over alleged security concerns, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported.
- Iran's Foreign Ministry rejected Sweden's allegations as "baseless" and called the expulsion unjustified, claiming Stockholm's decision was influenced by Israel.
- **Israeli man sentenced to 13.5 years for spying for Iran:** An Israeli court [sentenced](#) Alexander Granovsky to 13.5 years in prison Wednesday for carrying out security-related tasks for an Iranian operative in exchange for thousands of dollars, according to Haaretz.
- Granovsky, arrested in 2024, maintained contact with the operative via Telegram and sent photos of the neighborhood where former Israeli general and Blue and White leader Benny Gantz lived. He was also convicted of setting nine vehicles on fire and spraying graffiti, and was asked to recruit people with criminal records to carry out acts of violence.

Palestine

- **Killed and wounded in Gaza:** Over the past 24 hours, five Palestinians were killed—two due to wounds sustained in earlier attacks and three in new Israeli attacks—and 28 injured across Gaza, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.
- The total recorded death toll since October 7, 2023 has risen to 73,821 killed, with 174,897 injured. Since October 11, the first full day of the so-called ceasefire, Israel has killed at least 1,386 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded 4,784, while 831 bodies have been recovered from under the rubble.
- **Israeli forces carry out demolitions and raids across occupied West Bank:**
 - **Ramallah:** Israeli forces [detained](#) Palestinian journalist Alaa Al-Rimawi after raiding his apartment in Ramallah's Al-Masyoun neighborhood on Thursday, WAFA reported. On Wednesday, settlers attacked homes and set fire to agricultural land in Burqa, east of Ramallah, while Israeli forces prevented Civil Defense crews from

reaching the fire. Also Wednesday, Israeli forces shot and wounded a Palestinian man during a raid on Al-Bireh.

- **Nablus:** Israeli forces **beat and injured** two Palestinians Thursday, while detaining and interrogating them during a raid on Al-Ain refugee camp. Forces also raided homes, turned one into a military post, and blocked access to the camp.

- **Qalqilya:** Israeli forces **shot** a Palestinian man in the foot during a raid on Qalqilya, while another man with disabilities suffered from tear-gas inhalation.

- **East Jerusalem:** Israeli forces **demolished** five residential structures and a sheep pen in Anata, northeast of occupied East Jerusalem, leaving around 30 people without their homes. Forces beat residents and prevented them from removing their belongings before the demolitions.

- **Toll of Gaza's Israeli-damaged building collapse rises to 21 killed and 45 wounded:** Gaza Civil Defense spokesperson Mahmoud Basal told Drop Site's Abdel Qader Sabbah that the building collapsed at around 3 a.m. as families were sleeping, crushing its six floors on top of one another. Dozens remain trapped beneath the rubble.

- “Half an hour ago, there were still voices coming from inside this building. But unfortunately, the resources we have are not sufficient to reach them,” Basal said, describing how rescuers lack specialized equipment to locate survivors beneath the concrete due to Israeli restrictions.

- Basal said around 2,000 damaged buildings across Gaza are on the verge of collapse while still housing thousands of Palestinians. “Are there any alternatives? The truth is, there are no alternatives in Gaza,” Basal said.

- With insufficient tents and shelter space, Basal appealed directly to the international community, ceasefire guarantors, Board of Peace, and its High Representative, Nickolay Mladenov: “What more are you waiting for?”

- **Sabbah's interview with Basal and an eyewitness.**

- **21-year-old Palestinian prisoner dies in Ofer prison:** An Israeli court has ordered an autopsy of a Palestinian detainee who died in Ofer Prison on Tuesday, according to the Palestinian Prisoners' Club. Mutaz Al-Atrash, 21, had been under administrative detention for approximately a year. He had no known health problems prior to his arrest. Israeli police notified the family on Wednesday without providing any information on the cause of death.

- Al-Atrash is one of at least 92 Palestinian prisoners who have died in Israeli custody since the start of the war on Gaza nearly three years ago, according to the

Palestinian Prisoners' Club. The group attributed the deaths to torture, starvation, medical neglect, sexual violence, and other abuses, while saying the fate of additional Gaza detainees remains unknown.

- **Gaza Health Ministry: Israel cuts approved medical evacuations from 136 to 61:** The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza said Israeli authorities obstructed Thursday's scheduled medical evacuations to Egypt, reducing the number of approved patients and companions from 136 to 72 before ordering another 11 to return, leaving 61.

