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AMER

United States (California): Proceed with caution and expect disruption amid out-of-control wildfires in Los Angeles County. Since 7 January, eight wildfires have broken out around Los Angeles (LA) County killing at least 24, destroying over 12,000 structures and forcing over 100,000 to evacuate. The causes of the fires are under investigation, but their rapid spread is attributed to strong wind gusts and extreme dryness brought on by drought. On 9 January, five of the fires had been 100% contained and deemed inactive. The Hurst fire was deemed 89% contained on 11 January. However, the Palisades fire spreading out of Palisades (Los Angeles) and the Eaton fire in Pasadena and Altadena remain 13% and 29% contained.

Curfews in mandatory evacuation zones from 18:00 - 06:00 (local time) are still in place with police and national guard monitoring entrances and patrolling zones. Several highways and interstates in Southern California are closed due to these wildfires, particularly in the Los Angeles area, including [Pacific Coast Highway](#) (State Route 1), [Topanga Canyon Highway](#) (State Route 27), [Interstate 10](#) (Santa Monica Freeway), and [Interstate 210](#) (Foothill Freeway). Travelers are advised to monitor the situation and take precautions including monitoring evacuation notices and air quality. Anticipate transportation disruptions and short notice road closures around Los Angeles County, as well as regional flight delays and cancellations.

United States: The blocking of Nippon Steel's acquisition of US Steel over national security concerns foreshadows a likely increase in protectionism over the coming years. The announcement on 6 January by the Biden administration's halting of the deal between Japan based Nippon and US Steel was a controversial decision by an outgoing president. It highlights the power of US labor unions, the politicization of national security, and the resurgence of protectionist US economic policies. President Biden cited a desire to protect US union jobs and critical national



supply chains in his explanation. The incoming Trump administration had already declared their opposition to the deal during the campaign, matching his various other protectionist economic policies. Businesses should take note of this changing stance towards foreign companies in the US economic landscape – especially in critical sectors such as defense, energy, and tech.

Guyana: Jump in oil exports to Europe during 2024 is projected to increase further as Europe continues to decouple from Russia. Shipping data has revealed that Guyana’s status as a burgeoning oil nation continues to cement. Their market share in Europe has further expanded, in recognition of Guyana’s lighter crude grades that are compatible with European refineries, as well as its easy shipping access. Additionally, two geopolitical conflicts have strengthened their desirability. Houthi attacks in the Red Sea have dampened oil exports from the Middle East and persistent global pressure to reduce reliance on Russia has resulted in a diversifying landscape. Sixty-six percent of Guyana’s crude exports went to Europe in 2024. They are now the fifth largest South American exporter of oil.

Bolivia: Avoid ongoing protest march to La Paz by Morales supporters over the coming days due to potential violent clashes with security forces or counter-protestors. On 10 January, supporters of the former Bolivian President, Evo Morales, began a “March for Life” protest in Patacamaya (Aroma Province), set to reach the capital La Paz in the coming days, demanding action on inflation, shortages of goods, and economic instability. The march highlights grievances over rising fuel prices, reduced subsidies, and widespread public dissatisfaction. Significant disruptions are to be expected upon its arrival in La Paz, including road blockades on the Patacamaya-La Paz highway, street closures, restricted access to key infrastructure, and possible violent clashes with security forces given past precedent. The event underscores fractures within the ruling Movement for Socialism (MAS) party, where



loyalists of Morales and supporters of President Luis Acre struggle for influence. This internal discord risks destabilizing Bolivia's political environment ahead of the 2025 general elections.



EMEA

Switzerland: Expect disruption and heightened security during the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2025 meeting in Davos slated to take place on 20-24 January. The annual event convenes leaders from governments, major international organizations, the Forum's 1,000 partner companies, and civil society organizations. The meeting's focus on converging technologies and hyper-intelligence as they seek to address challenges such as geo-economic uncertainty, trade tensions, cultural polarization, and climate anxiety. For the security sector, this event is critical as it will examine the dual nature of emerging technologies, emphasizing the need for frameworks that prevent misuse while leveraging innovation to address evolving security challenges.

Given the global prominence of the meeting, extensive security and logistical measures are in place. Restricted zones surrounding key locations, stringent accreditation processes, and regular random checks at checkpoints can be expected. Disruptive protests by far-left groups should be anticipated and efforts by Islamist extremists to carry out a terrorist attack cannot be ruled out. Road closures, traffic control, and the prioritization of official WEF shuttles emphasize the need for advanced travel planning. Travelers are advised to either rely on public transportation for efficiency, or to obtain secure transportation well in advance.

Armenia: Declaration to begin European Union (EU) ascension talks underlines continued drift of former Soviet states toward the Western sphere of influence. On 9 January, the Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan declared support for a bill that would launch his country's bid to become a member of the EU. While he cautioned that this decision can only be made through a referendum and that attaining EU membership takes years to formalize, this initial action retains its importance.



