



Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 7 JUL – 14 JUL 2023



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Week 29: 7 July – 14 July 2023

Executive Summary

- Further heavy rain is forecast for the north-eastern **United States** which will very likely hinder ongoing flood responses.
- Hurricane Calvin is tracking westwards in the Pacific Ocean towards **Hawaii** and could make landfall on the Island of Hawaii (Big Island) as a Tropical Depression by 18-19 July.
- Heavy rainfall is also forecast for much of **Colombia, Venezuela, Peru,** and northern **Brazil** which will likely result in localised flooding and landslides.
- Temperatures in **Italy** and southern **Spain** will be notably elevated during the next reporting period.
- Political opposition have called for a third day of demonstrations to occur in **Kenya** on 19 July.
- Al-Shabaab and Somali government activity is likely to remain elevated in the **Kenyan border region** over the coming weeks.
- Much of **South Asia** will very likely continue to report fatal flooding.



Figure 1: Significant activity identified during the current reporting period (7 - 14 July 2023)

AMER

- 1 Extreme weather across the United States
- 2 Several security related incidents across Mexico
- 3 Tensions rising in Guatemala ahead of presidential run-off

EMEA

- 4 Israeli judicial reform bill passes first vote
- 5 Senior IS figure killed in Syria
- 6 Suicide attack in southeast Iran
- 7 Sudan peace summits
- 8 Anti-government protests spark violence across Kenya
- 9 Al-Shabaab activity reported in Somali-Kenya border region

APAC

- 10 Severe flooding across several areas of south Asia
- 11 North Korea launches ICBM amid accusations of US incursions
- 12 Fractious week in Thai politics



Americas (AMER)

United States. The last reporting period has seen several extreme weather events take place across the country. The northeast of the country has suffered extremely heavy rainfall, with parts of New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut, experiencing as much as 20 centimetres of rain between 9-11 July. Vermont was most impacted, with ‘catastrophic’ flooding blocking major roads in the state capital Montpelier and search teams having to rescue hundreds of people from their homes and vehicles. Flooding was not exclusive to the northeast, with the Mayor of Louisville, Mississippi, declaring a state of emergency after nearly a foot of rain fell over several hours, causing flash flooding. In the south, a severe heatwave stretching from California to South Florida has also been breaking temperature records. The National Weather Service at one point had excessive heat advisories, watches, and warnings in place for roughly 100 million Americans. Tornadoes were also widely recorded across central states, with at least eight tornadoes touching down in Illinois on 12 July, forcing O'Hare International and Chicago Midway International airports to halt air traffic.

So What? Climate scientists argue that the growing frequency and intensity of severe weather across the United States is symptomatic of global, human-driven climate change. The flooding in Vermont is the worst since Hurricane Irene reached the state in 2011, whilst Phoenix, Arizona, has exceeded 43 degrees Celsius for 15 straight days and will break a city record if this streak continues past 18 days. Extreme weather will very likely become more frequent across the United States in the longer term. In the short term, more heavy rain is forecast for New England, New York, and Pennsylvania, in the coming days, which will very likely hinder the ongoing recovery efforts and exacerbate the damage already present. In the south, the sweltering conditions are expected to worsen over the weekend and continue into next week and it is likely that heat related medical incidents will place the emergency services under increased strain.

Mexico. On 11 July, six people were killed and a further 12 people were injured as a bomb targeting security officials exploded in Tlajomulco, Jalisco. Jalisco state attorney general's office received an anonymous call informing about the location of human remains, and when security officials arrived to investigate, the device was detonated. Elsewhere, the United States Treasury Department imposed sanctions on ten Mexican nationals and one company for their alleged involvement in the Sinaloa Cartel's fentanyl operations. Extreme weather has also affected the country, with significant flooding reported in Mexico City and record temperatures recorded across northern states.

