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MORNING REPORT

January 23, 2025 | By Alexis Simendinger & Kristina Karisch

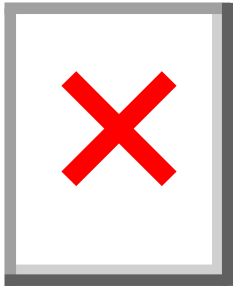
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In today's issue:

- Trump's border offensive begins
- Hegseth gains momentum to lead Pentagon
- Tracking the president's tariff two-step
- Trump threatens Putin over Ukraine war

TRUMP FIRST 100 DAYS



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Trump dispatches troops, ICE in migration crackdown

President Trump on Wednesday ordered active-duty troops to the southern border to [bolster federal, state and local law enforcers](#) who are cracking down on migrants the president describes as “invading” the United States.

The initial force, according to the administration, is 1,500 troops, deployed as military airlift support for the Department of Homeland Security to deport more than 5,000 immigrants without legal status detained in San Diego, Calif., and El Paso, Texas.

That initial troop number could grow to as many as 10,000 active-duty military members in future missions, a defense official [told reporters](#).

Trump, during a primetime Fox News interview Wednesday, floated an incorrect statistic to criticize the Biden administration's handling of immigration and defend his blitz at the border. *"There's never been a country that allowed 21 million people to come in over a three-year period,"* he said.

His assertion is unsubstantiated. According to detailed information published last year by [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org), the raw immigration numbers were indeed high under the Biden administration — 5 million migrant encounters compared with 1.4 million under Trump during comparable time frames in their respective terms — but percentages of migrants removed from the U.S. were similar under each president: 47 percent removed under Trump in his first term and 51 percent under **President Biden**.

[The Hill](#): Five takeaways from the president's [Fox News interview](#) Wednesday.

[CNN](#): Fact checking the president's Oval Office interview.

The use of troops on domestic soil under what the president ordered as a national security emergency is expected to trigger legal and constitutional challenges and [calls for Congress to step in legislatively](#).

Trump and his border security advisers insist they're moving with speed to reverse Biden's immigration policies, an aim [generally supported by a majority of registered voters](#) last year. But Trump's leap from his first-term border wall focus to raids and roundups, followed by "mass deportations" — and the upcoming fight about removing the Constitution's protection for birthright citizenship — have placed him into politically untested territory.

"Right now, we're going to shut that border down and get a hold of this problem," White House immigration adviser **Tom Homan** told [CNN during a Tuesday interview](#). *"The president has been clear on this. We're going to concentrate on public safety threats, but in sanctuary cities where they don't let us take that public safety threat into custody, we have to go find [those migrants]."*

Trump and allies boast they will locate, apprehend and deport millions of individuals living in the U.S. who do not have legal status, whether or not they have been convicted of crimes. And they vow to find those without legal status in workplaces, their homes, schools and churches. The administration also is intent on blocking asylum-seekers and migrants without legal status who trek to the border to apply for U.S. entry.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department and federal prosecutors have been [ordered to investigate state or local officials](#) who will not enforce the administration's immigration policies. If federal prosecutors decline to

prosecute immigration violations, they must be disclosed to Justice headquarters. And [more than 10,400 refugees](#) around the world who were part of a legal travel program to the United States found their flights canceled and the U.S. program shut down by the Trump administration, [effective immediately](#).

Trump will [tour the California wildfire disaster region](#) near Los Angeles from the air Friday but did not commit to seeing Democratic critic Gov. **Gavin Newsom**. While the governor seeks federal assistance to help recover from the continuing fires, he and other state leaders have said they [oppose Trump's immigration actions](#).

[The Hill](#): Sen. **Katie Britt** (R-Ala.) used social media to report an administration-provided statistic that on the president's second day on the job, Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested 308 migrants lacking legal status. That's up slightly from the average daily arrests reported by ICE in September, according to the most [recent available data](#).

[Fox News](#) published [photographs](#) provided by ICE of alleged male migrant criminals among 460 individuals ICE said it arrested for crimes in seven states over a 33-hour period beginning Jan. 21.

[The Hill's Niall Stanage in the Memo](#): Trump 2.0 comes into focus.



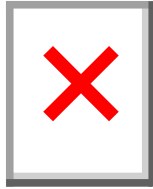
Smart Take
with **Blake Burman**

The Pentagon is sending an additional [1,500 troops to the Southern border](#) as President Trump builds out his immigration policies.

I spoke with **Alina Habba**, counselor to the president, and asked if that number could reach up to 10,000.

"I wouldn't be surprised if it was that many. It's whatever it takes to undo the damage that happened," Habba said. *"We have a lot of work to clean up."*

The president believes fixing the border was the key to his election victory. And on Day 4 of his presidency, what's clear is Trump is just getting started.



