Rosneft becomes top Venezuelan oil trader, helping offset U.S. pressure
Russian state oil major Rosneft has become the main trader of Venezuelan crude, shipping oil to buyers in China and India and helping Caracas offset the loss of traditional dealers who are avoiding it for fear of breaching U.S. sanctions. Trading sources and Refinitiv Eikon data showed Rosneft became the biggest buyer of Venezuelan crude in July and the first half of August.

Facing farmer anger, Trump scrambles Cabinet to brainstorm on biofuel policy -sources
U.S. President Donald Trump, faced with mounting anger in the farm belt over policies that allow oil refineries to use less corn-based ethanol, summoned Cabinet members on Thursday to discuss ways to boost biofuel demand, four sources familiar with the matter said. Throughout his 2016 campaign that brought him to power, Trump championed ethanol but also courted the oil industry. However, his latest decision to grant dozens of waivers to oil refineries infuriated farmers, a key constituency he is counting on for re-election in 2020.

Asian refiner profits hammered by free-fall in fuel oil margins
Asian refining margins have tumbled more than 50% since mid-July on anticipation of plummeting demand for high sulphur fuel oil (HSFO) ahead of a shift to cleaner marine fuels next year. Complex refining margins for a typical Singapore refinery, an Asian benchmark, had dropped to $4.31 a barrel by the close of markets on Thursday, down from $7.39 at the start of August and a near two-year high of $9.37 on July 11.

U.S. will aggressively enforce sanctions over Iran tanker -State Dept official
The United States will aggressively enforce its sanctions to prevent the private sector from assisting an Iranian oil tanker that is traveling through the Mediterranean and that Washington wants seized, a State Department official said on Thursday. "The shipping sector is on notice that we will aggressively enforce U.S. sanctions," the official told Reuters days after warning countries not to allow the tanker to dock.

EXCLUSIVE-Biofuels company proposes to buy fire-damaged Philadelphia refinery
A biofuels producer said on Thursday it is proposing to acquire the fire-damaged Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery and convert it to make renewable diesel and jet fuels. S.G. Preston Co is the first company to identify itself as a potential buyer of the refinery, the oldest and largest on the East Coast. PES's owners halted production at the 335,000 barrel-per-day refinery and put the 1,300-acre (526-hectare) facility up for sale after a June fire damaged one of its gasoline-producing units.
Asian petrochemical profits slammed by trade war crossfire, oversupply
Profits from making petrochemicals in Asia have plunged to their lowest in months as the unrelenting trade conflict between Beijing and Washington stifles Chinese demand for chemicals and plastics just as waves of new production start to come on line. The global output capacity for polyethylene, a key ingredient for plastics used in everything from piping to toys, is expected to exceed demand by 3 million tonnes by the end of 2020, compared to overcapacity of 545,000 tonnes in 2019, data from commodity consultancy Wood Mackenzie showed.

Argus to launch Singapore bunker fuel derivative contract on CME
Oil price reporting agency Argus is launching a Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) listed Singapore marine fuels future contract on Monday, catering primarily to suppliers and end-users of the fuel. "This new futures contract, will make Singapore even more relevant as a financial trading and physical marine fuels hub, enabling both fuel suppliers and ship owners to hedge their risks effectively," Alan Bannister, Asia head of business development at Argus, said on Friday.

China's July gasoline exports surge 75% higher than a year ago
China's gasoline exports in July surged 75% from a year ago, customs data showed on Friday, as refiners stepped up overseas shipments amid new production and slowing domestic demand. Gasoline shipments were 1.56 million tonnes last month, data from the General Administration of Customs showed, up for a second month from 1 million tonnes in June and 890,000 tonnes in July last year.

COLUMN-U.S. refiners limit crude processing amid slack fuel demand: Kemp
U.S. refineries have cut the volume of crude processed so far this year, but stocks of gasoline and distillates remain ample, highlighting the slack demand for transportation fuels. Fuel consumption has stalled, part of a worldwide slowdown in oil demand associated with the slackening of manufacturing and freight activity.

Trafigura takes stake in Frontline in $675 mln tanker deal
Frontline has agreed to buy 10 Suezmax oil tankers from Trafigura in a cash and share deal worth up to $675 million which will make the Geneva-based trading firm a large shareholder in the shipping group. Under the terms of the deal Trafigura will take an 8.5% stake in Frontline, valued at $128 million, and will receive a cash payment of between $538 million and $547 million, the companies said on Friday.

MARKETS TODAY

**OIL**: Oil prices steadied, on track for a weekly gain, with attention focused on a speech by U.S. Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell for news on whether it will cut interest rates for a second time this year to boost the world's largest economy.

**FOREX**: The euro edged lower and the dollar strengthened broadly, awaiting a keynote speech by the head of the Federal Reserve after some of his fellow policymakers signalled reluctance to cut U.S. interest rates further.

**U.S. EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR THE DAY (ET)**

- **1000** New Home Sales-Units for July: Expected 0.649 mln; Prior 0.646 mln
- **1000** Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell delivers remarks at the Jackson Hole Economic Policy Symposium: Challenges for Monetary Policy

TECHNICAL CHARTS

**NYMEX Crude** | **NYMEX RBOB Gasoline** | **NYMEX Heating Oil** | **ICE Brent Crude** | **ICE Gas Oil** | **ICE Heating Oil**