



# Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 19 JULY – 26 JULY





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Week 30: 19 July – 26 July

## Executive Summary

- Disruption to **France's** high-speed rail network before the Olympic ceremony demonstrates the ease of low-sophistication sabotage and will **likely** inspire similar incidents throughout the Games.
- **Israel's** response to a deadly Houthi drone attack on **Tel Aviv** will **almost certainly** result in increased attacks on Israel but also an escalation in the **Red Sea** and **Gulf of Aden**.
- It is **highly likely** that escalating jihadist attacks in **Niger** indicate rapidly deteriorating security, it is a **realistic possibility** that ungoverned space may be exploited to launch regional attacks.
- A militant attack on a military outpost in northern **Togo** **likely** signals the destabilisation of the Sahel region and the intent of Islamist groups to expand their operations towards coastal **West Africa**.



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

### AMER

- 1 USA:** Biden drops out of presidential race and Trump declares Harris illegitimate
- 2 USA and Mexico:** Sinaloa Cartel leadership arrested in Texas
- 3 Colombia:** Increase in FARC attacks and first drone-related death

### EMEA

- 4 France:** Sabotage conducted against rail network before Olympic ceremony
- 5 Germany:** Iranian-linked organisations banned
- 6 Yemen:** IDF strike Yemen after Houthi's first fatal attack on Israel
- 7 Niger:** Series of attacks by jihadist groups against junta forces
- 8 Togo:** Islamist group conducts mass casualty attack on army outpost in north

### APAC

- 9 Myanmar:** Junta forces surrender regional military command HQ
- 10 Taiwan and the Philippines:** Typhoon Gaemi causes floods and disruption



## Americas (AMER)

### United States:

#### **President Biden drops out of presidential race, endorses VP Harris.**

On 21 July, US President Joe Biden announced that he would be ending his bid for re-election in 2024, and instead endorsed his Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden's announcement followed weeks of speculation about the president's health and fitness that followed a dismal debate performance against Republican nominee and former President Donald Trump. Following the debate, Biden was asked to step down by senior Democrats and major party donors. Harris' new presidential bid was met with considerable enthusiasm from the party, with the incumbent vice president raising more than USD 100 million in donations in a matter of days. Trump has questioned the legality of the swap and has not indicated if he will debate Harris.

**Assessment:** The announcement is likely to affect Trump's chances of election in 2024. The former president narrowly escaped an assassination attempt at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, and subsequent polls indicated that his popularity among voters slightly surpassed Biden's. Harris is, on paper, a stronger Democrat candidate against Trump, and the party leaders are likely betting that she will be able to better reach on-the-fence voters than the current president. The Republican Party is likely still struggling to adjust its electoral narratives in the aftermath of the Pennsylvania assassination attempt. While Trump called for unity and pluralism in his post-shooting appearance at the Republican National Convention (RNC), other senior members of the party reiterated old conspiracy theories and illiberal talking points. The discrepancy almost certainly demonstrates the entrenchment of "Trumpism" in the GOP, and the recent assassination attempt highly likely unified the party base away from the moderate wing of the party. Moreover, Trump's campaign recently received notable endorsements, most importantly from multiple tech billionaires including Elon Musk, owner of X.com. While Harris' success in quickly amassing the support of the key Democrat electorate, the momentum of Trump's campaign may prove hard to stop. Finally, Trump's language, which seemingly identifies Harris as an "illegitimate" candidate, could have serious security implications. If Trump were to lose the election, these discourses could be leveraged by the ex-president and by militant right-wing activists to dismiss the 2024 elections as fraudulent. While a repeat of the attempted "January 6" insurrection is highly unlikely, such developments could drive cases of domestic terrorism, civil unrest, and other forms of politically motivated violence.