So What? Whilst there have been numerous security incidents in southwest Mexico in recent months, the use of explosives and number of casualties increase the significance of the attack in Jalisco. Concerningly, this attack follows a similar incident in late June where security forces in the neighbouring state of Guanajuato went to investigate a phone tip regarding a vehicle, which exploded when they arrived. It is likely therefore that this method of violence is being adopted by local actors and similar attacks should be expected in the near future. The United States Treasury sanctions highlights Washington's renewed commitment to tackling their domestic fentanyl issue. High ranking officials from both Mexico and the United States are set to meet this month, and both are hoping to bring China, where the majority of the drug originates, into the fold to help deal with the issue. Expect an uptick in Mexican security operations targeting these networks in the coming months. The heatwaves being experienced in the north normally occur in April and May, and so this extended, more intense season is likely a factor of climate change, as is the unseasonal heavy rain and flooding in Mexico City. It is highly likely that Mexico will be subject to more extreme weather like this in the coming years.

Guatemala. On 12 July, Guatemala's electoral court confirmed that Bernardo Arevalo and Sandra Torres would advance to the second-round run-off in the presidential election. Later that day however, a Guatemalan court ordered the suspension of Arevalo's political party, Semilla, over irregularities in the registration of its members. Arevalo vowed to still run and said the party would immediately appeal the decision. The following day, Guatemala's top court suspended this decision and reinstated Semilla's rights to campaign for Arevalo during the upcoming campaign.



So What? The initial results had been delayed after the ruling party and its allies alleged irregularities in voting, triggering a review of the ballots, in a move which had been widely criticised by international actors. It is likely that the suspension of Semilla was politically motivated, with the move again widely condemned by the international community. Torres unexpectedly urging the popular vote to be respected and suspending her campaign in solidarity, in combination with the international focus, likely contributed to Guatemala’s top court overruling the lower court so quickly. Current polls and analysis suggest that the election itself is highly likely to be a very close contest between Arevalo and Torres and therefore expect political volatility to remain heightened in the run up to the 20 August vote, and in the following days as the result is scrutinised.

AMER Regional Forecast. Israeli President Isaac Herzog will visit the White House on 18 July, before addressing a joint session of the United States congress on 19 July. The visit comes against a backdrop of colder relations between Washington and Tel Aviv over Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s controversial judicial reform proposals and a significant spike in violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian groups. The issue of West Bank settlement will also likely be discussed.

Tensions between the United States and Cuba will also very likely remain elevated in the short term, after Cuban authorities labelled the presence of a United States nuclear-powered submarine at its military base at Guantanamo Bay a “provocative escalation”. Relations are already strained following recent suggestions that China is attempting to strengthen ties with Havana.

Whilst violent incidents in Mexico appear to be trending upwards, Colombia is likely to see a decrease in armed violence in the short term after the Central General Staff of FARC and the Colombian government agreed to re-establish peace talks and the ELN confirmed that they would lift the armed strike across Choco state. Such a decrease in activity will very likely remain vulnerable to further deterioration in peace negotiations at the political level.

Much of the AMER region will likely continue to face the impacts of extreme weather events over the coming reporting period, particularly Brazil, Mexico, and the United States, which have all reported notable flooding during the week. Heavy rainfall is also forecast for much of Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, and northern Brazil over the next reporting period, which will also likely result in localised flooding and landslides in remote regions.

Hurricane Calvin is tracking westwards in the Pacific Ocean towards Hawaii. Calvin could make landfall on the Island of Hawaii (Big Island) as a Tropical Depression by 18-19 July which would still very likely bring strong winds and rainfall. Meanwhile, subtropical storm Don also continues to build in the mid-Atlantic.



Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

Israel. Large-scale anti-government protests have resumed across the country after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu resumed efforts to pass controversial judicial reforms. Thousands of demonstrators were present in Tel Aviv on 8 July, whilst on 11 July protestors blocked major highways across the country and more than ten thousand gathered outside of Ben Gurion airport after Netanyahu's reform bill secured initial approval in the Knesset. On 12 July, amidst heavy security the President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mahmoud Abbas conducted a scheduled visit to the Jenin refugee camp, which had been raided by Israeli forces between 3-5 July. Also on 12 July, three Hezbollah militants were injured as Israeli forces prevented them from damaging infrastructure near the border town of Metula, Israel.

