Welcome to this week’s Future Trends - the must-read weekly briefing covering the changing face of global politics, economics, development, and conflict.

Here’s what you need to know this week:

- Ukraine aid dropped from US Congress spending bill
- North Korean parliament enshrines nuclear ambitions in constitution
- Global nuclear warhead stockpiles growing again
- Indonesia launches China-backed ‘Whoosh’ high speed railway
- US National Security Agency unveils AI security centre
- Dozens of Jupiter-sized planets discovered in the Orion Nebula
SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Ukraine aid dropped from US Congress spending bill. Lawmakers omitted further aid to Ukraine in a measure passed Saturday to avoid a federal government shutdown, signalling that US support for funding its fight against the Russian invasion is getting harder.

Australian 'drone killer' system Slinger heading for Ukraine. The Slinger aims to take down drones at a cost of between $155 and $1,550 per engagement with ten being delivered to Ukraine as part of a US military aid package. A cannon mounted on the back of a pick-up truck tracks its target which is part of a weapons system that launches "hard kill" strikes to knock out drones out from the sky.

‘Energy war’: Ukraine tries to protect electricity supply before winter. More strikes are expected, this time attacking Ukraine’s energy grid, after a summer in which Russia targeted Ukraine’s grain export facilities. Ukrenergo, the state-owned electricity transmission system operator, said “enemy shelling” recently damaged a thermal power plant.

POLITICS

North Korean parliament enshrines nuclear ambitions in constitution. North Korea’s parliament has unanimously moved to enshrine its nuclear programme in the country’s constitution. “The nuclear force-building policy has been made permanent as
the basic law of the state, which no one is allowed to flout with anything,” said Kim Jong Un.

**US allows Israel to join visa waiver program.** Israel has agreed to the unprecedented easing of restrictions on movement for Palestinian Americans who live in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, and to ease restrictions placed on Arab and Iranian Americans who want to enter Israel. Israeli citizens are expected to be allowed to enter the US without a visa by November 30.

**Pro-Russian ex-PM Fico wins Slovak election, needs allies for government.** Slovakia's leftist former Prime Minister Robert Fico beat his progressive rival in a parliamentary election after campaigning to end military aid to Ukraine, but he will need to win over allies to form the next government.

**Wife of deposed Gabonese president arrested for money laundering.** Sylvia Bongo Valentin, the wife of Gabon’s deposed President Ali Bongo, has been charged with “money laundering” and other offences. She is currently under house arrest.

**Eswatini holds parliamentary elections.** Voters in Eswatini, the last absolute monarchy, cast their ballots for legislative elections. Political parties are banned, but candidates can run for seats in the House of Assembly every five years.
CONFLICT

CHART: Global nuclear warhead stockpiles growing again

Swedish PM summons army, police chiefs as gang violence rocks nation. Sweden's prime minister summoned the head of the armed forces and the police commissioner in a bid to stem gang violence, he said, following a wave of violence that has taken at least 11 lives in September alone.

More than 70% of Nagorno-Karabakh’s population flees. After an offensive from Azerbaijan, more than 70% of Nagorno-Karabakh’s original population has fled to Armenia as the region’s separatist government said it will dissolve itself.

Kosovo demands Serbia withdraw troops from border. Kosovo demanded that Serbia withdraw its troops from their common border, saying it was ready to protect its territorial integrity. Tensions have been high since Kosovo police fought around 30 heavily armed Serbs who stormed the Kosovo village of Banjska and barricaded themselves in a Serbian Orthodox monastery.
US and Kenya sign a defence pact ahead of the Haiti mission. The US and Kenya have signed a defence agreement that ensures the East African nation receives American support for security deployments to violence-plagued Haiti.

ECONOMICS

Indonesia launches China-backed ‘Whoosh’ high speed railway. A $7.3 billion railway that connects the country’s capital with the city of Bandung was a Belt-and-Road initiative. The launch for the bullet train named "Whoosh" is far behind an original target of operations in 2019.

US emergency oil reserve hits a 40-year low. Goldman Sachs warns the shrinking Strategic Petroleum Reserve is limiting Washington’s ability to protect consumers from the impact of Saudi Arabia’s substantial supply cuts. This could inflate oil prices to average $100 a barrel this time next year, boost already-high prices at the pump and worsen inflation.

UK economy will shrink for two years as Eurozone and US grow. The UK economy will shrink this year and in 2024, according to a report by a leading US thinktank that said stubborn inflation and a shortage of workers would damage the prospects for growth more than most analysts expect.
Netflix in Africa: A boost for countries GDP. Since its entry into Africa in 2016, video streaming giant Netflix has invested a total of $175 million in the continent’s film production, creating over 12,000 jobs and contributing millions to African economies.