### United States and Mexico:

#### **Sinaloa Cartel boss and El Chapo's son apprehended in Texas.**

On 25 July, the US Justice Department announced that the co-founder and suspected current leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada was arrested in El Paso, Texas. During the joint Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) operation, Joaquin Guzman Lopez, the son of Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán, the cartel's other co-founder, was also arrested. The exact details of the operation have yet to be released. However, early reports indicate that the cartel members were lured onto a plane supposedly heading to the south of Mexico which actually flew to the US.

**Assessment:** The Sinaloa Cartel is considered the largest drug supplier to the US and in recent years has hugely increased its smuggling of fentanyl to the US, a drug which is now the leading cause of death for Americans aged 18 to 45. Their apprehension may temporarily disrupt the cartel's operations but is unlikely to have any meaningful long-term effect regarding disruption or deterrence. Their capture could lead to a power vacuum within the Sinaloa Cartel which is likely to trigger infighting among cartel factions, a scenario that will almost certainly lead to violent clashes on the streets of Mexican territory which they control,

including the major cities of Culiacan and Durango, and even parts of Chiapas in the far south. Long-term, the arrest of the leadership may lead to increased fragmentation of the cartel, another scenario that will almost certainly lead to increased violence. Rival cartels like the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) may interpret this lack of leadership as a weakness and seek to exploit this opportunity to expand their influence and control over lucrative areas. This is most likely to manifest itself in the areas disputed between the Sinaloa Cartel and rival cartels. One prominent example is the major tourist city of Tijuana, where territorial disputes have been fierce given the city's strategic location near the US border and the lucrative tourist market within Tijuana.

## Colombia:

### **Increase in FARC attacks throughout Colombia and first drone-related death.**

Throughout the reporting period, there has been a spate of attacks attributed to dissident groups belonging to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC) guerilla group. The majority of the attacks have been targeted at the Colombian army or police and most were located in southwest Colombia, particularly in the Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Huila departments. However, there have also been several militant attacks in Colombia's northeastern department of Arauca close to the Venezuelan border. On 24 July, suspected FARC dissidents dropped a grenade onto a football field in El Plateado, Cauca department, killing a 10-year-old boy and injuring at least a dozen injuries. The attack took place during the middle of a cultural and sports week being held in the district and marks the first deadly use of a drone in Colombia's war with FARC.

**Assessment:** Attacks in southwest Colombia were likely conducted by more than one FARC dissident group, with several rejecting President Petro's plans for "total peace". Several dissident groups, including the Carlos Patiño front and the Second Marquetalia are known to operate in the area and are vying for control of a main drug trafficking route to the South Pacific known as the Micay Canyon and much of its surrounding environment. The IED attack was likely in response to the refusal of local residents to expel army troops from the area- an established tactic of many of the dissident groups. Several of the other attacks can likely be attributed to the largest FARC dissident group, Estado Mayor Central (FARC-EMC). The government ended a ceasefire agreement with FARC-EMC on 16 July and has recently arrested several of the group's leaders, with attacks potentially being a form of retribution. FARC-EMC is assessed to have as many as 4,000 fighters and operates in over 200 of Colombia's 1,100 municipalities. Increased attacks across Colombia are likely a result of these developments, with simultaneous attacks across the country potentially overstressing Colombia's armed forces. This trend will be exacerbated if FARC-EMC coordinates or cooperates with other dissident groups like the Second Marquetalia, with both groups known to work together in the past to capitalise on the lucrative drug trade. FARC militants have increasingly used drones to drop munitions on targets, a tactic that has been used to good effect in the Middle East and Ukraine. This will likely become an established tactic of FARC, with drones offering a level of accessibility in Colombia's rural and mountainous environment, and one that will help them engage superior government forces at a distance. Should there be a major escalation in fighting, then it is almost certain that the kidnapping risk across the country will increase as this has traditionally been a major source of revenue for FARC dissidents.

