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Centro de Estudios y Análisis sobre el Futuro de Europa

WORLD

Monday, 16 November 2026 · 13:30

- **Section:** World / Actualidad
- **Window covered:** 16 November 2026, about 05:10 to 12:00 Europe/Madrid (04:10–11:00 UTC): only items new since the 07:30 brief.
- **Compiled from:** the CEAFE World section brief, the shared logs and @F_CEAFE posts.

Update: EU foreign ministers answer Russia's "maximum demands" with their own, approve €8bn for Kyiv and 113 new listings

At today's Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, High Representative Kaja Kallas said the ministers would work on "the substance" after leaders fixed the E5 + EU negotiating format on Friday, setting out "maximum demands" of their own "to reply to the maximum demands that Russia is still presenting".

She said Russia's 2021 list of demands "was a pretext for war" and the same list, enlarged, is now "a pretext for keeping the war going", and that a ceasefire must come before "talks about anything else" (EEAS transcript). Euronews reports Russia is again demanding that NATO roll its military presence back to 1997 positions. The Council approved the largest single payment yet under the Ukraine Facility, nearly €8bn (Council press release; Zelenskyy thanked von der Leyen), and Ireland's presidency said ministers would adopt 113 new sanctions designations, including Russians blamed for cyberattacks and sabotage. The FT reports, in an exclusive reposted by @F_CEAFE, that the Commission will offer to cover almost two-thirds of Ukraine's estimated €70bn financing gap for next year, in a proposal due to member states on Wednesday. Poland's Radosław Sikorski noted that "the United States stopped funding aid to Ukraine in January last year… It is Europe that is supporting Ukraine". Ukraine's FM Andrii Sybiha told the Council that trilateral talks "have resumed after a nine-month pause" and that "Europe will play a new role in the peace process".

Russia's side: President Putin, in a message published by the Russian MFA (official Russian source), said Russia "firmly rejects all manifestations of neocolonialism, including the use of force & sanctions to exert pressure". No Russian official reaction to today's listings yet; watch MFA spokeswoman Zakharova's briefing.

Why it matters for Europe. Sikorski's line is the key fact: Europe now carries Ukraine's financing alone, yet it sits at the table only as an ad hoc E5 + EU group, with the High Representative working "on the substance" behind it. The money and the sanctions are European; the decision on the format should be

too. A single EU negotiating voice, backed by the €70bn financing plan, would turn Europe's weight into leverage.

What to watch. FAC press conference this afternoon; the Commission's €70bn financing proposal (Wednesday); the extraordinary European Council on financing on 26–27 Nov; NATO foreign ministers on 2 Dec.

Sources

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Update: Beijing confirms the first-ever Xi–Putin–Trump summit in Shenzhen on 19 November

China's Foreign Ministry formally announced that Xi Jinping will hold a China–Russia–U.S. summit with Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump in Shenzhen, on the sidelines of APEC, on Thursday 19 November (MFA; The Hindu).

Spokeswoman Mao Ning said it will be "the first ever face-to-face meeting between the Chinese, Russian and U.S. heads of state" and that the leaders will discuss "safeguarding world peace" and "strategic stability in major-country relations"; @F_CEAFE reposted both her post and Global Times' version. A Global Times editorial (Chinese state media) calls the summit proof of "high recognition of China's image as a stable and responsible major country" and a rebuttal of the idea that great powers are "destined for confrontation". Reuters reports that tighter US curbs on Chinese access to advanced AI chips will likely overshadow the Trump–Xi talks, though AI-safety cooperation is possible. Al Jazeera notes Washington wants China in a new nuclear arms-control treaty with Russia, which Beijing resists because of its much smaller arsenal. Yonhap's experts expect the North Korean nuclear issue to feature little.

Why it matters for Europe. The three powers will discuss "world peace" and strategic stability, Ukraine included, with no European at the table. EUISS's Alice Ekman (in Le Monde) says Beijing wants to use APEC to "accelerate the restructuring of global governance and marginalise Western countries". A Europe that speaks with 27 voices is easy to leave out; this is the clearest case yet for a single EU foreign and security policy voice.

What to watch. Summit readouts on Ukraine, Iran, Taiwan and chips; any reference to Europe; Chinese and Russian readouts compared with the White House's.

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France's secret "Volia" mission: French soldiers have been working inside Ukraine since at least summer 2026, RFI reports

An RFI investigation published this morning says small teams of French soldiers have been operating in Ukraine since at least the summer of 2026 under a highly confidential structure called "Volia", led by a French general.

Their task, according to RFI's sources, is not combat but training Ukrainian troops and maintaining French-supplied equipment (Caesar guns, Mirage 2000 jets, precision missiles). The officially acknowledged "Gerfaut" training detachment in Poland (part of EUMAM-Ukraine, extended to 15 Nov 2028) is said to serve as a cover and gateway; soldiers are reportedly told to say they are going to Poland. An AFP source confirmed small contingents are deployed for training and maintenance. RFI says Parliament was not informed, although Article 35 of the Constitution requires it for any deployment of conventional forces abroad; Senate defence committee chair Cédric Perrin called informing Parliament "a constitutional obligation" (JDD, quoting RFI). @F_CEAFE reposted Florian Philippot's post calling it a "state lie unmasked".

Russia's side: No official Russian reaction to the RFI report was found at the time of writing. Moscow has previously said any foreign troops in Ukraine would be "legitimate targets" (Russian MFA, January 2026, reported by CNN). Watch the Kremlin and MFA briefings.