So What? Netanyahu's coalition were widely expected to win the vote given that they possess a majority (64) of the Knesset's 120 seats. Two subsequent votes will now be required before the bill will be written into law, with protests highly likely to intensify alongside the votes. Protest leaders have promised to intensify demonstrations over the coming weeks regardless, with national strikes becoming increasingly possible. The visit to Jenin was Abbas' first since 2012 and prompted a mixed reception from Palestinians in the city. The PA is facing a crisis of credibility due to its inability to deal with Palestinian militancy, Israeli settlements, and its controversial security arrangement with Israel. This has led to increasing criticism of the PA for failing protect Palestinians and driven a surge in support for Palestinian militant groups across the West Bank, although particularly in Jenin. Abbas' visit is therefore unlikely to improve these perceptions. The incident near Metula follows several recent incidents along the Lebanese border, which are very likely to continue given the territorial disputes remain unresolved.

Syria. The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed on 7 July that senior Islamic State (IS) leader Usamah al-Muhajir was killed during a United States airstrike in eastern Syria. The exact location of the strike has not been released and no further details are known.

So What? The killing of al-Muhajir continues the recent trend of senior IS figures being targeted by United States airstrikes in Syria, although this latest strike is unusual in that it occurred in the northeast whereas other recent strikes occurred in the Idlib and Aleppo Governorates in the northwest. No exact details were published of al-Muhajir's role within IS, although CENTCOM has assured that it is major blow to the group's logistics and operational planning in eastern Syria. The airstrike was also notable for highlighting a growing tension between the United States and Russian military operations in Syria, with CENTCOM revealing that the MQ-9 Reaper drones used to target al-Muhajir had been harassed by Russian fighter jets in the region on 7 July. The Pentagon declassified two videos that showed Russian fighter jets dropping parachute flares in front of the drones, causing them to undertake evasive manoeuvres. Harassment from Russian aircraft has also previously resulted in the downing of a United States MQ-9 Reaper drone over the Black Sea in March 2023. Similar actions from Russian aircraft will almost certainly prompt further tensions between the two militaries in the Syrian theatre over the coming months.

Iran. On 8 July, two police officers were killed after armed individuals attacked Police Station 16 in Zahedan, Sistan-Baluchestan province. At least two assailants reportedly detonated explosive vests during the attack. State media reported that all four attackers were killed by responding security forces. The attack was subsequently claimed by Baluch militant group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice).

So What? Attacks involving suicide bombings are rare in Iran, with the most recent example also occurring in Sistan-Baluchestan province, when at least 27 Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) personnel were killed in an attack on the Khash-Zahedan road in February 2019. That attack was also claimed by Jaish al-Adl. The group, which is known to be affiliated with al-Qaeda and to operate from safe havens in Pakistan, has cited the violent suppression of protestors by Iranian security forces in Zahedan in September 2022 (also referred to as the Zahedan Massacre or Bloody Friday) as justification for the attack on 8 July. The incident is likely to prompt an uptick in security force operations across the province in the short term, although complex attacks such as that at the police station are likely to remain rare.



Sudan. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) members met in Addis Ababa on 10 July, to discuss implementing a peace process for the war in Sudan. Following the summit, IGAD has confirmed it would ask the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF) to consider a possible humanitarian and peacekeeping deployment to Sudan. Egypt also hosted a summit between regional states on 13 July, seeking to implement a three-month ceasefire and open routes for aid deliveries. Fighting continues across the country, with multiple airstrikes reported in Khartoum and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) claiming to have inflicted heavy losses on SPLM-N forces in the Blue Nile region. The Sudanese civil aviation authority has also extended the closure of Sudan's airspace until 31 July, with the exception of humanitarian aid and evacuation flights with permission from authorities.

