

Russia Stokes Tensions in the Balkans

30 well-armed Serbs stormed the Kosovar village of Banjska before barricading themselves in a Serbian Orthodox Christian monastery in an incident that left three attackers and one Kosovar police officer dead. Kosovar authorities say they are investigating evidence suggesting Russian involvement in the attack. The attack came amid long-running EU-sponsored talks between Belgrade and Pristina to try to normalize relations after Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008. The reportedly large Serb military deployment along the border threatens major escalation and destabilization after years of sporadic violence in northern Kosovo. Serbian forces would likely be able to easily overrun Kosovar troops, but the presence of NATO (and EU) peacekeepers in Kosovo means any attack against the territory would risk triggering a confrontation with Western troops that could quickly devolve into war. The White House National Security Council announced that the US is monitoring an "unprecedented" deployment of Serbian troops. The White House confirmed that NATO would be increasing the deployment of peacekeepers in northern Kosovo. With Russia bogged down in Ukraine and unable to come to Armenia's defence in the Caucasus against Azerbaijan, it would seem this is Russia's response to the recent losses by stocking up tension in the Balkans.

UK Has Run Out of Military Equipment to Give Ukraine

The UK has run out of military equipment that it can give to Ukraine, according to a senior British military source speaking to The Telegraph. "We've given away just about as much as we can afford," the unnamed source told the paper, adding that the UK had a role to play in encouraging other nations to continue arming Ukraine. The UK has been a staunch supporter of the proxy war in Ukraine and has led many escalations in NATO support. *The Telegraph* report came after Ben Wallace, who resigned as defense secretary last month, said he urged Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to spend billions more so Britain could overtake Germany as Ukraine's top supporter in Europe. The UK's lack of arms for Ukraine is the latest sign that NATO support for the proxy war is fracturing. Poland recently declared it would no longer provide Ukraine with weapons over a grain spat, Slovakia elected a candidate who campaigned on ending military support for Ukraine, and Congress still has yet to authorize the additional \$24 billion in spending on the war that President Biden is seeking.

Republican House Speaker Ousted after Cutting Deal with President Biden

The US House of Representatives voted to remove Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) as speaker, marking the first time in history a House speaker was removed through a resolution to oust them. The effort was launched by Rep. Matt Gaetz, who introduced a privileged resolution to vacate the speakership after accusing McCarthy of cutting a secret side deal with President Biden on Ukraine aid. Since a handful of Republicans supported Gaetz's maneuver, McCarthy needed some Democrats to support him to survive, but none did. The final vote was 216-210, with eight Republicans and every Democrat voting to remove McCarthy. There's no clear nominee to replace McCarthy. Gaetz had long been threatening to launch an effort to remove McCarthy. His decision to go through with the motion came in response to the stopgap funding bill that was passed by the House on Saturday and signed by President Biden to avert a government shutdown. The House stripped billions in Ukraine aid from the stopgap funding bill, but Gaetz said McCarthy must have cut a secret deal since Democrats supported it anyway. American politics is so polarized now that the Republican party is self-destructing. What took place is the culmination of a fractious intra-Republican fight between the party's political establishment and its seething base that has been brewing since at least the Tea Party movement of 2010 who eventually supported Donald Trump.