## AMER Summary and Forecast:

### **Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:**

#### **Netanyahu gives fourth address to US Congress.**

On 24 July, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered his fourth address to a joint session of the US Congress in Washington DC, seeking support for Israel's war in Gaza. Protests against the war greeted Netanyahu outside and inside Congress, with Representative Rashida Tlaib holding a sign calling him a "war criminal." Netanyahu denounced the protesters and accused the International Criminal Court of false accusations. Despite ongoing ceasefire negotiations, Netanyahu reiterated a hardline stance, calling for increased US military aid to ensure a decisive victory against Hamas.

### **Panama security forces scheduled to start deporting migrants.**

Panama's security forces are scheduled to start deporting migrants who try to enter the country through the southern Darien Gap. The new government campaigned on an anti-migrant platform and quickly signed a deal with the US to receive funding for its deportation efforts.

### **Polls suggest President Maduro will lose the Venezuelan presidential election.**

The Venezuelan presidential candidates have been holding their last rallies with the election set to take place on 28 July. Current polling indicates that the incumbent President Nicolás Maduro is set to lose the election to former diplomat Edmundo González. However, it is likely that Maduro will refuse to concede the election reminiscent of the presidential crisis of 2019. The 2019 crisis resulted in widespread civil unrest, political instability, human rights abuses and frequent violent clashes between protestors and the security services. The event was accompanied by extensive sanctions on Venezuela which exacerbated an already fire humanitarian crisis and pushed Caracas towards US adversaries like Russia, China and Iran.

## **Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:**

### **Cartel kill senior Mexico City police figure.**

On 22 July, Mexico City's head of intelligence and police operations, Milton Morales Figueroa, was killed in a suspected drug cartel hit while on a family outing in Coacalco. The attackers emerged from two SUVs and also injured two others. The attack on a senior capital officer follows a similar 2020 ambush on then-police chief Omar García Harfuch. The assassination of such a prominent official will almost certainly lead to major police operations with the arrest or killing of cartel members likely to inspire reprisal attacks.

### **Migrant boat capsizes killing 40 Haitian migrants.**

On 19 July, a boat fire was reported to have killed at least 40 Haitian migrants. The fire began as the group were attempting to reach the Turks and Caicos Islands. Haitian citizens are reportedly increasingly taking desperate and dangerous measures to escape the island, which continues to have high levels of gang-led violence despite the arrival of Kenyan police. Northbound sea routes are likely appealing to Haitians due to the closure of the Dominican Republic border to the east.

## **Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:**

### **Wildfires spread across the US and Canada.**

Wildfires have spread across parts of Canada and the US, forcing thousands to evacuate their homes. In Alberta, Canada, the major tourist town of Jasper faced flames reaching 100 meters high, spreading five kilometres in less than 30 minutes, resulting in up to 50 per cent structural damage and the evacuation of 25,000 people. In the state of Oregon, the Durkee Fire has burned almost 270,000 hectares, is threatening multiple small towns and killed hundreds of cattle. In California, a man was arrested for allegedly starting the Park Fire, which rapidly grew from 567 to 50,585 hectares, prompting the evacuation of over 4,000 people in Butte County and Chico. Both regions are battling severe wildfire conditions, with international firefighting support being deployed to Canada.

### **Bolivian authorities declare state of emergency due to extreme weather.**

The department of Santa Cruz has declared a state of emergency, scheduled to persist until the end of the year. Authorities cite extreme weather that has led to a combination of torrential rainfall leading to flooding and landslides, droughts, and wildfires. The response to wildfires in eastern Bolivia has been hampered by fuel shortages. It is likely that large-scale deforestation has contributed to the spread of wildfires in the region, and local authorities are likely to struggle to contain their spread due to the logistical challenges involved, exacerbated by fuel shortages.





## Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

### France:

#### **Sabotage leads to large transport disruptions on Olympics opening day**

In the early hours of 26 July, large-scale disruptions were recorded in much of the French high-speed rail network. During the night between the 25 and 26 July, unknown perpetrators allegedly set fire to rail infrastructure in different parts of the country, near the towns of Arras, Courtalain, Pagny-sur-Moselle, leading to widespread delays. The sabotage action coincided with the opening of the Olympic Games in France.