So What? Whilst the IGAD summit is a positive step towards an African solution for regional insecurity, it is not yet clear whether EASF members possess the political will required to quickly deploy a peacekeeper force to Sudan. Similarly, despite the African Union's Expanded Mechanism being implemented to ostensibly coordinate regional, continental, and international efforts towards achieving peace in Sudan, it is becoming increasingly apparent that multiple overlapping attempts to broker ceasefire agreements may in fact be counterproductive. Egypt is not a member of the EASF or IGAD, yet almost certainly has a strong interest in restoring Sudanese internal security on terms favourable to Cairo. These interests may not necessarily align with those in Addis Ababa or other regional capitals. What is clear is that previous attempts at finding a diplomatic resolution to the conflict have not yielded any enduring, tangible results, and this is highly likely to remain true until the military situation on the ground in Sudan compels either the SAF or Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to negotiate.

Kenya. Violent nationwide protests on 7 and 12 July have resulted in the arrest of over 300 people and at least nine fatalities, according to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. The worst unrest has been reported in Nairobi, where Azimio supporters have demonstrated in large numbers and have blocked major highways across the city. An extensive police presence has been deployed across the capital, clashing with protestors at Kamukunji Grounds and Jogoo Road. Tear gas and water cannons have also been deployed against demonstrators across the country. Demonstrations were reported in at least 20 counties, including Nakuru county which is considered to be predominantly supportive of President Ruto's ruling Kenya Kwanza party. On 13 July, the opposition called for a third day of demonstrations to occur on 19 July, with Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna further calling for three consecutive days of protest between 17-19 July.

So What? In an effort to curtail the violence, the government plan to introduce additional legislation (The Assembly, Demonstration, Picketing and Petition Bill, 2023) which is currently at the committee stage. The bill seeks to place considerable restrictions on freedom of assembly and demonstration, and imposes financial and legal constraints on the protest organisers for any damage caused during demonstrations. The Bill further proposes that protestors participating in an outlawed protest or assembly should face one-year imprisonment, whilst also granting additional powers to police and security forces to prohibit assembly or demonstration if imminent danger or breach of public peace is suspected. It remains to be seen whether the Ruto government can pass this legislation quickly enough to prevent further rounds of unrest. That said, it remains realistically possible that a temporary agreement will be reached between the opposition and the government in the coming weeks, as has happened after previous rounds of unrest in April and May. However, periodic unrest is very likely to return and should be actively anticipated regardless of any agreements between the opposition and government. Opposition groups are clear in signposting when protests will occur, evidenced by the advanced warning of planned activity for 17-19 July, although once demonstrations do occur it is also clear that violence can become uncontrollable and escalate quickly. Fatalities at protests is symptomatic of increasingly heavy-handed security force responses and likely suggests further protests will result in civilian casualties. The Kenyan interior ministry has noted it would arrest and prosecute opposition leaders it suspects of provoking violence, which will also likely exacerbate tensions and unrest.

Somalia. On 9 July, the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) confirmed it had conducted three overnight airstrikes against al-Shabaab fighters engaging Somali National Army (SNA) forces in a remote area near Afmadow, approximately 100km north of Kismayo. AFRICOM assess at least 10 al-Shabaab fighters were killed, with no civilian casualties. The Somali government subsequently claimed to have killed over 40 alleged al-Shabaab members during aerial and ground attacks in Welmaro, near Afmadow. Further north, on 13 July al-Shabaab

fighters captured a Somali military base in Geriley, Gedo region, that had been recently handed over by Kenyan forces. Three Somali soldiers and one civilian were reportedly killed during the attack.

So What? The base in Geriley is located around 12km from the Kenyan border and had only been handed over to Somali regional forces on 29 June. Al-Shabaab had also previously attempted to attack the base on 4 July, although on that occasion had been repelled. The incident at Geriley continues the recently observed trend of al-Shabaab targeting bases occupied by Somali or African Union (ATMIS) forces, whilst both this incident and the Somali operation near Afmadow are also both consistent with elevated al-Shabaab operational tempo in southern Somalia and across the border in northeastern Kenya. On 10 July, al-Shabaab fighters reportedly killed several Kenyan special forces during an ambush at Kiwanja in Garissa County, in their second cross-border attack in recent weeks. Such activity possibly indicates a concerted effort from al-Shabaab to exploit security vacuums following the withdrawal of Kenyan forces from several bases along the Kenyan border region. Consequently, al-Shabaab and Somali government activity is likely to remain elevated in this region over the coming weeks.

