



# Global Intelligence Review

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## **AMER**

**Nicaragua: Constitutional reforms highlight persistent efforts by President Daniel Ortega to establish an authoritarian political dynasty.** On 31 January, President Daniel Ortega decreed that his wife, Rosario Murillo, who currently serve as Vice President, is now his “co-president.” This action, in concert with a decree extending the presidential term to six years, is part of an ongoing transparent effort to institute a political dynasty. By formally elevating Murillo, Ortega seeks to further tighten his family’s grip on power. Many of President Ortega’s children already hold key government and media positions – positioning them as eventual potential successors. Entrenchment of authoritarianism under Ortega has been characterized by the imprisonment and exile of opposition figures, the revocation of citizenship for critics, and the closure of over 5,000 civil society organizations. The Ortega-Murillo family’s consolidation of control mirrors autocratic family dynasties seen in Cuba, raising concerns about Nicaragua’s long-term democratic prospects. This development could push the country further into isolation, drawing it closer to authoritarian allies while straining relations with democratic nations in the region. Travelers should remain cautious of growing political repression and arbitrary law enforcement under the Ortega-Murillo regime.

**United States: Anticipate disruptions in state capitals nationwide during “50 Protests, 50 States, One Day” demonstrations slated to take place on 5 February.** The “50 Protests, 50 States, One Day” (505001) movement will stage demonstrations nationwide at state capitals on 5 February to denounce President Donald Trump’s initiatives. The movement’s decentralized nature makes turnout unpredictable, but social media engagement suggests growing momentum. Thus far, demonstrations have been announced in Atlanta (Georgia state), Austin (Texas state), Honolulu (Hawaii state), Montgomery (Alabama state), Nashville (Tennessee state),





and Raleigh (North Carolina state). Key risks include the blockade of highways, public disorder, and potential clashes with police or counter-protestors – similar to protests that occurred in Los Angeles (California state) on 2 February, where demonstrations ultimately led to multiple clashes with law enforcement and temporary roadway closures. Law enforcement will likely implement heightened security measures to manage possible confrontations between protesters, police, and counter-demonstrators. Travelers should anticipate delays and plan journeys accordingly.

**United States (Washington, DC): Upcoming visit of Israeli Prime Minister is likely to spark Pro-Palestinian and counterprotests over the coming days.** On 3-6 February, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will visit Washington DC to meet with members of Congress and President Trump. Disruptive pro-Palestinian protests can be expected throughout the duration of his visit near government buildings – especially the White House and Capitol Building on 4 February when the Israeli Prime Minister is expected to meet President Trump. There is the potential for ensuing scuffles involving the police or pro-Israel activists in the event of counter-demonstrations. Intermittent traffic disruption and road closures can be expected in downtown D.C. throughout the entire visit. Travelers should avoid any protests as a precaution and allow for extra time for journeys or plan alternative routes.

**United States: Collision near Ronald Reagan Airport (DCA) underscores heightened aviation risks in Washington DC due to high levels of congestion.** On 29 January, a midair collision occurred between an American Airlines regional jet and a US Army Black Hawk helicopter. Among the 64 individuals on board the aircraft and three military personnel on the helicopter, there were no survivors. The city's complex air traffic environment, characterized by a mix of commercial flights, military



operations, and restricted zones, demands rigorous coordination and communication among various aviation entities. At the time of the incident, there was only a singular air traffic controller in the tower, managing both the helicopter and airplane flight paths; this suggests that understaffing was a factor that led to the incident.

**United States: Approach the Chinese app, DeepSeek, with increased caution as sensitive information could be accessed or monitored by Chinese authorities.**

On 27 January, Chinese AI company DeepSeek released its R1 model, a generative AI platform that rivals leading US models – such as Open A.I. and Chat GPT - in performance but was developed at a fraction of the cost. The app quickly became one of the most downloaded free applications in the US iOS App Store. However, because user data is stored on servers in China, concern has been generated that the Chinese government can access sensitive information through the platform. DeepSeek's emergence signals China's rapid advancement in AI technology, challenging US dominance in the field. Mirroring recent national security anxieties regarding TikTok's Chinese ownership, DeepSeek's rapid adoption in the U.S. has bolstered concern that Chinese technology firms collecting user data are operating under government oversight. The app's success has prompted discussions about the effectiveness of US export controls on advanced technology and the potential need for stricter regulations to protect national security. Stakeholders should monitor increasing scrutiny of foreign-owned companies and remain wary of using applications that are subject to foreign government influence.