**Assessment:** At this stage, it is impossible to attribute responsibility for the sabotage to any single actor. Two scenarios can be considered the most likely based on previous cases and plots to disrupt the Olympics. First, there is a realistic possibility that the sabotage was carried out by anti-Olympic Games activists associated with the French far-left. These groups have repeatedly warned that they will disrupt the game if President Emmanuel Macron does not acquiesce to their demands to appoint a left-wing government led by the New Popular Front, the coalition that obtained the largest number of representatives at the recent snap National Assembly elections. Alternatively, the low-sophistication sabotage could be an example of a hybrid operation sponsored or conducted by a foreign state actor, most likely Russia. Russian or pro-Russian actors have recently been linked to multiple fires or cases of sabotage against infrastructure and in other European countries. France has recently allowed Ukraine to fire French-derived weapons into mainland Russia and has even suggest that French troops could be deployed in some capacity to Ukraine. Moreover, a foreign intelligence service likely has the logistical and operational capabilities to conduct simultaneous sabotage actions like the ones observed on the night of 25-26 July. The effectiveness, ease and desirability of low-level sabotage make it likely that more incidents will occur during the Paris Olympics. The recent disruption of a Tesla “gigafactory” near Berlin, caused by environmentalists setting fire to an electricity pylon, demonstrates the effectiveness of targeting exposed infrastructure for causing significant disruption. Targeting exposed infrastructure in rural or isolated areas requires minimal expertise and only basic tools, making such actions particularly attractive to saboteurs. Furthermore, with the current high threat of terrorism, it is likely that the French authorities are currently overstretched and largely incapable of assigning substantial resources to lesser threats.

### Germany:

#### **Islamic organisations with links to Hezbollah and Iran banned.**

On 24 July, German authorities banned six Islamic institutions with links to the Islamic Republic, identifying them as “outposts” for the Tehran regime to spread its ideology and influence in Europe, and as vehicles to provide financial support to the Lebanese armed group, Hezbollah. Authorities also ordered raids on 53 properties, including a major Hamburg Mosque. The German Interior Ministry stated that the organisations espoused a militant form of Shia Islam with the goals of radicalising Persian diasporas and other Shia groups in Germany in support of Iran’s activities in the Middle East and, possibly, to carry out terrorist activity in Europe. The raids come only a week after German and Spanish police detained four individuals accused of trafficking drone parts to Hezbollah via civilian-owned companies registered in Europe.

**Assessment:** One of Iran’s strategic objectives is to spread its revolutionary ideology abroad. Iran has long sought to establish groups and institutions abroad that can further its interests and has used religious freedom laws to operate these with little risk of intervention by host countries’ authorities. Iran’s foreign operations are likely unique as they combine a military and civilian component. Military activities include covert operations and the accumulation of assets, including weapons and improvised explosives, for possible terrorist use. Already in 2020, US State Department figures warned that “Hezbollah [was] gradually building up stockpiles of weapons on European soil”. Civilian activities have two fundamental goals:

spreading Tehran's brand of Shiism to local Shia communities and pooling local communities' funds to be remitted to its proxy groups in the Middle East, thus indirectly funding terrorism. The drone-parts case falls into this category. In the United Kingdom, a similar scheme was discovered in April 2024, with prosecutors reporting that the London-based Islamic Centre of England redirected around GBP 240,000 of Covid-19 pandemic-period furlough scheme funds to militant groups in the Middle East. It is highly likely that Iranian operations in Europe have intensified in the aftermath of 7 October, and that Tehran has sought to capitalise on the wave of support for the Palestinian cause to advance its geopolitical interests in target European countries, especially Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. The recent setbacks in Germany and the United Kingdom are likely to have a short-term effect on Iranian operations. However, Tehran-linked organisations are likely to be able to effectively reorganise, also using less traceable payment methods (including cryptocurrencies and Hawalas) to maintain remittance flows towards Iran itself and Iranian proxies.

