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GLOBAL

Terrorist attack in New Orleans (United States) highlights the growing use of vehicular ramming to carry out mass casualty attacks. On 1 January, 14 people were killed and 34 injured during an Islamic State (IS) inspired attack involving a vehicular ramming combined with firearms and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which failed to detonate. Over the past decade, vehicles have become an increasingly popular modus operandi to carry out mass casualty events, including in Zhuhai (China) and Magdeburg (Germany) in 2024, Charlottesville (United States), Barcelona (Spain), Stockholm (Sweden) and London (UK) in 2017, and in Nice (France) and Berlin (Germany) in 2016. Motivations behind these assaults vary, ranging from affiliations with extremist Islamist groups, to far-right ideologies, and mental health issues. The heightened use of vehicles as weapons in public spaces reflects a shift towards low-cost, high-impact tactics in asymmetric violence, exposing vulnerabilities in urban environments and challenging traditional security measures.



AMER

Central and Eastern United States: Exercise caution and anticipate disruption over the coming days as Winter Storm Blair continues to move eastward. On 3 January, Winter Storm Blair brought snow, ice, and freezing temperatures as it moved through the Midwest, Southeast, and Northeast. Washington DC faces the brunt of the storm, with up to 16 inches of snow expected, disrupting major transportation hubs, including the regions three key airports, and contributing to the cancellation of over 10,300 flights nationwide since 3 January. States of emergencies have been declared in seven states, including Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Arkansas, and parts of New Jersey, as hazardous conditions forced closures of key interstates and highways. These transportation routes include [I-70](#) in Kansas, [I-64](#) in Kentucky, and [I-81](#) and [I-83](#) in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The storm has left approximately 300,000 people without power and caused widespread public service disruptions. Monitor real-time updates on road closures and flight delays and prepare contingency plans to navigate the disruptions caused by Winter Storm Blair.

Mexico: Defer all non-essential travel in Durango state due to escalating violence against foreigners. On 30 December, three US nationals were fatally shot during a roadside attack along the Francisco Zarco Highway in [Santiago Papasquiaro \(Durango state\)](#). A 14-year-old boy survived the attack but remains in critical condition. The family, who were visiting relatives for the holidays, had been driving a truck with a US license plate, when they were assaulted under unclear circumstance but amid an increase in violent crime in the area. This incident underscores the escalating gang and cartel violence in Mexico, where criminal organizations are expanding their operations and targeting both foreigners and locals with increasing brazenness. Such violence not only threatens public safety, but also undermines



Mexico's tourism dependent economy, complicating foreign investment and the ability to foster economic stability. Travelers and business owners should strongly consider utilizing executive protection and secure transportation, even if going on vacation, to minimize risks and ensure personal safety amidst the continuing rise of violence within the region.

Ecuador: Follow official directives amid the extension of the state of emergency in seven provinces. On 3 January, President Daniel Noboa extended the 60-day state of emergency (SoE) in areas of [Azuay](#), [Canar](#), [Guayas](#), [Los Rios](#), [Orellana](#), and [Sucumbios](#) provinces. Officials extended the SoE in response to escalating internal unrest and violence linked to increasing organized crime. The measure orders the mobilization of military forces and restricts constitutional rights, such as freedom of movement, inviolability of the home and correspondence, and includes a nightly curfew from 22:00-05:00 (local time). Ecuador's crisis reflects the regional challenges posed by the global drug trade, where weak state capacity and transnational drug trade destabilize economies and trade routes. The militarized response may exacerbate marginalization and push criminal organizations to adapt, undermining long-term stability.

Venezuela: There is a heightened risk of arbitrary detention for Western passport holders over the coming weeks as Maduro prepares for Trump Presidency. Since July 2024, over 50 foreign passport holders have been detained by security forces, with the majority being charged with espionage or terrorism. President Nicolas Maduro is likely preparing for a Donald Trump presidency by detaining Western passport holders, in particular US nationals, to use as bargaining chips. The rise in detentions came after the US refused to acknowledge Maduro's victory in the country's 2024 presidential election. Maduro has a history of using



detained foreign nationals by swapping them for jailed Maduro loyalists or sanctions relief. In light of Trump taking power on 20 January 2025, the risk of arbitrary detentions will remain heightened over the coming weeks.



