



Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 12 APR – 19 APR





Global Intelligence Summary

Week 15: 12 April – 19 April

Executive Summary

- The trial of former President Trump in the **US** will **likely** result in civil unrest and may increase the chances of violent extremist actions.
- **Iranian** and **Israeli** counterstrikes have **almost certainly** increased fears of escalation but efforts towards de-escalation will **likely** be pursued.
- In **Niger**, the junta’s announcement that US military personnel must leave the country is a **likely** precursor of increased future Russian influence.
- The live-streamed stabbing of a bishop in Sydney, **Australia** is **highly likely** indicative of a growing trend of radicalised individuals exploiting social media for publicity.

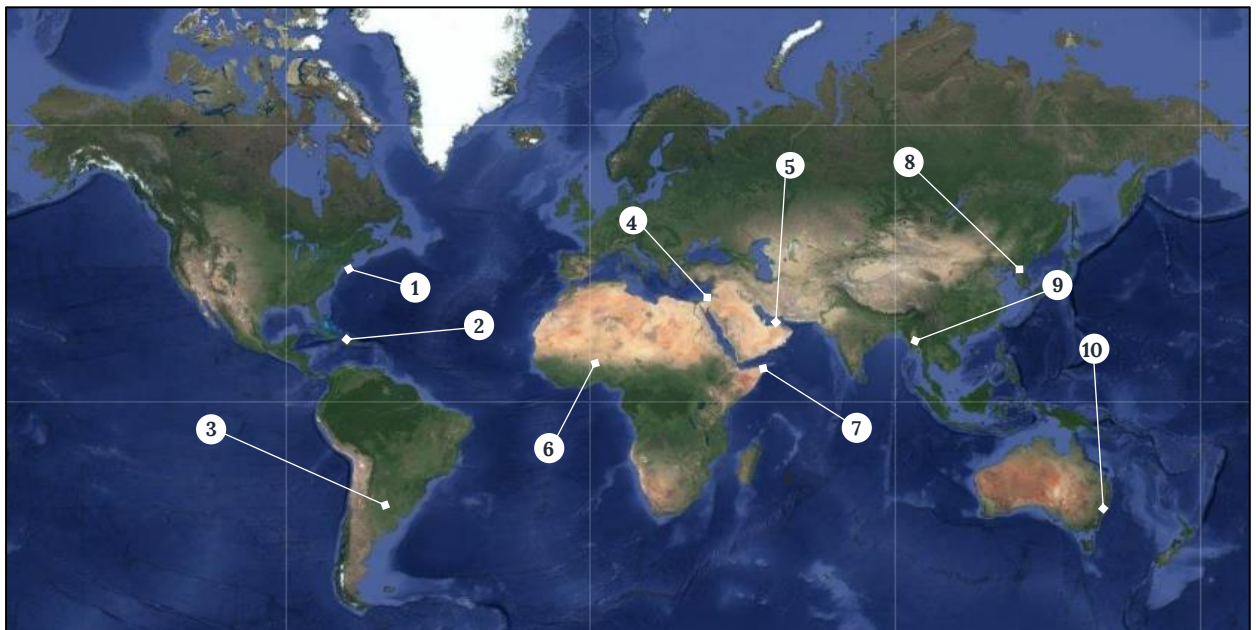


Figure 1: Significant activity identified during the current reporting period.

AMER

- 1 USA:** Trump trial begins in New York
- 2 Haiti:** Transitional Council established
- 3 Argentina:** Milei secures first defence procurement

EMEA

- 4 Israel and Iran:** Rivals trade blows as fears of escalation mount
- 5 UAE and Oman:** Flash floods paralyse Gulf states
- 6 Niger:** Junta accelerates US departure, Russian entry
- 7 Somalia:** Pirates release hijacked ship for USD 5 million

APAC

- 8 North Korea:** US and allies push for sanctions monitoring
- 9 Myanmar:** Junta moves may prelude ceasefire negotiations
- 10 Australia:** Two stabbing attacks shock Sydney





Americas (AMER)

USA:

Trump trial begins in New York.

On 15 April, former US President Donald Trump arrived at a Manhattan courthouse for the first day of his criminal trial, which regards hush money payments he allegedly made to cover up potentially bad press during his 2016 campaign. It is the first time in US history that a former President is indicted on criminal charges. Trump also faces other proceedings regarding his alleged involvement in the 6 January 2021 attempted takeover of government buildings by some of his supporters, the alleged keeping of classified documents at his Florida properties, and the alleged attempts to subvert the 2020 election results in the state of Georgia.