## Yemen:

### Israel responds to lethal Houthi drone attack with first direct strike on Yemen.

On 19 July, the Houthi Movement in Yemen achieved their first successful fatal drone attack on Israel after a one-way attack uncrewed aerial vehicle (OWA-UAV) managed to penetrate Israeli air defence and strike Tel Aviv. The UAV hit an apartment building around 100 metres from the US Consulate, killing at least one individual and injuring at least 10 others. Rather than taking a direct course, the drone reportedly followed GPS waypoints, transiting over the Mediterranean Sea before heading east to strike Tel Aviv. The Houthis have claimed that the attack involved their new "Yafa" drone which purportedly is a modified Iranian-made Samad-3 UAV with an improved 2,600-kilometre range and decreased radar signature. On 20 July, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) conducted a retaliation strike on Yemen, marking the first time Israel has struck back at the Houthis despite hundreds of attacks. IAF strikes targeted several military and dual-purpose sites in al-Hudaydah (al-Hodeidah), a major port city under Houthi control. Targets included the port's energy infrastructure and loading facilities, including 20 fuel depots and multiple container cranes, leading to a huge fire at the port, three deaths and around 80 people injured. A spokesperson for the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) commented that the strikes were conducted to disrupt Iran's facilitation of lethal aid to the Houthis and that the port had effectively been shut down.

**Assessment:** The success of the Houthi drone attack was likely determined by multiple factors. The Houthis have been conducting reconnaissance in force against the IDF's air defence network, probing for gaps and attempting to identify any vulnerabilities. With Israel faced with Hezbollah to the north, Popular Mobilisation Forces in Iraq and Syria primarily on its eastern flank and Hamas and the Houthis to the south, it is likely that IDF air defence coverage in the west of Israel was limited. The Houthis exploited this by approaching Tel Aviv from the Mediterranean Sea which likely caught the IDF off guard. The Houthi's Yafa drone likely followed a series of GPS waypoints, obfuscated its route by using established civilian flight corridors and exploited the terrain to avoid detection by coalition military assets deployed to the area. The small and slow-flying projectile, which would ordinarily have a small radar cross-section, was likely improved further by developments in Houthi drone technology- invariably with Iranian assistance. Early indications suggest that the Yafa is made from composite materials like plastic or carbon rather than metal. Such a development would make it lighter and provide it with greater range but would also make it harder to detect on legacy radar systems calibrated to identify metallic objects.

Israel's advanced air defence network, comprised of the Iron Dome, David's Sling and Arrow System amongst others, has capable radar systems that can detect a wide range of aerial threats including those made from composite materials. However, these systems are harder to detect and provide air defence operators less reaction time, especially if early warning isn't provided by allied forces- a factor that was pivotal in April 2024, when Iran and Iranian-backed proxies launched over 350 drones, missiles and rockets towards Israel. Other Iranian proxies will almost certainly emulate the successful tactics of the Houthis. This could undermine Israel's venerated air defence and force the IDF into reevaluating its tactics and technology. One immediate response might be to re-position air defence to improve coverage on the western flank. However, such a move could lead to other areas being less protected, a major vulnerability considering the degree of omnidirectional threats. In the long term, the IDF will likely need to enhance its detection capabilities. Ukraine has successfully incorporated an array of acoustic sensors to provide early warning

from Russian aerial threats, a capability that is lacking in Israel's air defence network. However, these improvements are not immediately achievable and if Israel's air defence is jeopardised, the IDF may be forced into actively degrading the Houthis' capabilities with further strikes. It is too early to assess to what degree the IAF strikes have degraded or deterred the Houthis. The strikes have likely benefitted Houthi propaganda with recent statements indicating that their immediate action will be a comprehensive response as part of their fifth phase of operations. This will almost certainly include an increase of attacks against Israel itself but also an escalation of Houthi attacks against merchant shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, with recent indications suggesting the Houthis have improved the lethality and accuracy of their maritime operations through the increased use of uncrewed surface vessels (USVs).