EMEA Regional Forecast. Opinion polling in Spain suggests that a right-wing government is likely to be elected in the 23 July general election, after the conservative People's Party (PP) extended its lead over the ruling Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). PP will very likely require the support of the right-wing Vox party to govern. Elsewhere in Europe, the Netherlands is likely to undergo a period of political volatility following the collapse of Prime Minister Mark Rutte's government over immigration issues. Rutte has noted he would not stand when elections are held later this year, although would lead an interim government until then. The United Kingdom's Conservative government will face the prospect of losing three seats in Parliament in by-elections scheduled for 20 July. The political situation in Kosovo also appears to be easing, after Kosovan authorities pledged to scale down police presence in regions where tensions have been elevated in recent weeks.

In Africa, Gabon President Ali Bongo has confirmed that he will seek a third term in the general election on 26 August. Both of Bongo's previous election victories were disputed by opposition groups, with the 2016 result prompting violence between protestors and police. Anticipate unrest to emerge in the weeks preceding the election, which will very likely spike if Bongo secures re-election. Zimbabwe will also face the prospect of violent unrest if the main opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) continues to face legal challenges ahead of the 23 August election. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the apparent assassination of a prominent opposition political figure has prompted anti-government protests in Kinshasa which will very likely raise tension in the short term.

Tension is also likely to remain elevated in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region over the next reporting period, following several low-profile incidents in the past week, including the Azerbaijani state border service closing a checkpoint between Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region after accusing Armenia of using Red Cross vehicles to smuggle goods.

Environmental risks have intensified during the reporting period and appear set to endure across the short term, as many countries within the region enter the peak summer months and rainy seasons. Significant flooding will likely continue to impact coastal regions surrounding the Black Sea, with heavy rain warnings issued for 12 Turkish districts.

Mainland Europe is also set to record particularly high temperatures in the immediate term, with heatwave conditions across southern Europe and northern Africa likely to bring temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius. Temperatures in Italy and southern Spain will be notably elevated during the next reporting period.

Eruptive activity at Iceland's Fagradalsfjall volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula has subsided over the course of the week, although there remains some potential for further volcanic activity and toxic gas emissions. A large-scale eruption is highly unlikely to occur in the immediate term.



Asia Pacific (APAC)

South Asia. Severe flooding has affected several regions across southern Asia in the last reporting period. India has been significantly impacted; New Delhi has recorded 113 percent above average rainfall so far this month, with the Yamuna River surging to a 45-year high, whilst at least 22 people have died in floods and landslides in the northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab. Neighbouring Pakistan, particularly the states at the foot of the Himalayas, are also experiencing a notably heavy monsoon season. In southwest China, flash flooding in Chongqing killed at least 15, and in Wanzhou district a record-breaking maximum daily rainfall of 227 millimetres was recorded. Widespread flooding was also reported in Mongolia, Japan, and South Korea.

So What? Many factors contribute to flooding, but experts say climate change caused by global warming makes extreme rainfall more likely. Given the record-breaking flooding seen in recent years across the region, most notably in Pakistan in 2022, and this pattern continuing into 2023, this is almost certain to be true. The lack of infrastructural development in rural areas of these countries often exacerbates the damage and disruption caused by such extreme weather. In Himachal Pradesh for example, over 700 roads and key highways have been closed due to landslides. Across the affected areas in India, Pakistan and China, all education services, public transport, and large gatherings have been suspended. With the above average rainfall forecast to continue in the coming weeks, it is highly likely that the flooding will worsen, and as these extreme weather events become more frequent, local populations may be forced to consider relocating from higher-risk areas in the coming years.