Assessment: Despite the relative “lightness” of the charges compared to those covered in the other legal proceedings Trump is facing, this trial is likely to receive extremely high levels of attention by US media and especially by broadcasters aligned with Trump’s view. Trump’s 2024 presidential campaign has heavily invested in portraying the former President as being persecuted by the law, and large swathes of the Republican party have supported this angle by attacking the justice system. There is an inherently high risk of disruptions, protests and violence, including terrorism, associated with any trial involving a major political figure, and, in the case of Trump, these risks are likely even more notable. Accordingly, Manhattan is very likely to see an increased police presence, with possible impacts on local business and transport. Some domestic extremist groups will likely use the trial to stoke popular anger against government institutions, possibly to cause a repeat of the 6 January disorders. Even if an event of the same scale remains unlikely, it is possible that activists will seek to cause localised disruptions in Manhattan to coincide with some of the trial’s key dates. Single, radicalised Trump supporters may also be motivated by the trial to carry out attacks against public figures, including the presiding judge and jurors, and other public officials and Democrat politicians. Due to the ease of accessing different types of firearms in the United States, any “lone wolf” attacks are likely to pose a disproportionate risk to civilians and state officials. In case of a final sentence that is adverse to Trump’s camp, and especially one that prevents his participation in the November elections, these risks are almost certain to increase considerably. In this regard, an important threat is posed by the spread of disinformation by foreign agents. It is likely that adversarial states, firstly Russia, will seek to use the trial to bolster their information operations directed at destabilising the US political environment.

Haiti:

Transitional council established.

The planned Transitional Council that will have the difficult task of guiding the country’s transition from its present state to a stable democratic system has been officially established. Among its voting members are Haiti’s former central bank governor, some former diplomats and senators, and a representative of the private sector. Non-voting members include an evangelical pastor and a former World Bank official. Unexpectedly, Prime Minister Ariel Henry did not resign following the announcement.

Assessment: Henry’s missed resignation is likely a non-factor in the process, as the Prime Minister has essentially disappeared from Haiti’s political scene after remaining stranded in Puerto Rico while the country descended into chaos. Nevertheless, the Council’s functioning is not certain due to the ongoing situation within the country. After some leaders briefly repeated

statements demanding a political role in Haiti's future, the gangs that control much of the country have increased attacks on its institutions, damaging both government and religious buildings. These actions may reflect gang leaders' intention to further discourage the re-establishment of an administrative authority in the country, although it is unlikely that they are part of an overarching strategic plan or outlook. With Haitian institutions having essentially ceased to exist, the most likely avenue towards peace is offered by the Kenyan UN-backed contingent, which however is still frozen, despite international pressures that aim to expedite its deployment. To the Kenyan government, the mission likely appears both too costly and risky. While, under President William Ruto, the country has sought to gain more international relevance as a leader in the Global South, Kenyan officials are aware that the planned 1000-strong police force would most likely face an extremely difficult situation once deployed, made worse by the heavily armed gangs and the lack of institutions and infrastructure on which to rely to establish effective operations.

Argentina:

President Milei secures first major defence procurement.

Argentina has secured a deal with Denmark for the purchase of 24 F-16 multi-role fighter jets worth approximately USD 300 million which also includes the purchase of AIM-9 Sidewinder and AIM-120 AMRAAM air-to-air missiles. The purchase marks the first major defence procurement since the Milei administration came to power in December 2023. Milei has promised to strengthen the Argentine military despite facing multiple fiscal issues such as high inflation and currency devaluation. Milei has also promised to review and update Argentina's defence policy so that it better reflects the geopolitical environment, with his new policy focusing on more international collaboration with the United States and other Western nations.

Assessment: President Milei's decision to spend on defence at a time when his administration is cutting thousands of government jobs that have provoked large-scale demonstrations will likely prove highly unpopular with many ordinary Argentinians. The acquisition of F-16s will provide the Argentine Air Force with a supersonic capability which it has not had since it retired its Mirage III fighter jets in 2015. The purchase has raised concerns over Argentina's ability to reclaim the Falkland Islands from the United Kingdom by force, with Milei campaigning on establishing a roadmap that will achieve Argentine sovereignty of the disputed territory. However, the UK has established a permanent military presence on the islands since the end of the Falklands War in 1982. The Royal Air Force has a squadron of Eurofighter Typhoons on the Falklands which can be supported by further Typhoons and F-35s deployed from the UK's aircraft carriers- both of which are far more capable than the fourth-generation F-16s. Argentina's decision to purchase F-16s is likely more indicative of a foreign policy shift towards the West. Under the previous administration, Argentina was set to purchase the JH-17 fighter jets, produced jointly by China and Pakistan. This purchase was reflective of a wider policy of Argentina turning to China to improve its defence and economy that would have almost certainly perturbed Washington given the strategic implications that were likely to result from this partnership. China has made significant investments in Argentina across multiple sectors, including energy, infrastructure, agriculture, and technology, and has become one of Buenos Aires' largest trading partners. Washington has likely calculated that these investments have come with caveats that could threaten US power in the region in favour of China. Since 2018, the Chinese Deep Space Network has run a radio station in Neuquén Province. This organisation, although presented as a civilian research organisation, is suspected of reporting directly to the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force, an arm of the Chinese military. China has also attempted to establish a naval base in Ushuaia on the southern tip of Argentina. A Chinese base here would have major ramifications for the US and the region. China would likely use it to research and exploit undersea natural resources such as hydrocarbons and fish. It would also provide China with a logistics hub to extend its influence into Antarctica where it has recently established its fifth outpost and is suspected of gradually militarising the area. However, most importantly, it could enable Beijing's navy to control Drake's Passage - a strategic waterway between Argentina and Antarctica. This,

in theory, could enable China to block the US' Atlantic and Pacific-based fleets from providing mutual support in a time of war or heightened tensions- a scenario Washington will almost certainly not accept. Milei has also been highly critical of Chinese influence in Argentina and has attempted to diminish it, even campaigning on full alignment with the US. However, it is highly likely that Chinese influence in Argentina is so entrenched the new president will have to accept Beijing as a key strategic partner for the immediate future.