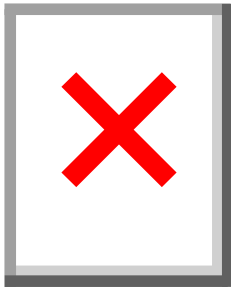
Burman hosts "The Hill" weeknights, 6p/5c on NewsNation.
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3 Things to Know Today

1. Firefighters [worked into the night to contain a blaze](#) in northern Los Angeles County, prompting renewed fears of death and destruction in a region that already faced devastating wildfires this month.
2. Trump's team on Wednesday ousted National Security Council career staff from the White House, action mirrored across government to try to replace federal civil servants with political allies. [Don't call us. We'll call you.](#)
3. Hollywood is [now ready to work with Trump](#). Reversing allegiances is par for the course in the industry: "They still have to make money."

LEADING THE DAY



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CONGRESS: The House on Wednesday [passed the Laken Riley Act](#), sending the immigration-related bill to Trump's desk in what is poised to be his first legislative victory since returning to the White House. The chamber cleared the bill in a 263-156 vote. Forty-six Democrats voted with all present Republicans in favor of the legislation. Passage in the House came two days after the Senate approved the measure in a bipartisan 64-35 vote.

Trump is expected to sign the measure, marking the first bill enacted in his second administration on a topic — immigration and the border — he and Republicans made a priority on the campaign trail.

"The Laken Riley Act will now go to President Trump's desk for him to sign into law," Speaker **Mike Johnson** (R-La.) wrote on the social platform X

after the vote. *“Criminal illegal aliens must be detained, deported, and NEVER allowed back into our country. The American people demand and deserve safety and security.”*

Congressional huddles: A trio of moderate House Republicans [met with Trump at the White House](#) on Wednesday, the latest huddle between the president and different GOP factions as the lower chamber prepares to pass his legislative agenda with its slim majority. Reps. **Don Bacon** (R-Neb.), **Mike Lawler** (R-N.Y.) and **Brian Fitzpatrick** (R-Pa.) — all of whom represent districts former Vice President **Kamala Harris** won in November — attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Trump is expected to attend [the House Republican retreat](#) at Trump National Doral in Florida on Monday. Trump’s visit to the annual House retreat comes at a pivotal time, as Republicans work out their plans for a budget reconciliation bill — or bills. The final strategy is still up in the air.

- [The Hill](#): House Democrats bashing Trump for pardoning violent felons who attacked the U.S. Capitol are now taking those criticisms a step further, calling for Congress to rein in the clemency powers for all presidents in the future.
- [The Hill](#): House Oversight and Accountability Democrats hoping to highlight potential conflicts of interest under Trump see leverage in a past ethics bill from Chair **James Comer** (R-Ky.) introduced during his investigation Biden.
- [The Hill](#): Johnson will establish a new select subcommittee that will probe the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot — and likely dig into the now-defunct Jan. 6 select committee that was led by Rep. **Bennie Thompson** (D-Miss.) and then-Rep. **Liz Cheney** (R-Wyo.).

In the Senate, Republicans are trying to make sense of Trump’s blizzard of executive orders and are already spotting some problems in the broadly ordered directives that will take weeks or months to sort out. For example, Trump has ordered greatly expanded drilling in Alaska, but at the same time he has imposed a hiring freeze on the Bureau of Land Management that will inevitably slow permitting, [The Hill’s Alexander Bolton reports](#). In addition, Trump’s border security orders will be difficult, if not impossible, to implement without major funding increases for ICE and CBP but Trump has opposed the idea of moving a separate border security bill early in the reconciliation to fund those priorities. Trump’s proposal to curtail birthright citizenship has GOP senators predicting it will face an uphill battle in the courts.

“Some of it is not helpful,” said a senior Republican aide, who said Trump’s team would have been wise to provide more detail about the

scope of the orders or could have waited until some of his nominees cleared Senate committees before taking actions that were likely to prompt legislative pushback.

CABINET PICKS: Senate Republicans are steamrolling ahead on **Pete Hegseth's** nomination to lead the Pentagon, and [a new report detailing allegations of abusive behavior](#) by the nominee has seemingly not dissuaded them. The Senate is set to hold an initial procedural vote on the nomination today, [The Hill's Al Weaver reports](#), even as Democrats attempt to delay final passage.

The affidavit from **Danielle Hegseth**, who was previously married to Pete Hegseth's brother, dropped as the clock continued to wind down on Hegseth's nomination. Danielle Hegseth claims that the Pentagon nominee was abusive toward his second wife, **Samantha Hegseth**, to the point where she hid in a closet at times and developed a plan in case she "needed to get away" from him. Hegseth's attorney refuted the claims.