- The ministry said it would allow only critical cases and patients requiring ambulances to leave, with the others returning in protest against what it called "unjustified punitive policies." It called for international intervention to ensure all patients can leave for treatment under the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement.

- **Israel extends detention of journalist Naqaa Hamed for six days:** Israeli authorities have extended the detention of Palestinian journalist and Drop Site contributor Naqaa Hamed for six days, according to a statement by her family. Hamed was arrested near Bethlehem on Tuesday as she was returning from a reporting assignment in the occupied West Bank.

- According to the family, Hamed's detention centers around her coverage of the Israeli siege of several Palestinian families in their homes in the town of Qusra.

- Hamed's sister, Fatima Salem [said](#) on Wednesday in a social media post: "As an American taxpayer, knowing that my own contributions may be helping to sustain the very system responsible for detaining my sister, an American citizen, is unbearable."

- **Read more about Naqaa's arrest [here](#).**

- **U.S. extends visa restrictions barring Abbas from UN General Assembly; Palestinian FM calls decision "unjustified":** The U.S. State Department [said](#) it will extend visa restrictions on Palestinian Authority (PA) and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) officials, preventing Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas from traveling to New York to address the UN General Assembly next week for the second year in a row.

- Washington accused the PA and PLO of failing to reform and undermining peace, including by seeking international recognition of Palestinian statehood and pursuing cases at international courts.

- The Palestinian Foreign Ministry [rejected](#) the decision Thursday as "unjustified," saying: "Recourse to international institutions and international law is a legitimate right of the State of Palestine, and a peaceful and legal means of protecting our people and their rights."

- The UN General Assembly is scheduled to vote on a draft resolution on Thursday to allow Abbas to address the session remotely, [according](#) to The New York Times.
- **Israel and Morocco expand diplomatic ties:** Israel and Morocco will open embassies, exchange ambassadors, and expand relations under the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords, according to a joint [statement](#) on Wednesday with the United States, saying “the establishment of full diplomatic, peaceful and friendly relations...will advance the cause of peace and unlock new opportunities for the entire region.”
- In the statement, the U.S. and Israel reaffirm their recognition of Morocco’s sovereignty over Western Sahara which it has occupied since 1975 in defiance of the United Nations and the international community.
- **Ireland withdraws from Eurovision 2027 over Gaza:** Irish broadcaster RTÉ [said](#) Ireland will not participate in or broadcast the 2027 Eurovision Song Contest, citing the continued loss of life and humanitarian crisis in Gaza and restrictions on independent international journalists entering the territory.
- Ireland was among five countries—alongside Iceland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Spain—that boycotted the 2026 contest after Israeli broadcaster KAN was allowed to participate. Dutch broadcaster AVROTROS said last month it will not participate in Eurovision 2027 saying the event “can no longer be considered neutral, with a participating country still involved in a large-scale military conflict.” However, responsibility for Dutch participation has now returned to public broadcasting umbrella organization NPO.

Lebanon

- **Israeli attacks continue across southern Lebanon despite ceasefire; bodies of two young men recovered:**
 - **Nabatieh:** The Lebanese Red Cross [recovered](#) the bodies of two men from Ain Al-Samahiyah, between Nabatieh Al-Fawqa and Zawtar Al-Sharqiyah, after they were killed in an Israeli attack on Wednesday. Israeli artillery also shelled the Al-Dimashqiyah area on the eastern outskirts of Kfar Tibnit, while Israeli forces opened machine-gun fire toward Wadi Al-Hujeir early Thursday, Lebanon’s National News Agency (NNA) reported.

- **Tyre (Sour):** Israeli forces [continued](#) demolishing homes in Mansouri on Thursday. Israeli warplanes also struck Mansouri, Majdal Zoun and nearby valleys overnight.
- **Aoun, Macron, and King Abdullah meet in Paris to discuss support for Lebanese army:** Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Jordan's King Abdullah II [held](#) a trilateral meeting in Paris on Thursday focused on strengthening cooperation and mobilizing international support for the Lebanese army, NNA reported.
 - Aoun separately met Macron at the Élysée, where they discussed efforts to end Israeli attacks on Lebanon in the context of ongoing Lebanese-U.S.-Israeli negotiations and the framework agreement. Aoun also welcomed a French-Italian initiative for the period following the end of UNIFIL's mandate.
 - Aoun called for a "joint regional security strategy" built around shared energy projects and economic, security and political cooperation.