AMER Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.

On 16 April, the Russian Prosecutor General, Igor Krasnov, arrived in **Havana** to hold bilateral talks with his **Cuban** counterpart. Russia's isolation caused by the war in Ukraine has likely forced it to seek new alliances or strengthen old ones, with Krasnov's Cuban visit the first part of a tour of Latin America. Russia also maintains a major surveillance site in Cuba and has historically used the country to challenge the US in its near abroad, potentially stoking fears over military cooperation and the rebasing of Russian military assets on the island.

In response to **Ecuador's** raid on Mexico's embassy in Quito, **Honduras** has now recalled its top diplomat in Ecuador, citing concerns over what it perceives as Ecuador's flagrant disrespect of international law. The raid has resulted in widespread condemnation across Latin America and it is likely other countries will follow Honduras' move with **Venezuela** ordering the closure of its embassy in Quito on 16 April.

Venezuela has lost license 44, a US license that enabled Caracas to export oil to markets around the world and secure investment. The license was revoked after the Maduro regime failed to implement an electoral roadmap. The decision will likely scupper the Biden administration's attempts at rapprochement with Caracas and will likely harm the Venezuelan economy, where there is already a dire humanitarian crisis.

Recent projections from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicate that **Argentina's** inflation may fall to 150 per cent from almost 300 per cent as a result of the austerity measures introduced by President Javier Milei. Whilst this may improve the lives of many Argentinians and increase investor confidence, the curb of inflation has come to the backdrop of thousands of job cuts which have sustained civil unrest across the country.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

On 21 April, **Ecuadorians** will go to the polls to vote in a constitutional referendum that will include 11 questions focusing on national security, the justice system, migration and employment. The main objective of the Noboa government likely is to empower the armed forces in the country's fight against organised crime which has made Ecuador one of the murder capitals of the world. The referendum could see Ecuador emulate the draconian policies of El Salvador and provoke claims of human rights abuses.

On 16 April, Carlos Julio Rojas, a prominent **Venezuelan** journalist and activist was arrested by the country's authorities for alleged involvement in an assassination attempt on President Nicolas Maduro. Roja's detainment forms part of a wider series of arrests made against opposition figures and critics of the regime as Venezuela heads towards presidential elections in July. The US has announced that its renewal of Venezuelan sanctions relief is dependent on Caracas abiding by democratic norms during the election. However, recent indications are that Venezuela has no intent on allowing for free and fair elections and has likely been emboldened by its developing ties to Russia, China and Iran.

On 13 April, **Brazilian** authorities of **Para** state opened an investigation following the retrieval of a boat with around 20 bodies, believed to be migrants from Haiti. It is unusual for Haitian migrants to take sea routes towards Brazil, as stable neighbours, including the USA, are located closer to

the country. The boat may have missed its destination and then drifted south towards a remote part of Brazil's coastline.

After 30 years, **Argentinian** authorities attributed responsibility for the 1994 Buenos Aires Argentine Israelite Mutual Association AMIA bombing to Iran and Hezbollah, the deadliest attack of this type in the country's history. The announcement is likely politically significant, as it coincides with escalating Iran-Israel tensions and with the rule of President Javier Milei, who is one of the world's political leaders most vocally supportive of Israel. In a further signal of closeness to Tel Aviv, Milei recently appointed a rabbi as Argentina's ambassador to Israel, and is likely planning to move the country's embassy from Herzliya to Jerusalem. **Argentina** has also sealed a USD 300 million with Denmark to procure 24 F-16 fighter jets despite making huge cuts across other parts of government. The move could perturb the UK by offering Argentina a supersonic attack capability that could threaten the Falkland Islands.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook headquartered in **Menlo Park CA, US**, announced that it would scrap the internal data analysis tool CrowdTangle ahead of the US general elections, replacing it with a more limited alternative. Among its other uses, the monitoring instrument was used by journalists and researchers to track disinformation on Meta, thus helping increase the transparency of the online information space. It is possible that the decision will have negative repercussions on the extent of independent oversight of Meta's activities and operations.

Ecuador has suspended schools and non-essential public services after declaring a nationwide "energetic emergency" on 16 April. The emergency has led to widespread blackouts and incidents of electricity rationing, likely caused by a decrease in energy production from the country's hydroelectric dams due to a severe drought caused by the El Niño phenomenon. It is likely that criminal gangs will exploit the blackouts and incidents of civil unrest may be provoked if the energy supply isn't fully restored.

Chile has now recorded over 135 cases of Dengue fever, all of which it states have been imported as a result of regional travel. There were only 90 cases recorded in the whole of 2023, stoking fears that Chile may be the next country to succumb to South America's current Dengue epidemic where there are now almost four million estimated cases in 2024 as El Niño conditions favour the spread of mosquitoes.



Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

Israel and Iran:

Strategic rivals trade blows provoking fears of Middle East conflict.