Armenia – which once existed definitively within the Russian sphere of influence – has suffered from Russia’s singular focus on Ukraine. This was exemplified by their decisive and humiliating loss of disputed territory to Azerbaijan in a 44-day long war in 2020 that proved Russia was no longer a reliable guarantor of security. There is diverse evidence of this trend throughout the former Russian sphere of influence. Citizen protests against the Kremlin-supported ruling politicians in Georgia have been ongoing for three months; Azerbaijan has been vocally critical of Russia over their recently downing of a civilian plane; the Romanian presidential election was annulled and is set to be repeated over allegations of Russian hybrid meddling; Transnistria– the Russian backed Moldovan breakaway region – is freezing due to its inability to access Russian natural gas, and the Central Asian former Soviet states are acting with an increasing independence that tilts toward the major powers in Asia, China and India. Businesses should take note of this shift and seek out the resulting opportunities.

Lebanon: Election of US-backed candidate to presidency is unlikely to significantly alter Hezbollah’s status quo. On 9 January, the US-backed Lebanese army commander, Joseph Aoun, was elected by parliamentary majority to the office of president. Comments by Aoun suggest he is considering efforts to disarm Hezbollah and wants to remain neutral in the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, in accordance with the 1989 Taif Agreement that ensures distribution of political power across sectarian lines, Aoun does not possess the constitutional authority to undertake this alone. He requires collaboration from the Cabinet to have the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) enforce the disarmament of Hezbollah – making the task more convoluted. Hezbollah and its coalition partners are unlikely to disarm willingly. Due to Aoun’s focus on the ongoing economic crises and reconstruction efforts he is likely to avoid any potential clashes with Hezbollah that could pull the



country into further conflict or instability. Furthermore, both the LAF and the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL) forces previously failed to enforce the mandate under Resolution 1701 that ended the 2006 war, whose key requirement mandated that Hezbollah move all military assets north of the Litani River. There is no indication that the LAF would fulfil the mandate this time around, suggesting that Hezbollah will be able to rearm and reconstitute as a militant force over the coming years.

Germany: Expect disruptions over the coming weeks during the 2025 election due to likely protests targeting political rallies. On 10 January, the political party Alternative for Germany (AfD) held a convention in Riesa (Saxony state), which was met by mass protests that led to road blockades and clashes with police. The AfD, led by Alice Weidel, is a far-right political party and has a history of its members planning extremist acts, making it unpopular with mainstream political parties and many citizens. However, AfD is currently placing second for the elections on 23 February, with polls showing the party having 20% support, prompting both an increased campaign effort and protests against the party. While Weidel is unlikely to win the chancellorship, the support the party is receiving will likely prompt an increase of AfD conventions and rallies across Germany. In turn, this increase in rallies could be met by demonstrations, leading to clashes with police, counter-protesters and subsequent transportation disruptions. Monitor for and avoid all related protests out of precaution.



APAC

South Korea: Civil unrest and political instability are likely to continue over the coming weeks after officials extended the arrest warrant for President Yoon Suk. On 7 January, authorities extended President Yoon's arrest warrant after police failed to apprehend him following a standoff at his residence with the Presidential Security Service (PSS). Since the first attempt, Yoon's residence has been reinforced with barbed wire, vehicles have been used to block entrances and he refused to attend his impeachment trial on 14 January due to safety concerns. Prosecutors have vowed to arrest Yoon this time and are planning to execute the warrant over the coming days. Large crowds of pro-Yoon protesters gathering at the residence vowed to block any arrest attempts. Although the leader of the PSS resigned and is being investigated for obstruction after resisting the police's first attempt, its new leader has stated that he will also resist any arrest attempt. Should police succeed in arresting Yoon it is likely that his supporters will clash with arresting forces and continue to hold large disruptive protests in the coming weeks.

India: Expect heightened security measures and disruptions linked to preparations for Republic Day. From 19-26 January, key areas in New Delhi, including Kartavya Path and India Gate, will face traffic restrictions due to parade rehearsals. Additionally, the airspace closure of Indira Gandhi International Airport from 10:20 - 12:45 (local time) daily will disrupt approximately 1,300 flights. Enhanced police deployment, night patrols, and security checks across sensitive locations, such as metro stations and lodging establishments, reflect concerns about potential security threats. Bomb hoaxes have already caused disruption to the event, and police in Bengaluru arrested a suspect for calling in a fake bomb threat on 13 January. This period coincides with Delhi's legislative assembly elections, adding



another layer of disruption. Although Republic Day, taking place on 26 January, has historically been free from major incidents, the symbolic nature of the day and past history of terrorist attacks during similar high-profile events heighten the government's precautionary stance. Travelers in New Delhi during this period should plan routes meticulously, allow for extra time to reach destinations, and carry identification at checkpoints.

Mongolia: Expect and avoid further anti-government protests slated to take place in the capital Ulaanbaatar through 22 January. Coalition members from opposition parties rallied at [Sukhbaatar Square](#) on 11 January, causing disruption on adjacent roadways and the cancelation of several bus routes. Organizers have indicated they intend to demonstrate daily from 11:00 (local time) until 22 January. Further demonstrations are likely to take place in the vicinity of the [Government Palace](#) and are liable to be forcibly dispersed by security forces, posing incidental risk to bystanders.