Shortly after news broke of the claims, Democrats also slammed the brakes on Trump's other nominees, including **John Ratcliffe**, his choice to lead the CIA. But Republicans appear to have the votes to confirm Hegseth and the others.

"I think it's a stretch. I think it looks desperate. I think it probably helps Pete a little bit if the best they can do is not even the sister of the ex-wife, but the ex-wife of a brother," said Sen. **Kevin Cramer** (R-N.D.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which advanced Hegseth to a floor vote along party lines on Monday. *"Third party, hearsay — all the while it's not validated by the actual ex-wife. It looks like everything else up to this point: like a smear campaign."*

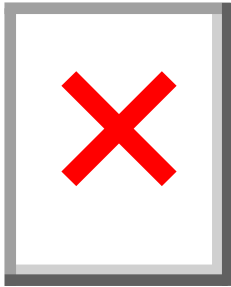
- [The Hill](#): Pressure is mounting on **Robert F Kennedy Jr.** as critics squeeze senators from both sides of the aisle. Bipartisan critics, including liberal advocates and an organization founded by former Vice President **Mike Pence**, argue the nominee to lead the Department of Health and Human Services isn't fit to serve.
- [Bloomberg Government](#): The Senate Finance Committee will hold a confirmation hearing for RFK Jr., on Jan. 29.
- [Axios](#): RFK Jr. earned \$326,000 from the anti-vaccine group Children's Health Defense and a \$100,000 licensing fee for use of the Make America Healthy Again brand, according to financial disclosure forms.

WHEN & WHERE

- **The House** convenes at 10 a.m.

- **The Senate** meets at 10 a.m.
- **The president** is expected to address attendees at the [Davos World Economic Forum](#) in Switzerland via video.

ZOOM IN



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What is Trump's trade agenda? Much remains rhetorical, which means global trading partners, businesses and industry leaders remain in the dark. [The Hill's Tobias Burns sorted through five big questions](#) in an effort to sort things out.

One additional unknown: Who among Trump's Cabinet leaders and White House economic advisers will influence the administration's trade posture

and navigate the president's convictions that tariffs offer the U.S. big sticks and produce [big revenues](#)?

Trump released a first-day memo about trade policy, which directs federal agencies to study U.S. trade with China and to reassess the updated North American Free Trade deal among the U.S., Canada and Mexico. But he stopped short of ordering new import taxes.

Subsequently, Trump vowed 25 percent tariffs on goods from Canada and Mexico, to begin Feb. 1, and floated a possible 10 percent tariff on goods from China. That would be a sizable reduction from earlier Trump tariff talk that ventured as high as 60 percent and 100 percent.

POLITICS: Rep. **Nancy Mace** (R-S.C.), a House member since 2021, said during a Wednesday interview with [The Associated Press](#) that she's considering a run for South Carolina governor and will decide soon. She [caused a stir](#) in November by challenging allowable bathroom use in the Capitol by Rep. **Sarah McBride** (D-Del.), the first openly transgender member of Congress.

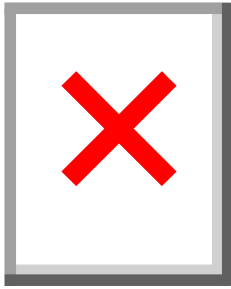
- [The Hill](#): Progressives are focusing their ire on the U.S. "oligarchy."
- [The Hill](#): Democrats are "sniping" each other over all things Trump.
- [The Hill](#): A partisan standoff roils the Minnesota State House.

COURTS: Judges, in written comments responding to Trump's pardons and dismissals of Justice Department prosecutions against accused defendants in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, noted evidence and facts presented to the court that resulted in convictions. *"Dismissal of charges, pardons after convictions, and commutations of sentences will not change the truth of what happened on Jan. 6, 2021,"* federal District Court Judge **Colleen Kollar-Kotelly** [wrote](#). *"What occurred that day is preserved for the future through thousands of contemporaneous videos, transcripts of trials, jury verdicts, and judicial opinions analyzing and recounting the evidence through a neutral lens."*

[The Hill](#): A federal judge on Wednesday denied former Sen. **Bob Menendez's** (D-N.J.) bid to toss his corruption conviction and receive a new trial.

Supreme Court: A routine traffic stop in Texas turned deadly within minutes when an officer shot and killed 24-year-old **Ashtian Barnes** in 2016. The Supreme Court weighed Monday [whether courts should examine everything](#) that happened during the traffic stop.