U.S. News

- **Federal Reserve raises interest rates:** The Federal Reserve Board [raised](#) interest rates by a quarter point to 3.9% as it tries to get inflation under control. It was the first increase since 2023. "The plain fact is that inflation is too high and has been for too long," said Fed Chair **Kevin Warsh**.
 - President Donald Trump, who spent years railing at Warsh's predecessor, **Jerome Powell**, said he still supported Warsh but denounced the decision, writing on social media that "Interest Rates in the United States should be 1%, or less, because we are the Best Credit in the World — BY FAR."
 - At a rally in North Carolina, Trump [criticized](#) the Federal Reserve board and said it had voted to raise rates in order to hurt him politically. "They're raising rates to make Trump do as bad as they can possibly do," he said.
 - At the same rally, Trump said higher gas prices were "a very inexpensive price to pay for what we've done" in the Iran war, and repeated his promise to send Americans checks for \$5,000 if Republicans won the midterms: "If we win, we're going to get you \$5,000."
- **Democrat puts hold on Trump plan to sell more bombs to Israel:** Rep. **Gregory Meeks** of New York, ranking member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said he would block the Trump administration's plan to sell \$2.8 billion in new bombs to Israel. "The Trump

administration has not provided sufficient assurances that these weapons will be used by the Netanyahu government in accordance with U.S. law and with appropriate protections for civilians,” Meeks said. However, Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** can bypass congressional review by claiming the weapons sale is an urgent national security interest.

- **House recesses early to avoid vote on Hegseth impeachment:** Speaker of the House **Mike Johnson** [sent](#) lawmakers home Wednesday, avoiding a vote on a resolution by Rep. **Thomas Massie** of Kentucky to impeach War Secretary **Pete Hegseth** as well as a bipartisan effort to release additional files related to **Jeffrey Epstein**.

- Johnson claimed “the House has done its job” and said “we’re walking out here with our heads high.”

- Massie took control of the House floor and denounced Johnson in an hour-long speech. “Why would we be canceling days when the country is burning?” Massie said. “We should stay here for every day that’s on the calendar and we should debate.”

- **Top general says U.S. must be prepared to fight on moon:** Gen. **Dan Caine**, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, [told](#) an audience at the Air, Space, and Cyber Conference that U.S. forces must be prepared to fight around the moon, “from the seabed to cislunar space.”

- His remarks came just days after Air Force Secretary **Troy Meink** confirmed at the same conference that the U.S. has deployed weapons in space.

- **OpenAI discloses new AI transgressions:** OpenAI on Wednesday reported six additional incidents in which its AI agents engaged in “unexpected or concerning” activity over the last six months, the New York Times [reported](#).

- In one incident, an AI model created hidden notes reminding itself to conceal errors or lie about missing data. In another it described itself as “freed from the roles and identities that bind other chatbots.”

 Have a tip on Capitol Hill? Email DC Correspondent Julian Andreone at Julian@dropsitenews.com

Other International News

- **U.S. raids vessels in Eastern Pacific:** The U.S. military raided vessels in the Eastern Pacific on [Tuesday](#) and [Wednesday](#), accusing them without evidence of “supporting illicit at-sea drug trafficking operations,” according to U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). The crews from both vessels were arrested and transferred to Ecuadorian authorities. “We are relentlessly pursuing narco-terrorists who prey on our citizens, undermine hemispheric

security, and leave death and suffering in their wake. This deliberate, lawful, and precise operation saves lives and makes our citizens—from Ecuador to the United States—safer,” SOUTHCOM Commander Gen. Francis L. Donovan said in a statement.

- **Russian missile and drone barrages hit Kyiv, Odessa, and Zaporizhzhia:** At least 19 people were injured, including two children, in a large overnight Russian missile and drone [attack](#) across Ukraine, with strikes concentrated on Kyiv and the Kyiv region, Odessa and Zaporizhzhia.

- Russia’s Defense Ministry claimed that it struck military-industrial, metallurgical, electronics, energy and transport infrastructure, as well as three bulk carriers and a ferry in the port of Chornomorsk that it said were being used to support the Ukrainian military.

- Ukraine said it struck an oil refinery in Yaroslavl northeast of Moscow, while President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also claimed Ukrainian forces damaged Russian aircraft and helicopters at a military base in Rostov and naval targets in the Black Sea.