**United States: Monitor official health department updates about the increasing case numbers in the Tuberculosis outbreak in Kansas state.** As of 31 January,



there are 67 active Tuberculosis (TB) cases and 79 latent infections reported in Kansas – primarily in [Wyandotte](#) and [Johnson](#) counties. The outbreak has resulted in two fatalities. TB, an airborne bacterial infection, is treatable with antibiotics but requires prolonged treatment. Globally, TB remains the leading cause of infectious disease deaths, with 1.25 million fatalities and 8 million infections reported in 2023. Exercise heightened health precautions if traveling to Kansas, and make sure to have up-to-date vaccinations.

**Colombia: Avoid all travel to the Catatumbo region amid a state of emergency and escalating violence with militant groups.** On 24 January, President Gustavo Petro declared a state of emergency in the northeast Catatumbo region, which borders Venezuela, amid a military operation against competing rebel groups. On 17 January, the National Liberation Army (ELN) launched an offensive on dissident groups of the disbanded Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia (FARC) to assert control over abandoned cocaine plantations and trafficking routes. The fighting has killed at least 80 and displaced over 32,000 civilians. In response, 9,000 soldiers have been deployed to the area to stem the violence, and the government broke off peace talks with the ELN, reissuing warrants for its leaders. Colombian intelligence has accused Venezuela of backing the ELN, while Venezuela has accused Colombia of sheltering leaders of Tren de Aragua, one of the largest gangs in Venezuela, making the prospect of collaboration on border security unlikely. The violence is the worst security crisis the country has experienced in years and has ended the government's hope for the peaceful disarmament of the ELN. Reasserting control over the region will likely be drawn out due to the difficult mountainous terrain and the historic presence of the groups in the region.





## EMEA

**Democratic Republic of Congo: Rwandan-backed M23 militia forces seek to entrench their presence in mineral-rich eastern regions, raising concerns of inflaming a wider regional conflict.** On 27 January, M23 announced that they had seized the city of Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This development reignited a conflict, which has been ongoing in some form since the 1990's. The events, which have led to the current situation, include a compound history of competition over natural resources, ethnic-animosity, xenophobia, and Western paternalism. M23 (March 23 Movement), referring to the date of a previous peace agreement between the group and the government in 2009 – is made up of Congolese and Rwandan ethnic Tutsi fighters. They claim to be protecting the Tutsi minority population in the DRC from alleged harassment and genocide on xenophobic grounds – which has not been substantiated. The international community widely considers this purported mission to be a cover for coveting access to rare minerals – such as gold and coltan - in the eastern region as a proxy for the Rwandan state. Rwanda is the third largest exporter of coltan – an essential mineral used in modern electronics – despite having no industrial mines of its own.

The UN has documented Rwandan logistical, financial, and military personnel support and involvement in M23. The main opposition rebel group to M23 is the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FLDR), a group made up by Congolese and Rwandan ethnic Hutus that operate out of the DRC and seek to overthrow the Rwandan government due to their hatred of the Tutsi ethnic group now in power. Support to the FLDR, by the Congolese government in their campaign



against M23, has been documented by international watch groups – incurring the backlash from the Rwandan state, which funds M23. Thus, fueling a vicious cycle.

M23 previously captured Goma in 2012 but was quickly expelled – and subsequently driven out of the DRC – due to a combination of military force and international sanctions on Rwanda that forced a retraction of their support. M23 reemerged in 2021, slowly occupying increasingly larger swathes of land in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. They have transparently seized economically strategic towns and established unlawful regimes to administer the areas and illegally extract minerals. The Congolese government has been fighting back with assistance from previously anti-government rebel groups, mercenaries, and a longstanding UN peacekeeping mission. Goma has been a receiving ground for the hundreds of thousands displaced by the conflict, which has fluctuated in intensity over the course of four years and witnessed many failed ceasefire agreements. The number of casualties – at least 770 killed and 2,880 injured – and displaced persons are likely to rise as M23 seeks to entrench itself within Goma and set their sights on the capital city Bakavu in South Kivu province.

Declarations that M23 seeks to overthrow the Congolese government are most likely a gambit to exacerbate fears and plays on expectations to produce a context in which their retention of nominal control over large regions in the eastern DRC is considered tolerable. Potential talks between the Congolese government and the leaders of M23, or Rwanda, have been publicly rebuked – increasing the likelihood of a drawn-out multi-front conflict. Already, South Africa has protested the deaths of 13 of their soldiers in the crossfire, prompting an escalatory response from Rwanda that raised regional tensions. It has been reported that as many as 4,000 Rwandan troops are present in the DRC supporting M23 in their assault.