Donald Trump's business empire in peril. Donald Trump and his family business are standing trial in New York in a civil fraud case that could deal a major blow to the former US president’s real estate empire.

DEVELOPMENT

US National Security Agency unveils artificial intelligence security centre. The US National Security Agency announced the creation of an artificial intelligence security centre that will oversee AI capabilities within US defence and intelligence services. NSA Director says these capabilities cannot be ‘taken for granted’.

The Global Innovation Index. The GII uses 80 indicators to track global innovation trends in 132 economies, guiding policy makers and business leaders in stimulating human ingenuity. This year’s report identifies an increasingly uncertain outlook, particularly for African nations.
Antimatter feels gravity's pull, and one of biggest mysteries of the Universe stays unsolved. Equal amounts of matter and antimatter should have been made during the Big Bang, yet the universe is made of matter. If anti-matter behaved differently to matter, then a plausible explanation exists.

Extreme heat waves in Bolivia drive a drought, forcing cities like El Alto to ration water. Livestock and crops have been adversely impacted as water shortages threaten to continue until the next rainy season in December.

Antarctic sea ice reaches all-time low annual maximum. Since the beginning of recording in 1979, September 10 broke the record of a year that has been rated the lowest since the recording, causing concern that it may be the start of a long-term trend.

SOCIAL

Astronomers discovered dozens of Jupiter-sized planets in the Orion Nebula. Astronomers using the James Webb Space Telescope identified
dozens of Jupiter-sized planets floating in the Orion Nebula. Notably, the planets are not connected to any star and appear to be moving in pairs.

**JP Morgan Chase: AI could cut workweeks to 3.5 days.** CEO Jamie Dimon predicted AI could cut workweeks to 3.5 days, but acknowledges it will inevitably eliminate some jobs. Dimon said the firm would aim to "redeploy" employees displaced by AI job losses.

**Key Taiwan Tech Firms Are Helping Huawei With China Chip Plants.** Several Taiwanese technology companies are helping Huawei Technologies Co. build infrastructure for an under-the-radar network of chip plants across southern China, an unusual collaboration amid the ongoing tensions.

**Scientists unveil 'fire-safe' liquid fuel.** Chemical engineers in California have designed a fuel that ignites only with the application of electric current. The "safe" liquid fuel doesn’t react to flames, and would not start accidental fires during either storage or transport.

**Report: X (formerly Twitter) found to have highest rate of disinformation.** The EU has issued a warning to Elon Musk to comply with sweeping new laws on fake news and Russian propaganda, after X was found to have the highest ratio of disinformation posts of all large social media platforms.

**PEACEBUILDING**

The **Maersk Company** is replacing its fleet of container ships with new vessels using “green methanol.” The fuel is produced from plants, which have already removed greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, so the production process does not release additional CO2 into the air. Maersk’s first ship using green methanol is now in operation, and the company has ordered 24 more. Maersk has reduced carbon emissions by 40% in the last decade and is aiming to reach net zero by 2040. The company is also engaging in partnerships to scale green methanol production.

The **Carter Center** is expanding its Inform Women, Transform Lives campaign, a global effort to ensure that women can seek and receive beneficial information from their local governments. The Center has selected 12 more cities around the world to participate in the program: Accra, Ghana; Baltimore, Maryland; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Glasgow, Scotland; Kathmandu, Nepal; Lagos, Nigeria; Mérida, Mexico;
Quezon City, Philippines; Quito, Ecuador; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Rotterdam, The Netherlands; and Santiago, Chile.

**Green Amendments for the Generations** seeks to amend the Bill of Rights section of all US state constitutions to recognize and protect “rights to pure water, clean air, a stable climate and healthy environments.” Thus far, Montana, Pennsylvania, and New York have adopted constitutional guarantees for a healthy environment. A Montana judge has ruled in favor of a group of young people who argued that the state’s failure to consider climate change when approving fossil fuel projects was unconstitutional.

The US Government has announced a new **Climate Corps initiative** to train more than 20,000 young people in skills needed to address climate change. The program will provide job training and service opportunities for a wide range of projects, including installing solar panels, restoring coastal wetlands and retrofitting homes to be more energy-efficient. All participants will be paid. Eight states have already established climate corps programs, and five more are planning to set them up. Many of the state programs are embedded in state governments and receive federal funding from AmeriCorps. Some are funded through public-private partnerships.