EMEA

Croatia: Monitor the election results in light of the Western-skeptic incumbent predicted Presidency win. On 29 December, incumbent President Zoran Milanovic advanced to the runoff, securing 49% of the vote. The runoff, scheduled for 12 January 2025, will be held against Dragon Primorac, a member of the ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party, who secured only 19% of the vote. Milanovic's stance, including his opposition to Croatian military support for Ukraine and broader skepticism toward NATO's role in the conflict, reflects a regional trend of pro-Russian and Western-skeptic leaders gaining influence, such as in Slovakia and Georgia. The shift in political dynamics across Central and Eastern Europe poses a threat to the continued military and financial assistance to Ukraine, potentially diminishing the EU's and NATO's unified stance against Russian aggression and weakening regional security. The trending rise of pro-Russian or Western-skeptic leaders in the region may alter trade dynamics and foreign policy priorities over the coming years.

Israel: Monitor developments amid concerns that officials will end the ceasefire over claims of frequent Hezbollah violations. The 60-day ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel that went into force on 27 November 2024 remains fragile as both Israel and Hezbollah accuse each other of committing violations on multiple occasions. On 5 January 2025, Israel accused Hezbollah of not withdrawing beyond the Litani River and failing to dismantle its military infrastructure in southern Lebanon, a key requisite by Israel for sustaining the ceasefire. Likewise, Hezbollah has accused Israel of not withdrawing its troops from southern Lebanon and launching continuous airstrikes. However, with Israel attempting to return its citizens to homes in the north by stabilizing the northern security environment, its defense



minister has threatened to renew the conflict if Hezbollah does not fully withdraw north of the Litani river.

Eastern and Central Europe: Halt of Russian natural gas flow through Ukrainian pipeline threatens industrial sector and consumers prices. On 31 December, the agreement between Ukraine and Russia to allow for the transport of natural gas through Ukrainian pipelines to Europe officially ended. Officials in Ukraine hope the move will further squeeze Russia's ability to fund the war. Ukrainian President Zelensky had warned for months that the contract would not be renewed, allowing reliant consumer countries to diversify their energy imports and create contingency plans. The most affected countries are projected to be Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Moldova. The disruption will likely put pressure on benchmark prices, which have risen over the past year, while remaining under the heights reached shortly after the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. In turn, increasing the operational costs for industries and consumer price points.



APAC

Bangladesh: Monitor developments as escalating inter-communal tensions are liable to lead to violent civil unrest over the coming months. On 2 January, a Dhaka court denied bail to Krishna Das Prabu, a Hindu leader charged with sedition after organizing large rallies in [Chattogram](#). He was reportedly advocating for improved security for minority groups in Bangladesh. This judicial decision comes amid heightened tensions following the August 2024 overthrow of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, due to reports of the harassment and killing of the minority Hindu community as well as the vandalism of sacred sites. Hindus are being targeted for their perceived political affiliation and support for the unpopular Hasina, who sought refuge with the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India. While many attacks – the product of mob rage and rumors – are real, others are AI forgeries or exaggerations pushed by supporters of Hasina. Often these fabrications are amplified by the media in India. The interim government has responded by downplaying the violent incidents to maintain their image of strength. The Hindu leader's continued detention may exacerbate the already heightened inter-communal tensions and strain Bangladesh's diplomatic relations with neighboring India. Continue to monitor as the political instability within the region may lead to risks of targeted violence and inadequate government protection for vulnerable groups.

Singapore: The economy expanded by 4.0% in 2024, marking the fastest year of growth post-pandemic. This acceleration is attributed to a resurgence in the manufacturing sector, particularly in semiconductors and precision engineering, financial trading, and increased tourism following the relaxation of pandemic travel restrictions. In November 2024, the core inflation rate was at 1.9%; the lowest it has



been in nearly three years. The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) anticipates GDP growth to remain at the upper end of 2%-3% range for 2025. The country's robust economic performance solidifies its position as a regional hub, attracting global investments and reinforcing its strategic importance in Southeast Asia amidst geopolitical tensions. Additionally, Singapore's low crime rates make it an attractive destination for businesses seeking a secure, predictable, and investor-friendly environment in Southeast Asia. Business owners should capitalize on the economic growth, low crime rates, and declining inflation by expanding operations and leveraging increased consumer spending.

South Korea: Civil unrest and political instability are likely to persist over the coming days after officials issued an arrest warrant for President Yoon Suk. On 31 December, the constitutional court issued an arrest and search warrant on charges of abuse of power and starting an insurrection, following the controversial imposition of martial law in early December. This is an unprecedented legal move, as this is the first time an arrest warrant has been issued for a president within the country. On 3 January, the President resisted arrest by refusing to leave his official residence and deploying his Presidential Security Service (PSS) to block police access. This resulted in a tense six-hour standoff, which involved supporters rallying at his residence in support of the president. The PSS justified their actions by citing national security concerns, arguing that arresting the sitting president could destabilize the country's governance and compromise sensitive information. However, the longer legal proceedings are drawn out, the greater likelihood that political divisions will fuel the intensity of ongoing protests.