The international community's reticence to impose significant pressure on Rwanda to halt the violence reflects how Rwanda has successfully positioned itself as an essential ally to the West in Africa. Rwanda contributes the second highest number of peacekeepers to the UN, accepted deported immigrants from Europe, and sent their soldiers to suppress Islamist jihadist terror groups in Mozambique. The EU signed a strategic minerals deal with Rwanda in 2024, prompting further suspicion of their pointed muted response. The expansion of the current conflict could wreak havoc on the humanitarian situation in southern and eastern Africa, generating insecurity that terrorist groups thrive on, and disrupt critical minerals for multinational supply chains. Rampant anti-western sentiment within the DRC, due to the failed role of the UN, and perceived failures of Western countries to stop Rwanda from funding M23, produced unruly protests this past week outside foreign embassies and UN facilities in Kinshasa. On 4 February, the political wing of M23 declared a humanitarian ceasefire. However, it remains unlikely that the ceasefire will hold, and hostilities are likely to continue over the coming weeks. Stakeholders should monitor the situation closely and halt all non-essential travel to the country.

**Serbia: Anti-government protests persist after resignation of Prime Minister and calls for President Vucic to step down strengthen.** On 28 January Prime Minister Vucevic became the highest-ranking official in Vucic's government to resign after months of anti-government protests led by students. The deadly collapse of a railway station roof in November 2024 first sparked the now widespread demonstrations due to allegations of institutional corruption. The protests have been fueled by long simmering frustration with President Vucic – who has been in a position of high power within the Serbian government since 2012. Protesters are





gathering daily to march and continue to engage in blockades of key bridges and roads in the capital of Belgrade. President Vucic has accused demonstrators of being funded by foreign powers – which has not been substantiated. Although the protests are usually peaceful, an incident of a vehicular ramming into protesters occurred this week – the third of its kind in recent weeks. Protests are unlikely to stop as calls for President Vucic to resign and the establishment of an interim government grow stronger. Travelers should avoid non-essential proximity to any protests that could become targets for violence or serve as inflection points in the coming weeks.



## APAC

**Australia: Expect increased security presence near Jewish neighborhoods after police stop potential terror attack.** On 29 January, police foiled an attempted mass casualty attack on the Jewish community in northwest Sydney (New South Wales state) after discovering a trailer filled with explosives and a list of Jewish targets. Police announced that the explosives were potentially stolen from a mining site and would have had a blast radius of 40 meters if detonated. The trailer's owner was already in custody for separate charges, though police have arrested additional suspects and are continuing the investigation. Antisemitic violence, including arson and graffiti on cars, synagogues, and homes, as well as verbal assaults on individuals, has been on the rise in Australia since the war in Gaza began in 2023. This foiled attack marks a major attempted escalation of previous antisemitic actions and highlights the possibility for increasingly violent attacks in the future. Travelers should exercise heightened vigilance near Synagogues and in Jewish communities.

**Australia: Exercise caution and expect disruption amid intense flooding persisting in north Queensland.** Since 1 February, the northeast region has experienced torrential rain that has resulted in severe flooding. Six suburbs of Townsville – the largest regional city in the northeast – have been designated black zones, indicating a high risk for deadly flooding. Meteorologists expect the weather system will ease after 4 February but warn that further rainfall is possible. Evacuations have been issued, but emergency services are still overwhelmed with requests for urgent assistance. Lingering disruptions to roads and railways over the coming days should be expected. Travelers should follow the directions of local authorities and avoid areas with dangerous conditions.





**India: Stampede in Uttar Pradesh state highlights underlying risks surrounding major religious festivals.** On 29 January, a stampede occurred at the Sanga Nose holy site in Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh state), where the Ganga and Yamuna rivers converge, killing at least 30 and injuring more as devotees stormed barricades set up for crowd control in a rush to bathe in the waters. The stampede occurred on Mauni Amavasya, one of the holiest bathing days during Moha Kumbh, a 6-week Hindu festival that occurs every 12 years. The festival is expected to attract over 400 million people – one of the largest religious gatherings in the world. Religious festivals in India have a long history of deadly stampedes due to large numbers of attendees and poor crowd control. In response to this latest incident, police have increased their presence and barred vehicles from the entire festival. Travelers should exercise heightened situational awareness if visiting major religious festivals.