Why it matters for Europe. If confirmed, Volia shows a European state already doing in Ukraine what the Coalition of the Willing has only discussed: keeping European weapons working where they are used. It also shows the cost of doing it nationally and in secret: no democratic mandate, no common EU framework, and a fresh pretext for Russian escalation. Europe's support for Ukraine is stronger and more legitimate when it is common, declared and parliamentary.

What to watch. Élysée / Armed Forces Ministry response; parliamentary questions; Russian reaction; any similar reports on other European states.

Sources

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UK–EU summit on Friday: food and carbon deals and a defence commitment, as Burnham says Brexit cost more than it gained

Britain and the EU will meet in Brussels on 20 November for the second EU–UK summit, with António Costa and Ursula von der Leyen hosting Prime Minister Andy Burnham (EEAS).

Reuters reports the sides will sign deals on food and link carbon markets and make a commitment on defence, while a youth-mobility scheme and tuition fees remain disputed and the full package could take another six months. Burnham is expected to say tonight that the UK "has lost more than it gained" from a "needlessly hard Brexit" (BBC). The UK will have a "voice" but no vote on EU food rules, and the deal is calculated to add 0.4% to UK GDP (BBC, citing minister Hamish Falconer). London also wants a signal on whether its car industry can join the "Made in Europe" scheme (Reuters). Finland's President Alexander Stubb said "leaving the EU is a bad thing, both politically and economically… Brexit has proven that to be true", while keeping "all options open" with the UK (via @ClashReport).

Why it matters for Europe. Ten years on, the UK is rediscovering what CEAFE argues: a mid-sized European state alone is a rule-taker. A defence and security partnership with London strengthens Europe, but the EU should insist that UK participation in "Made in Europe" and SAFE-type programmes means European, not US-controlled, supply chains (Trident, F-35 and Palantir are all US dependencies for Britain).

What to watch. Burnham's Lord Mayor's Banquet speech tonight; summit declaration on Friday; "Made in Europe" and SAFE access for UK firms.

Sources

- Reuters) · (1)
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- eeas.europa.eu
- · (1)
- · (2)
- Stubb, via @ClashReport
- von der Leyen at the EU Enlargement Forum, via @ClashReport

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Iran: Tehran blames an Israeli “disinformation machine” for France’s fridge-hack attribution and US assassination-plot claims

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said that “from the so-called ‘refrigerator cases’ in France to allegations that Iran is plotting to assassinate U.S. officials” there is “a coordinated malign narrative campaign orchestrated by Israel’s disinformation machine”, designed to portray Iran “as an enemy of ordinary people” (post reposted by @F_CEAFE and by Iran’s MFA, which added that Iran has no “need to resort to terror”).

France had attributed the 11–12 October cyberattacks on refrigeration systems at about 700 retail sites to Shahid Kaveh, an IRGC-affiliated cyber unit (Iran International). In parallel, @F_CEAFE reposted a report (via @HormuzLetter, citing Ynet) that Mossad chief Roman Gofman briefed Israel’s security cabinet on possible military action against Iran after returning from Washington. US Treasury Secretary Bessent said Iranian officials “cannot fly abroad as isolation tightens”, and Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf said Iran “does not care whether the U.S. wants war or talks” (both via ClashReport articles). Pakistan hosted the 30th ECO Council of Ministers in Islamabad with Iran’s FM Abbas Araghchi present.

Why it matters for Europe. France’s attribution makes Iran’s hybrid campaign a direct EU security issue, not only a US–Israel matter. Iran’s denial is a claim from an official state source and does not refute France’s evidence; Europe’s answer should be common (EU cyber-sanctions regime) rather than national.

What to watch. Any French or EU response to Tehran’s denial; Israeli cabinet decisions; US–Iran escalation (Conflicts section).

Sources

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Update: ASEAN and China reach “substantial completion” of the South China Sea code, but no final text

Correcting the picture from the morning brief: at the 49th ASEAN Summit in Manila, Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro announced the “substantial completion” of negotiations on the ASEAN–China Code of Conduct, with provisional agreement on “about 80 percent” of the paragraphs, up from about 50% at the start of the year.

She stressed “there’s no conclusion yet”: geographic scope, terms of reference and whether the code is legally binding are still open, and the text passes to Singapore’s chairmanship in 2027. The parties did agree that the 2002 Declaration (DOC) is the code’s foundation and that it will uphold UNCLOS. Around it, ASEAN held summits with China (Premier Li Qiang, who praised free trade “in the face of global trade restrictions”), the UN (Secretary-General Guterres said Myanmar’s “human suffering has reached epic proportions”), Australia, South Korea (President Lee Jae Myung), and Japan’s PM Takaichi and India’s PM Modi arrived in Manila. Greece marked the anniversary of UNCLOS as “the only basis for the peaceful resolution of disputes”.

Why it matters for Europe. The South China Sea carries a large share of EU trade. The EU is not a party, but its interest is the same as ASEAN’s: rules over force, under UNCLOS. A non-binding code would leave the door open to coercion. Europe’s credibility in the region depends on acting as one trading and naval power, not as members sending ships on Washington’s request.

What to watch. Chairman’s statement; East Asia Summit; Trump’s arrival in the region before Shenzhen.

Sources

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- Guterres on Myanmar
- Reuters, Li Qiang
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See also

- Europe hunts for Palantir alternatives: Germany shortlists European systems, France readies Arcadia — see Defence Industry.