North Korea. On 12 July, North Korea fired an intercontinental ballistic missile from around Pyongyang into the Sea of Japan. The missile flew for 74 minutes at an altitude of 6,000 kilometres and a range of 1,000 kilometres, before landing in waters outside the Japanese exclusive economic zone (EEZ). North Korean officials have also accused the United States of airspace violations and warned that they may shoot down further intrusions made by surveillance drones and planes.

So What? This latest launch is North Korea's longest missile flight-time to date, signalling that they are making continual process with their weapons technology. It was later confirmed by North Korean media that the missile used was a Hwasong-18 solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile, the second time this particular projectile had been launched. It is almost certain that the launch was timed to coincide with a meeting between South Korean and Japanese leaders at the NATO summit in Lithuania, and a trilateral meeting between United States, South Korean, and Japanese military officials in Hawaii. Pyongyang regularly conducts missile tests to coincide with notable regional geopolitical events, or to signal displeasure with activity by regional states, with this latest launch no different. Tensions will very likely remain elevated in the short term, particularly given the United States and South Korea will convene their bilateral Nuclear Consultative Group in the next reporting period.

Thailand. Pita Limjaroenrat and his Move Forward party failed to secure enough votes in the bicameral legislature to form a government and assume the role of prime minister. Pita received 325 votes, 51 short of the required majority. Other developments this week saw two separate legal complaints against Pita gather momentum and following the vote, Pita and Move Forward announced a plan to try and curb the power of the military-appointed Senate.

So What? The political tension this week had been widely expected and Pita's potential route to prime minister was always going to be tough, despite winning May's election and gathering an eight-party alliance of 312 seats out of 500 democratically elected seats. Pita's anti-establishment, reformist agenda has highly likely contributed to the legal situation he finds himself in and it is very likely that these issues will continue to negatively impact his chances of becoming prime minister. Whilst it is unlikely that Pita will secure the required support in the next parliamentary vote on 19 July, Move Forward claim that dozens of senators abstained instead of voting against Pita in the initial vote, suggesting they were acting under duress, and other elected politicians may also vote in favour of him in order to respect the electoral process if it looks like the military will again look to seize control.



Regardless, it is almost certain that Thai politics faces further turmoil in the coming weeks, and with pro-democracy groups already calling for protests, there is potential for civil unrest to occur.

APAC Regional Forecast. The next reporting period sees several geopolitical meetings take place that could lead to developments for the region. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Indonesia will almost certainly see the internal conflict in Myanmar high on the agenda, although consensus on how to move forward on the issue remains unlikely to be reached. The summit will also likely see broader geopolitical issues play out with representatives of Russia, the United States, and China, all in attendance. The European Union (EU) and Japan will hold a summit on 13 July with the Ukraine conflict and China highly likely to be discussed, and the G20 Finance Ministers meeting is set to take place in Gujarat, India on 14 July.

In Pakistan, Imran Khan's bail has been extended to 19 July, which will likely be extended again in order to stave off potential civil unrest. If Khan is made to appear in court, protests are highly likely to occur with associated violence a realistic possibility.

With Taiwan's annual military drills scheduled for the end of the month, it is almost certain that China will continue to conduct military shows of force in the region during the coming weeks. This will highly likely take the form of an increased frequency of aerial and naval incursions into, and transits close to, Taiwanese airspace and Exclusive Economic Zone, respectively. Germany will send military personnel to Australia for the first time, as part of joint drills alongside 12 other nations from 22 July – 4 August, underlining Berlin's increased focus on the Indo-Pacific amid rising tensions with China.

The first South Korea-United States Nuclear Consultative Group meeting will take place in Seoul on 18 July and given the pattern of response from North Korea to similar developments in recent months it is realistically possible that this could elicit another missile launch from Pyongyang.

Environmentally, the region will be focussed on the impact of the ongoing flooding affecting several nations. Japan, South Korea, China, Mongolia, India, and Pakistan will highly likely experience continued flooding in the coming days, with flooding in northern India likely to prove fatal. In the Philippines, the Mayon Volcano is continuing to exhibit seismic activity and the potential remains for an eruption in the near future.