ELSEWHERE



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RUSSIA AND UKRAINE: Trump is working to turn up the heat on **Russian** President **Vladimir Putin** to come to the negotiating table for a deal to end the war in **Ukraine**, a priority issue that the president said he would resolve in his first days in office. A little more than 48 hours since returning to the White House, Trump has mocked Putin as “destroying his country” with the nearly three-year war [and threatened increased sanctions](#) on Russia and its enablers if a deal is not quickly reached.

“Let’s get this war, which never would have started if I were President, over with! We can do it the easy way, or the hard way — and the easy way is always better,” Trump wrote on Truth Social.

The posts are an opening salvo in Trump’s efforts to show that his “peace through strength” policy can end Europe’s biggest land war in almost a century.

Three years into fighting, Ukrainian public opinion is increasingly open to negotiating an end to the war as soon as possible. And Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky** has said he's optimistic Trump's decisiveness [could shift the dynamics of the war](#).

"He can be decisive in this war. He is capable of stopping Putin or, to put it more fairly, help us stop Putin. He is able to do this," Zelensky said.

- [The Washington Post](#): Ahead of the expected Trump-Putin call, each side stakes out its position.
- [Reuters](#): Putin has grown increasingly concerned about distortions in Russia's wartime economy, just as Trump pushes for an end to the Ukraine conflict.
- [The Wall Street Journal](#): The global elite, gathered in Davos, **Switzerland**, for the World Economic Forum, say they are buckled up and ready for Trump's second term.

GAZA CEASEFIRE: Steve Witkoff, Trump's Middle East envoy, confirmed on Wednesday he would be part of a team of "outside overseers" deployed in and along Gaza to ensure safety following a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas militants. Witkoff's [comments to Fox News](#) appeared to be the first public confirmation of the planned use of outside inspectors in Gaza — including a U.S. presence.

Israel and Hamas struck a multi-phase ceasefire and hostage release deal last week after months of mediation by the U.S., **Qatar** and **Egypt**.

- [The Associated Press](#): To secure the Gaza ceasefire, dealmakers had to overcome the enemies' deep distrust.
- [CNN](#): Gaza is a nightmare after 15 months of war. A visual guide to life on the ground.
- [NPR](#): Rebuilding Gaza will be a massive project. Here are five things to know.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION: Trump issued an executive order late Monday [withdrawing the U.S. from the World Health Organization](#). It's the second time Trump has tried to pull the country out of the public health organization, having previously done so months before the end of his first term.

It appears that the U.S. is more likely to complete its withdrawal this time — and become one of the few countries ever to do so in the organization's nearly 80-year history. There has been some debate over whether Trump would need approval from Congress to leave the WHO, however, and it is

not yet clear what the decision might mean for the future of the U.S., the WHO and global public health.

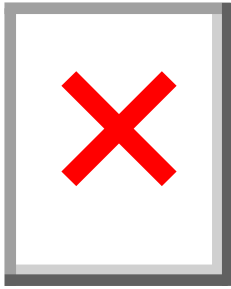
*“There is just not a lot of clarity on this,” said **Ashish Jha**, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health and former White House COVID-19 response coordinator. “Part of it is because we are in uncharted territory. Nothing like this has happened in recent memory.”*

[The Hill](#): **Panama’s** government formally raised concerns with the United Nations over Trump’s threats to retake the Panama Canal, noting any threat of force would violate rules.

OPINION

- **Why exactly are tech billionaires kissing Trump’s ring?** by Matt K. Lewis, opinion contributor, [The Hill](#).
- **America is a nation of immigrants that has not lived up to its promise**, by Ana Raquel Minian, guest essayist, [The New York Times](#).

THE CLOSER



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Take Our Morning Report Quiz

And finally ... It's Thursday, which means it's time for this week's **Morning Report Quiz!** Pondering some recent headlines, we're eager for smart guesses about **names in the news**.

Be sure to email your responses to asimendinger@thehill.com and kkarisch@thehill.com — please add “Quiz” to your subject line. Winners who submit correct answers will enjoy some richly deserved newsletter fame on Friday.

How do California wildfires get names such as “Nuns,” “Lilac” and “Friars”?

1. State Office of Emergency Services decision.
2. Fire official on the scene quickly chooses from a nearby location, such

as a road

3. Local TV news outlets invent identifiers that simply stick
4. U.S. National Interagency Fire Center draws from a seasonally prepared list

What gargantuan body of water is suddenly teed up for a U.S. name change?

1. Mississippi River
2. Lake Okeechobee
3. Gulf of Mexico
4. Clinton Lake

What U.S. corporation recently won a legal battle with an Australian company involving the name of a popular brand?

1. UGG
2. Campbell's Company
3. Netflix
4. Jockey

A new independent company of cable networks drawn from Comcast's NBCUniversal is now called _____.

1. Spinner
2. Spin Master
3. SPIN
4. SpinCo

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