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AMCHAM GUATEMALA
AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

USA OUTLOOK

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER
MARCH 09 TO MARCH 13

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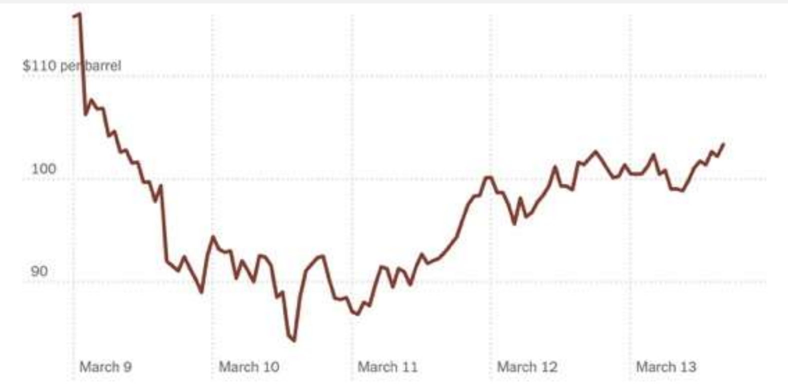
MARCH 09, 2026



Notes: Data shows future contract prices for Brent crude oil. Data delayed at least 15 minutes. Source: FactSet. The New York Times

Photo: NY TIMES

Oil Prices Spike to Over $110 a Barrel, Highest Since Pandemic

Oil prices surged sharply as fears grew that the war in the Middle East could further disrupt energy supplies. Brent crude briefly climbed as high as $119.50 a barrel and rose above $110, reaching its highest level since the pandemic before later easing. Since the conflict began on February 28, 2026, oil prices had increased by roughly 37 percent.

The spike reflected mounting concern over the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a critical shipping route through which about one-**fifth of the world's** oil normally passes each day. With shipping heavily disrupted, markets worried that global supplies of oil and natural gas could remain constrained, especially for economies in Asia and Europe that depend heavily on fuel imports.

Higher energy prices were already affecting consumers and financial markets. In the United States, the national average price of regular gasoline had risen about 17 percent since the war began, while diesel increased around 24 percent. The jump in oil and gas prices also added to inflation concerns, pushed up bond yields, and increased uncertainty over whether the Federal Reserve would keep rates high or move toward cutting them.

Source: https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/08/business/energy-environment/oil-100-dollars-barrel.html

MARCH 10, 2026

Oil Shock Sends Tremors Through World Economy

The widening war in Iran has triggered a major oil shock that is rippling through the global economy, driving up costs far beyond gasoline. Disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz have stranded shipments, increased freight and insurance costs, and pushed up prices for food, medicine, electricity, fertilizer, air travel, semiconductors, and other essential goods.

The impact is hitting countries and industries around the world, from higher mortgage rates in the United States to fuel shortages in Vietnam, export concerns in Kenya, and rising fertilizer costs affecting farmers across North America and Europe. Economists and energy experts warn that even if the conflict is brief, the consequences could last much longer, especially if high energy prices remain elevated.

The crisis is also reshaping broader geopolitical and economic dynamics. Higher oil prices could strengthen Russia financially, while Europe and Asia remain especially vulnerable because of their dependence on imported energy. At the same time, central banks face a difficult choice between raising rates to contain inflation or cutting them to support slowing growth, a dilemma that could keep borrowing costs high and increase pressure on debt, investment, and stock markets.

More broadly, the situation highlights how fragile the global economy remains after years of disruption from the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, tariffs, and shifting U.S. policy. The current conflict is not only an energy shock but also a reminder that geopolitical instability can quickly spill into trade, inflation, supply chains, and long-term global growth.

Photo: NYTIMES

Source: https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/04/us/politics/judge-order-trump-tariff-refunds.html

MARCH 11, 2026

Photo: NY TIMES

U.S. Trade Deficit Falls in January

The U.S. trade deficit fell to $54.5 billion in January 2026, down 25 percent from the previous month. Exports rose to $302.1 billion, while imports dipped to $356.6 billion, reducing the gap between exports and imports.

The increase in exports was driven mainly by gold, other precious metals, computers, and aircraft, while the drop in imports reflected lower purchases of pharmaceuticals, vehicles, and auto parts.

The figures reflected continued volatility in U.S. trade **flows tied to President Trump's tariff policies. Trump** has long viewed the trade deficit as a sign of economic weakness, though many economists argue it is shaped more by broader factors such as government spending and the value of the dollar.

The January data also came shortly before the **Supreme Court struck down most of Trump's broad** tariffs on February 20, 2026, forcing the administration to look for other ways to continue its trade agenda, including a temporary 10 percent global tariff and new trade investigations.

Source: https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/12/business/economy/us-trade-deficit-january.html

MARCH 12, 2026

Trump Removes Sanctions on Russia to Help Oil Flow Amid

The Trump administration temporarily lifted sanctions on Russian oil already at sea, allowing it to reach buyers worldwide until April 11, 2026. The measure was presented as a short-term step to increase global oil supply and ease energy prices, which have surged because of the war in Iran.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the goal is to release additional crude into the market and help bring down prices that have been nearing $100 per barrel. Although he acknowledged that Russia would receive some financial benefit, he argued that the impact would be limited because the authorization only applies to oil already in transit and for a brief period.

The decision marks a major shift in U.S. policy toward Russia. Since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the United States and its allies had imposed strong sanctions, including a price cap on Russian oil and measures against vessels used to evade restrictions. This new exemption loosens some of that pressure at a time when the administration is trying to reduce the economic effects of the Iran conflict.

Critics argue that the move weakens leverage over Russia and may undermine previous sanctions efforts. Some Democrats condemned the decision, while analysts warned it could damage coordination with Europe and potentially become more than a temporary measure. Around 130 million barrels of Russian oil are reportedly currently at sea.

Photo: NYTIMES

Source:

https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/12/us/politics/trump-russia-oil-sanctions.html

MARCH 13, 2026

Photo: NYTIMES

TikTok Investors Set to Pay $10 Billion Fee to Trump Administration

A group of investors behind a U.S.-controlled TikTok is expected to pay $10 billion to the U.S. Treasury as a **transaction fee for the Trump administration's role in facilitating the deal. Around $2.5 billion was reportedly** paid when the transaction closed in January 2026, with the remaining amount to be paid later.

The arrangement was designed to resolve long**-standing national security concerns related to TikTok's Chinese ownership through ByteDance. As part of the transaction, ByteDance separated TikTok's U.S. operations into** a new company and reduced its ownership stake to below 20%. Key investors include Oracle, MGX, and Silver Lake, each with roughly 15% ownership.

The White House took an unusually active role in the negotiations. President Trump assigned Vice President JD Vance to oversee the process, and Trump had previously indicated that the U.S. would receive a substantial fee for helping make the deal happen. Vance said the transaction values TikTok at $14 billion, meaning the $10 billion fee represents about 70% of that valuation, a figure some observers consider exceptionally high and potentially without precedent.

Source:

https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/13/business/trump-tiktok-10-billion-fee.html