## Niger:

### Series of attacks by jihadist groups mark potentially bloodiest week in Niger since coup.

During the reporting period, up to four or more significant battles have reportedly taken place between Nigerien junta forces and jihadist groups in Niger, resulting in potentially hundreds of casualties. The first allegedly occurred on 20 July in Ikarfane, near the Mali border, where Islamic State-Sahel Province (IS-Sahel, formerly known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara or ISGS) reportedly assaulted a Niger Armed Forces column consisting of 200 soldiers, potentially killing at least 30. The second occurred on 21 July in the village of Tassia in the Tillaberi region, northwest of Niamey near the Burkina Faso border. The defence ministry announced that 21 were killed in the attack, with three days of national mourning to be observed. The third battle is speculated to have taken place in Tankademi in the Tahoua region on 21 July, near the Mali border. While unconfirmed, potentially 237 Nigerien soldiers were killed in this single large-scale ambush by hundreds of IS-Sahel fighters who were speculated to be heavily armed and equipped with armoured vehicles. The fourth battle is claimed to have taken place on 22 July, near the village of Foneko in the Tillaberi region. An official statement on state television announced a preliminary death toll of 15.

**Assessment:** The past week is likely to have been the most violent in Niger since the military seized power in the July 2023 coup. The information space in Niger is complex and it can often take weeks for incidents to be confirmed. It is, therefore, a realistic possibility that the details regarding specific battles are inaccurate. The main jihadist groups active in Niger are the Islamic State-affiliated IS-Sahel and al-Qaeda-affiliated Jama'at Nusr al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM). Jihadist groups have been engaged in an insurgency for almost a decade in Niger. Since the coup, however, their activity has risen dramatically. This is highly likely due to a combination of declining state capacity and reduced international support. On 11 July, IS-Sahel conducted a raid at the high-security Koutokale prison near Niamey, claiming to have freed over 200 militants. Since then, further attacks reportedly occurred on 12 July, 17 July, and 18 July, the latter allegedly being conducted by JNIM against a Chinese convoy. It is highly likely that the intensity, extent and geographic spread of attacks by jihadist groups in July indicate that the control exerted by Niger's security forces is rapidly deteriorating. The junta has adopted a distinctly anti-Western posture, requesting France and the US withdraw all their troops. Prior to the coup, Niger was a crucial partner for the West in the fight against jihadist groups in the Sahel. Up to 40 per cent of Niger's budget was funded by international partners, and both France and the US contributed considerably to anti-jihadist military operations. Post-coup, Western withdrawal is highly likely to have diminished Niger's security profile. While a contingent of US forces are still deployed in Niger, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) announced on 24 July that their withdrawal will be completed in early August, as per the demands of the junta. The junta has sought closer ties with Russia, who sent 100 Africa Corps (formerly Wagner Group) personnel in April, and Turkey has reportedly deployed over 1,000 Syrian mercenaries to aid in counterinsurgency. However, it is unlikely that the resources provided by Russia and Turkey will be sufficient to make up for those lost by Western withdrawal. Niger's counterinsurgency capacity has likely been severely degraded, which has been exploited by insurgents and attacks will likely continue over the coming weeks. There is a realistic possibility that declining security in Niger will lead to significant ungoverned space, areas that can be used as a base of operations by jihadist groups to conduct attacks in the wider region.



## Togo:

### **Al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamist group conduct mass casualty attack on army outpost in northern Togo.**

The Kpékankandi outpost in northern Togo's unsettled Savanes region was attacked on 20 July leading to the deaths of 12 Togolese soldiers and at least 40 militants. The attack has been claimed by the al-Qaeda-linked Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) Islamist group. The outpost is located close to the border with Burkina Faso where JNIM have a long-established presence. The Togolese army has deployed reinforcements to the area in order to enhance its defence posture.