On 13 April Iran launched a layered attack of uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs), cruise missiles and ballistic missiles against Israel in retaliation for the Israeli strike on the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Syria which killed 13 people, including prominent figures in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). The attack, called Operation True Promise, marked the first time Iran has directly attacked Israel from Iranian soil. According to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) chief spokesperson, Daniel Hagari, the attack consisted of more than 120 ballistic missiles, 170 UAVs and 30 cruise missiles. The vast majority of aerial threats were intercepted outside of Israeli territory with the help of American, British and French assets. The Jordanian military also intercepted some of the threats that entered its airspace, which it closed before the attack. Several Iranian ballistic missiles bypassed coalition military assets and penetrated Israel's advanced air defence systems, causing minor damage to the Nevatim air base, where IDF jets which bombed the Iranian embassy in Damascus are housed. The Iranian attack was combined with missile and UAV attacks from Iranian proxy forces such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMFs) in Iraq and Syria and the Houthis in Yemen. After the attack, Iran stated that the matter could be deemed concluded and threatened to strike Israeli and US assets in the region if Tel Aviv retaliated. Israeli allies, including the US and UK, pressured Israel into not retaliating due to the success of interceptions and the failure of the attack to cause any major damage or fatalities. However, on the night of 18-19 April, Israel launched a missile strike against a suspected Iranian airbase near Isfahan in central Iran, approximately 400km into Iran. Iran has claimed to have intercepted the strike, suggesting that it resulted in no material damage. Tehran has stated that there is no planned retaliation for the Israeli attack but has warned that any further Israeli "adventurism" will be met immediately and at the maximum level.

Assessment: Despite possessing a formidable arsenal of UAVs, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, the Iranian strike on Israel demonstrated major complications with targeting Israel, especially when conducted from Iran itself. Regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who have long been allied together against Tehran, are suspected of providing intelligence to Israel directly or indirectly through the US, which would have almost certainly been supplemented with intelligence from Israel's Western allies, especially given the degree of assets that have been deployed to the region to contain or deter any escalation. This intelligence provided Israel and its allies ample time to mobilise military assets and prepare air defences, resulting in the majority of threats being shot down over Iraq, Syria or Jordan before Israel had to rely on its advanced air defence systems. The sharing of intelligence, combined with Jordan intercepting Iranian weapon systems, indicates that Arab nations, despite their disdain for Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, are determined to avoid a major escalation. They are likely to persist in supporting Israel's defence efforts, albeit reluctantly, in order to mitigate Israel's potential response, which could provoke a more severe Iranian attack. Without Arab and Western involvement, it is almost certain that Iranian missiles and UAVs launched along multiple axes would have approached Israel in close succession. This would have likely overwhelmed Israel's layered short to long-range air defence network which consists of its Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow and Iron Beam systems. With several missiles penetrating this network, it is almost certain that without external assistance many more would have struck their intended targets, suggesting that Israel is dependent on external help when faced with an attack of this magnitude, despite its claims. Moreover, Iran likely learned lessons from this attack relating to Israeli air defence and could likely alter its tactics in a future attack to achieve greater penetration. There is also a realistic possibility that despite the size of the attack, Iran knew it would not breach Israeli air defence to the extent that it would warrant a

major Israeli retaliation. With no major damage or fatalities sustained it was unlikely that Israel would conduct a major attack, especially as all of Israel's allies had been attempting to persuade the Netanyahu administration to pursue de-escalation and likely felt they held the cards after providing protection to Israel and also being the source of Israeli military aid. However, Netanyahu's popularity at home is at an all-time low, with demonstrations in Israel a frequent occurrence. It is likely his administration calculated that a retaliatory strike on Iran itself would show strength, and more importantly, demonstrate Israel's capability. By conducting a limited strike which reportedly only involved a few missiles, Israel has been able to demonstrate that it has superior strike capabilities and can penetrate Iranian air defence which is almost certainly less technically advanced than its own and likely overstretched given the huge potential target area it needs to cover. This demonstration of capability, which was largely symbolic, has likely persuaded Iran to pursue de-escalation after publicly downplaying Israel's strike. Any further escalation could prompt an Israeli attack on Iran's long-coveted nuclear deterrent, one of Tehran's primary strategic objectives. Alternatively, it could result in the imposition of major Western sanctions on Iran, a scenario the regime will want to avoid given the recent protests in the country and indications that the regime's popularity is at an all-time low.

UAE and Oman:

Flash floods paralyse Gulf countries.

Persian Gulf countries have been hit by unprecedented storms, leading to widespread flooding and multiple deaths. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman were by far the most severely affected countries. The latter saw at least 18 fatalities, while, in the former, Dubai received almost two years' worth of rain on a single day (15-16 April). Flooding in Dubai led to the cancellation and delay of hundreds of flights as floodwater inundated the Dubai International Airport, as well as blocked roads and caused other forms of disruption and damage.