- **North Korea says U.S.-led military buildup justifies expanding nuclear arsenal:** North Korea’s Vice Defence Minister Kim Kang Il said in a [statement](#) that Pyongyang will continue expanding and strengthening its nuclear forces, arguing that growing U.S. military cooperation with South Korea and Japan has created what he called an increasingly severe nuclear threat.

- Speaking at China’s Xiangshan Forum in Beijing, Kim said North Korea’s status as a nuclear weapons state is “irreversible” and described it as a “line of no retreat,” while accusing Washington of turning its trilateral cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo into a nuclear alliance.

- The remarks came alongside a statement from Kim Yo Jong, the sister of Kim Jong Un, rejecting renewed calls for denuclearisation following a recent International Atomic Energy Agency’s annual meeting discussing Pyongyang’s nuclear status.

- **Russia says new U.S. sanctions will undermine peace efforts:** After the U.S. House of Representatives passed a broad sanctions package dubbed the “Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia Act of 2026” and aimed at increasing economic [pressure](#) on Russia over the war in Ukraine, Moscow said that the bill would harm peace talks if signed into law by President Trump.

- The bill targets Russia’s energy and defense industries and its fleet of oil tankers used to circumvent existing sanctions, while also authorizing Trump to impose tariffs

of up to 100% on countries including China and India over purchases of Russian oil and gas.

- Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the legislation an “unfriendly” move while India separately warned Washington that secondary tariffs tied to its imports of Russian energy could damage bilateral relations.

- **Japanese PM reshuffles cabinet amid economic crisis:** Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi [replaced](#) 10 of 18 cabinet ministers on Thursday as her government faces declining public support due to an economic crisis exacerbated by the war in Iran, but retained the officials overseeing foreign policy, defense, and economic relations with Washington.

- Takaichi’s government is preparing revisions to Japan’s security strategy by year’s end, with plans to expand the military’s use of drones and artificial intelligence and further increase defense spending beyond its current 2% of GDP.

- The government is simultaneously trying to stabilize relations with China after Takaichi’s earlier remarks that Japan could intervene militarily in a Taiwan contingency strained ties with Beijing.

- **Scientists say climate change likely helped trigger catastrophic Nepal glacier collapse:** Scientists from the research group World Weather Attribution (WWA) say human-caused [climate change](#) likely helped create the conditions for the massive August collapse of glacier ice and rock on Nepal’s Langtang Lirung mountain, which unleashed flooding across parts of Nepal and Tibet and killed around 1,400 people.

- Researchers said Himalayan temperatures were about 5°C above normal in August, with roughly 1.5°C of that anomaly attributable to climate change, accelerating glacier thinning, permafrost thaw, and meltwater buildup.

- The study found glaciers in the region have been thinning by about half a metre per year since 2000, altering pressure on surrounding rock, while melting permafrost likely weakened the mountain slope.

- WWA said the precise trigger cannot be isolated, but concluded that warming substantially increased the likelihood of the cascading glacier-and-rock collapse.

- **Argentine judge orders halt to Falklands oil project as sovereignty dispute intensifies:** An Argentine federal judge has [ordered](#) Britain’s Rockhopper Exploration and Israel’s Navitas Petroleum to halt work on the Sea Lion oil project near the Falkland Islands, barring drilling, infrastructure construction, and hydrocarbon extraction until an environmental review is conducted by Argentine authorities.

- The injunction is unlikely to be enforceable on the British-administered islands, but it adds another legal front to Buenos Aires's renewed campaign against companies operating there.
- President Javier Milei's government is separately moving to strengthen sanctions against companies involved in economic activity around the islands, including oil exploration, while Britain maintains Argentina has no jurisdiction over the territory and says companies licensed by the Falkland Islands government can continue operating.
- **U.S. drone maker with ties to Trump family signs Pakistan Army deal:** U.S. drone company Powerus has [signed](#) a memorandum of understanding with the Pakistan Army that includes an initial order for unmanned aerial systems, according to company co-founder Brett Velicovich.
 - The value and details of the order were not disclosed but Powerus executives said the agreement could lead to a broader technology partnership, including potential production in Pakistan, while the Pakistani military said talks with the company covered defense procurement, production and long-term capacity building.
 - Powerus is preparing to merge with Aureus Greenway Holdings, a publicly traded company backed by an investment fund in which Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump have interests. Regulatory filings say the fund is expected to own 9.9% of the combined company.