Assessment: The cause of the floods is likely a combination of the region's regular rainy season and climate change-related conditions, such as this year's particularly severe El Niño phenomenon. As the region usually sees very little precipitation, the impact of the extreme weather event was almost certainly amplified by a lack of drainage infrastructure, with local systems being quickly overwhelmed. The lack of infrastructure also likely delayed clearing operations, with key transport hubs like the Dubai airport continuing to struggle to progress through backlogs of flights throughout the week. Due to the area's importance for global businesses and finance, the floods' economic impact is likely to be felt in the coming months. At the same time, it is likely that the event, which follows other unusual weather phenomena observed in the region, will prompt long-term sector-specific changes. For instance, in the floods' aftermath, a series of reports emerged indicating that insurance companies are considering restructuring their operations and rates in the region, to better reflect an increase in climate-related risks. With extreme climate events of this type becoming more likely, the overall threat levels of the region may experience an increase in the medium term. Finally, the floods also resulted in a large increase in the spread of disinformation, especially on social media. Some users popularised a (disproven) theory according to which the heavy rains were a result of "cloud seeding" – the practice, occasionally used by Gulf states, of dispersing large quantities of vapourised chemicals in the atmosphere to cause localised showers. Moreover, in some online Islamist circles, the floods have been linked to eschatological narratives about the coming end times, or to themes of divine retribution for the ongoing Israel-Gaza war.

Niger:

Junta begins accelerating US departure, Russian entry.

After surprisingly announcing that the US would not be allowed to continue military operations in the country in March, the junta ruling Niger has accelerated the process of removing American assets from the country. On 14 April, thousands of protesters gathered in Niamey to demand the

departure of the few hundred remaining US troops. At the same time, the junta has welcomed around 100 Russian “military trainers”, in a clear sign of strengthening ties with Moscow.

Assessment: Since taking power in 2023, the junta has decoupled from Western powers, which have traditionally seen Niger as a useful base to strike Islamist terrorist groups that operate in the region. Predictably, France was the first power to be expelled, with Niger following the lead of other Sahel juntas like Mali’s. Paris still appears to most citizens and political leaders in the Sahel as a colonial power, also due to its enduring involvement in the region’s monetary and financial systems. The removal of French troops nevertheless did not immediately result in Niamey taking an identical stance towards Washington. It is possible that the junta, which sees Islamist terrorism as a vital threat and understands the importance of Western forces and technology to reduce its vulnerabilities in this area, sought to maintain American forces’ deterrent while planning a restructuring of its relations with the US. The March announcement likely represented the culmination of months of calculations, with the Niger junta likely seeking to assess the potential of alternative foreign security providers, including Russia. While both Moscow and Tehran have an economic interest in the country, which has important rare mineral deposits, their willingness to invest in bolstering Niamey’s security possibly clashed with more pressing issues in Ukraine and the Middle East respectively. The recent arrival of Russian military trainers and air defence systems to Niger follows a January agreement to increase military cooperation with Moscow and is significant as it likely represents evidence of a concrete Russian commitment in this area. It is likely that such a move is a prelude to greater Russian deployments in Niger. Rather than regular Russian forces, however, the Wagner Group (now operating under the name of Africa Corps) would most likely constitute the bulk of these future efforts. It is possible that the presence of Russian forces in Niger will have a positive impact on the junta’s capacity to limit terrorist action in the country, also helping it coordinate its efforts with those of neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso. However, access to Russian assets may increase the military government’s ability to stifle popular dissent and control civil society, possibly leading to worsening security conditions and increased risks for humanitarian activists, journalists, and foreign travellers in the country. Finally, it is possible that local extremist groups will take advantage of the window of opportunity created by the shift from Western to Russian involvement to increase the volume of their attacks and their recruitment efforts in the short term.

Somalia:

Somali pirates release hijacked ship for USD 5 million ransom.

On 14 April, the ship MV Abdullah, which had been hijacked in March by Somali pirates while en route to transport coal from Mozambique to the UAE, was finally released. According to various sources, the release was secured by paying a USD 5 million ransom. In recent months, the number of attacks by Somali pirates has spiked.

Assessment: Attacks by pirates in the waters near the Horn of Africa saw a period of high severity in the mid-2000s. Operations were carried out by local fishermen and ex-militiamen, often with simple technological devices and small and fast skiffs. By the mid-2010s, the increased presence of various navies in the area, as well as improvements in vessel defences, contributed to reducing the number of incidents significantly, and in January 2023 the Maritime Bureau (MB) lifted the Indian Ocean High-Risk Area (HRA) due to the decrease in attacks. The increase in attacks in late 2023 and 2024 is almost certainly caused by the perception of a decrease in the risks associated with piracy due to the departure of most international navies from the area following the Houthi campaign of strikes and hijackings in the Red Sea. Moreover, domestic dynamics in Somalia may also be driving an increase in piracy. The EU Atalanta mission identified the area of Eyl, in the Nugaal region of Puntland as the new hotspot for pirates operating off the coast of Somalia. Puntland is semiautonomous and its leaders are currently involved in a standoff with the central government over a constitutional reform proposal and over Mogadishu’s calls to shut down the Ethiopian consulate in the region, following increasing tensions between the two countries due to the Somaliland question. The administrative and political tensions may result in logistical and

intelligence difficulties at the ground level, possibly reducing resources meant to fight pirates on land, and allowing for more opportunities for at-sea operations. Moreover, the ongoing al-Shabaab offensive against the Somali government and security forces is very likely contributing to diverting resourced from anti-piracy operations. With tensions in the Red Sea likely to continue following the recent tit-for-tat strikes between Israel and Iran, there is a realistic possibility that other groups of pirates will continue attacking commercial shipping vessels in the northwest Indian Ocean.

EMEA Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.

Belgian authorities allowed a right-wing event to resume after the Mayor of a district of **Brussels** forced it to close citing threats to “public security”. The NatCon (short for National Conservatism) conference included speakers from the European and British right wing. The incident may result in some disruptions in the Saint Josse area of the city, and in Brussels more broadly.

In **Spain**, voters in the **Basque Country** will be going to the polls to elect the 13th Parliament of the Basque Autonomous Community. The conservative Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) and the far-left EH Bildu parties are likely to win the majority of seats, with polls indicating EH Bildu will win overall. The result is likely to provoke anger in Spain after EH Bildu recently refused to acknowledge ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, Basque Country and Freedom, in Basque) as a terrorist organisation despite a spate of attacks from the late 20th to early 21st century. Both parties are also separatist and may seek to exploit Spain’s current weak coalition government that includes Catalan separatists who were recently controversially pardoned.

The G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting took place on 16-19 April in **Capri, Italy**. The summit was characterised, in addition to the ongoing issue of arms procurement for Ukraine, by the question of sanctioning Tehran following its 13 April attack on Israel. While the US is pushing for a comprehensive new sanctions package targeting the Islamic Republic, G7 president Italy, as well as other European members, are likely pushing for limited sanctions on specific individuals. Italian authorities announced they plan to invite African, Argentinian, Brazilian and Indian leaders to the 13-15 June G7 Leaders’ Summit, which will be held in the Puglia region.

The **Croatian** parliamentary elections resulted in a victory for the ruling Conservative coalition, which however fell short of winning a simple majority. The Social Democratic Party (SDP), which in recent years has seemingly shifted to a more nationalistic and populist position under the leadership of President Zoran Milanović, finished second, and will likely play a major role in any coalition government. The SDP will likely use this positive result to turn Croatian foreign policy towards a more EU- and NATO-sceptic position.

On 14 April, the government of **Cyprus** suspended asylum applications as the island recorded more than 2,000 arrivals in the first months of 2024, a significant spike if compared to the 78 arrivals over the same period last year. The influx of migrants, mostly departing from **Lebanon**, is almost certainly due to the worsening regional conditions in the Middle East, and more specifically Lebanon’s own instability.

Georgia’s capital of **Tbilisi** and other cities have seen significant protests following the initial approval of a bill forcing organisations that receive funds from abroad to register as “foreign agents”. The legislation is perceived by demonstrators as similar to Russian laws that the Kremlin used to crack down on dissent, and is colloquially referred to as “the Russian law”. Georgia’s president, too, is against the bill and has threatened to veto it, which likely further reinforces the protesters’ position. If the law is approved following further discussions, it will almost certainly strain Georgia-EU relations.

The **Nigerian** power grid has collapsed repeatedly, leaving large parts of the country with no energy. The widespread system failures happened despite a recent tariff increase for users. The

power outages are likely due to a combination of logistical failures, lack of fuel, and poor infrastructure maintenance. Civil unrest in the affected areas is very likely.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

French President Emmanuel Macron stated that, if the security risk is too high, the Olympic Games' opening ceremony in **Paris** could be changed. The ceremony is scheduled to take place on the Seine and will see the various Olympic national teams sail on the river while an estimated 300,000 people watch from the riverbanks. The size of the ticketed audience admitted to the ceremony stands has already been halved due to security concerns. Macron's remarks likely hint at significant pressures being put on the French government by security and police officials, due to the massive risks of terrorism associated with the Olympics. In fact, due to Paris' ideological and political significance, as well as the French government's unpopularity with Islamists, an extremism-related incident (most likely a low-complexity action by a lone actor) is extremely likely to take place during the games.

Russian peacekeepers have begun their withdrawal from the disputed territory of **Nagorno-Karabakh** which was recently reclaimed by **Azerbaijan**. The withdrawal will almost certainly mean that Azerbaijan will gain full sovereign control of the territory and is likely a further indication of Russia's diminished influence in the Caucasus.

The ongoing conflict between herders and farmers in **Nigeria's** central regions, also fuelled by Islamist attacks further north, continued with a new wave of attacks in **Plateau state**. On 14 April, Fulani herdsmen killed at least 10 in an attack on the region's villagers. Due to a significant overstretch in the government's security assets, there is no real possibility of a cessation of hostilities that, albeit being mostly about land, are exacerbated by religious and ethnic differences.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

On 16 April, the day following the fifth anniversary of a fire that damaged much of Notre Dame, the Old Stock Exchange in **Copenhagen, Denmark** was almost destroyed by a blaze, while undergoing restoration works. The building is one of the Danish capital's most impressive historic landmarks, dating back to the 17th century. There is a high likelihood that the following weeks will see the spread of conspiracy theories surrounding the fire, possibly attributing responsibility to different political, ethnic or religious groups.

Floods were recorded in **Margate, South Africa**, leading to at least five deaths. The extreme weather event followed days of unusually high rains and may be linked with broader weather patterns.

On 13 April, **Egyptian** authorities detained a gas tanker after it became grounded in an ecologically sensitive part of the **Gulf of Aqaba**. No major environmental damages were reported at the time of writing, and the vessel was refloated without any signs of oil spills. There is a possibility that the vessel damaged local coral structures.



Asia Pacific (APAC)

North Korea:

US and APAC allies push for more monitoring of North Korea.

The US, Japan and South Korea are seeking ways to renew sanctions monitoring and enforcement against North Korea and have explored the option of establishing a new multi-national panel that sits outside of the UN's structure. The drive for renewed sanctions monitoring follows Russia's decision to reject the renewal of the UN panel of experts that has been tasked with monitoring the implementation of sanctions on Pyongyang for over 15 years, a vote which China abstained from.

Assessment: The decision to establish a new mechanism for North Korean sanctions monitoring will almost certainly be endorsed by regional US allies like Australia and New Zealand, and will likely gain traction in Europe. If a new multi-national panel is established outside of the UN, it may lack the same degree of legitimacy and will invariably be dismissed by Russia and China as too Western-leaning and driven by Washington's foreign policy. However, if divorced from the bureaucracy of the UN, it may be afforded more flexibility and autonomy which could enable quicker decision-making. Beijing and Moscow will invariably protest against any oversight being conducted outside of the UN and will use humanitarian suffering as an excuse to ease North Korean sanctions. Russia and China will likely perceive a new panel as an attack on their sovereignty or influence and will suggest that it will lead to increased tensions in the region. More importantly, they will likely fear that it will scrutinise their relationship with Pyongyang. The Kremlin has been exploiting North Korea's isolation to develop a relationship built on military cooperation. This has reportedly involved Moscow exchanging military expertise and hardware for North Korean ammunition and weaponry to be used in Ukraine, which Russia vehemently denies. With Russia being a world leader in nuclear, missile, submarine, electronic warfare, satellite and various other technologies, this relationship has the potential to greatly improve North Korea's offensive capabilities. Long-term it could turn Pyongyang into more of an expeditionary force capable of projecting force way beyond its near abroad, a development that will almost certainly raise tensions in the Asia-Pacific and potentially ignite an arms race, with countries like Japan and Australia recently investing heavily in defence. There is a realistic possibility that both Russia and China may tacitly tolerate North Korea's military buildup to counterbalance the emerging alliance between the United States, South Korea, and Japan, viewing it as a strategic hedge against increasing Western influence in the region. Allowing North Korea to become more of a military threat could also strain US resources, forcing Washington to bolster its military presence in the region to counterbalance the growing threat, diverting attention and resources away from other global priorities which Moscow and Beijing could exploit.

Myanmar:

Junta's actions may hint at future end to the conflict.

During this reporting period, the junta controlling Myanmar moved former State Counsellor of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, from her prison to house arrest at an undisclosed location. The military government's official reason for moving Suu Kyi was her deteriorating health, currently threatened by a severe heatwave. Additionally, it released more than 3,000 prisoners, including some associated with the rebel forces, for a local New Year holiday. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states expressed deep concern regarding recent clashes in Myawaddy, Kayin State, and Rakhine State, that have led to civilian displacement. They called for

an immediate cessation of violence, urging all parties to exercise restraint and uphold international humanitarian law.

Assessment: Since the beginning of the year, the Myanmar junta has suffered a series of major defeats, and its forces have increasingly been plagued by low morale and extremely high levels of desertion, with entire units having been reported as passing to the side of the rebel insurgents or fleeing to neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh and Thailand. Moreover, recent conscription measures have partially backfired, with hundreds of youths choosing to join the rebel side rather than government forces. With the recent loss of the strategically crucial border town of Myawaddy, it seems very likely that junta forces have lost the initiative, and are unable to defend key terrain against the coalition of rebel groups opposing them. It is possible that the two announcements, that of Suu Kyi's house arrest and the mass release of prisoners, were made to reflect this reality. A possible scenario sees junta leaders realise that the civil conflict is essentially lost and aim to obtain political amnesty or exile in exchange for a peaceful transition of authority. The moves could be aimed at sending a signal to the insurgents' side, while also attempting to build popular support. Suu Kyi is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and, despite facing important international backlash due to her response to the Rohingya genocide carried out by Myanmar's military, is still extremely popular at home, and possibly acts as the unofficial leader of the pro-democracy movement. In this sense, the junta's official version of the move being prompted by worries about Suu Kyi's health is credible, as the military leaders have a clear interest in preserving the well-being of their political adversary in preparation for a new stage of the conflict, characterised by peace-building and negotiation. ASEAN's intervention and increasingly outspoken communications underscore a general regional interest in a cessation of hostilities, possibly indicating an acceptance of power transition as the most viable path forward. It is possible that the coming months will see hostilities decrease in intensity and a joint declaration concerning the beginning of the first stage of ceasefire talks.

Australia:

Two stabbing attacks shock Sydney.

On 15 April, an Islamist stabbing attack took place in Sydney, Australia. One individual entered a Church during mass and attacked a bishop, wounding others before being apprehended. The victim, who survived, is a popular influencer on social media, where some of his sermons have gone viral. The attack was followed by large demonstrations, during which two police officers were severely injured. Two days prior, another mass stabbing took place at a mall in the Bondi area of the city. Six people were killed by the attacker, who was fatally shot by a police officer, and several were wounded. No clear motive for the mall attack has been determined at the time of writing, although witness reports and the gender of most victims may hint at the fact that the suspect targeted women.

Assessment: It is difficult to make risk assessments about the mall attack, as the motive remains unclear, and very little is known about the attacker's ideological persuasion. The Church attack underscores the ongoing threat posed by online platforms in facilitating radicalisation and extremist violence. The perpetrator – who is reportedly underage – allegedly claimed to have selected his target because of online, viral videos in which he attacked Islam. Moreover, the perpetrator reportedly told the police that, before carrying out the stabbing, he waited for the livestream of the service to begin, to make sure that the attempted killing would be captured on camera. This point is crucial from a risk perspective: lone-actor terrorists increasingly seek to attain a level of virality on social media. Some of them have opted to directly film their violent actions, for example using body-worn devices, while others, such as the Sydney attacker, opt to focus on targets that are “on camera” at the time the attack is carried out. The Sydney attack therefore likely underscores that visibility may be proportionally correlated with the risk of being targeted by a lone actor. Events or situations that are largely recorded and broadcast live may be at an increased risk of attack by individual extremists seeking to disseminate their ideology with minimal means. These attacks often use rudimentary weapons, such as light firearms or, in the

majority of cases, knives. The gathering of about 5,000 protesters following the attack, which was rapidly assembled through social media channels, likewise demonstrates how ideologically motivated action can result in massively increased localised risks to individuals and physical assets.

APAC Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest.

After a tumultuous campaign, characterised by inter-religious violence and tensions, **India** will begin its weeks-long electoral process on 19 April. India's elections are set to be the largest in history, with 970 million eligible voters. Due to the monumental logistical difficulties of such an undertaking, the seven rounds of voting will only end on 1 June. Current polls place Prime Minister Narendra Modi's coalition clearly in the lead, although it is currently unclear if it will reach a simple majority.

China's influence in the **Solomon Islands** is in the balance after the Pacific island went to the polls on 17 April. The election count is ongoing but prominent China critic Daniel Suidani has been re-elected to the provincial assembly, who was ousted last year by lawmakers in a no-confidence vote after refusing to recognise China. China will be watching the results closely after signing a security pact with the Solomon Islands in 2022, a deal that was interpreted by many as a precursor for a permanent Chinese military presence on the island nation.

New Zealand's Ministry of Education announced that it plans to cut 12 per cent of its workforce, as part of widespread layoffs affecting the nation's public sector that have been initiated by the country's Conservative government – elected in October 2023. There is a possibility of protests in Wellington, Auckland, and other major cities.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror.

On 19 April, five Japanese nationals escaped unhurt from a suicide bomb attack that targeted their vehicle in **Karachi, Pakistan**. Islamist and Baluch nationalist militants have recently increased their attacks, likely due to the Pakistani government's ongoing instability. The attack, which has not been claimed by a terrorist organisation at the time of writing, shares some similarities with those carried out by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), which heavily targets foreigners, and especially Chinese nationals.

On 16 April, clashes in **Kanker**, Chhattisgarh state, **India** involving local security forces and Naxalite-Maoist militants resulted in the deaths of 29 Communist fighters. The Naxalite insurgency has been ongoing for more than five decades, focusing especially in the "Red Corridor", stretching from central to northeastern India, albeit the government has managed to significantly reduce its severity. It is very likely that the security operations were conducted to inflict a strategic setback on the insurgency prior to the elections. Retaliatory attacks targeting government workers at polling stations, especially in rural areas or smaller cities, are a realistic possibility.

On 17 April, **China's** People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) dispatched jets to shadow, monitor and warn a US Navy P-8A Poseidon aircraft patrol after it flew through the sensitive Taiwan Strait, which China claims control over. The warning from Beijing follows similar warnings in response to recent US-led naval drills in the **South China Sea** and has likely raised concerns over a US-China miscalculation in the Indo-Pacific where both countries are vying for influence.

On 17 April, **Australian** officials published the country's first National Defence Strategy document, which comprehensively covers various security, diplomacy and military areas of interest. The document singles out China as a strategic adversary – citing its "coercive tactics" – and emphasises the risk of a conflict breaking out in the region with little warning. The document will almost certainly be poorly received in Beijing, and its publication likely underscores the limits of

recent Chinese diplomatic overtures to Australia and New Zealand, such as the recent visits by Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous.

Ongoing flooding has resulted in at least seven deaths in northern **Kazakhstan** since late March. Flooding has been attributed to the melting of snowfall, resulting in significant rises in water levels along the Tobal, Ural, and Volga Rivers in northwest Kazakhstan and bordering Russian oblasts. As of 17 April, over 117,000 people have been evacuated. It is likely that flooding will continue throughout the spring season due to the ongoing snowmelt and warming temperatures, leading to widespread displacement and disruption.

Flash floods caused by unusually heavy rains have killed at least 100 people in **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan**. The extreme weather events are likely linked to this year's especially strong El Niño phenomenon. The floods particularly affect the two countries' shared border areas, which have seen heavy fighting, including strikes by Pakistani forces, and where government control is particularly tenuous. The danger government officials face in the border areas and the lack of infrastructure are likely to worsen the floods' impacts and may prolong their duration.

On 17 April, Mount Ruang, a volcano on **Sulawesi Island, Indonesia**, had a series of explosive eruptions, prompting authorities to issue a tsunami warning and evacuate more than 10,000 people. Airport closures were announced in Manado city, due to the risk posed by spreading ash clouds and gas. It is possible that flights in the region will face some disruptions in the coming week due to the ongoing presence of atmospheric ash clouds.