**Assessment:** The Savanes region remains in a state of emergency which was first introduced in June 2022 after a series of attacks on Togolese security services and civilians. It is almost certain that JNIM are exploiting an incredibly destabilised Burkina Faso as a safe haven to conduct cross-border attacks into neighbouring Togo. Militants across the region have been afforded a wide area of ungoverned space and increased freedom of movement following multiple military coups, including in Burkina Faso, that have replaced Western-leaning civilian governments with military juntas. This has resulted in the expulsion of Western military forces from Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, leading to an overstretching of domestic forces that have lost access to the advanced military capabilities of nations like the US and France. Furthermore, deterring cross-border attacks into Togo is likely a low priority for the Burkinabe government as they deal with a host of insurgent forces on multiple axes. Togo has increasingly been seen as a stable environment and has attracted heavy foreign investment, particularly from Western countries. JNIM's strategy is likely to undermine this notion by destabilising its northern region, a region which is primarily Muslim where JNIM is likely seeking to expand its recruitment of potentially disenfranchised locals. Local recruits could then be exploited to expand JNIM's operations within northern Togo, with similar trends being observed in nearby Benin and the Ivory Coast. Moreover, Togo, Benin, the Ivory Coast and other West African countries have contributed to initiatives such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Accra Initiative, both aimed at containing terrorism within the Sahel. Previous involvement in these initiatives invariably makes these countries legitimate targets for violent extremist organisations (VEOs) like JNIM. Most importantly, creating emerging threats within these countries will force governments to allocate resources to internal issues, thus degrading their ability to contribute to regional counter-terrorism initiatives under organisations like the UN or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Long-term, VEOs like JNIM, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP) likely harbour the intent of expanding their operations further south towards the coastal regions of these countries. These are areas where Western interests are disproportionately located, including tourist resorts which would offer VEOs a coveted high-profile target, as demonstrated by AQIM's 2016 attack on the Grand-Bassam resort in the Ivory Coast.

## EMEA Summary and Forecast:

### **Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:**

#### **Large environmental protests in La Rochelle, France.**

Large-scale protests took place in the French region of La Rochelle. The protests were organised by environmentalist groups that are opposed to the construction of artificial water collection basins for irrigation. While La Rochelle is a primarily rural and sparsely populated area, there is a high likelihood that the protesters will seek to extend disorders to Paris and other Olympic host cities in order to obtain higher exposure.

#### **Two killed in housing development collapse in Naples, Italy.**

On 23 July, two people were killed and over a dozen injured in Naples when the walkway of a public housing development – in the Scampia suburb, known for severe levels of poverty and organised crime presence – collapsed. The incident will likely spark civil unrest in Italy, especially in the south and targeted at national government institutions.

### **Blackouts lead to civil unrest in the Krasnodar region of Russia.**

Civil unrest occurred in the Krasnodar region on 20 July due to ongoing blackouts. The loss of power has likely been caused by abnormally high heat currently affecting the region. Authorities responded relatively mildly to the rare protest, with the local governor acknowledging the protesters' grievances. However, multiple arrests were reported. Russian authorities appear to be aiming to suppress potential civil unrest while avoiding broader demonstrations by not resorting to excessively harsh repression in these localised protest incidents.

### **European Union announced talks with Armenia to relax visa rules.**

European Union officials announced they will begin talks with Armenia to relax visa rules. The development likely represents a further signal of Armenia's movement towards the West and away from Russia's sphere of influence. While Yerevan has long been one of Moscow's key Caucasus allies, relations between the two countries soured following the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

### **Opposition leader sentenced in Tunisia for vote buying.**

A Tunisian court sentenced Lofti Mraïhi, the main opposition leader, to eight months in prison for "vote buying". Tunisian President Kais Saïed has implemented increasingly authoritarian measures and is seeking re-election at the next elections in October. The announcement is likely to drive civil unrest, which authorities will highly likely meet with further draconian measures, including arbitrary arrests and violent intervention.

### **Bangladeshis sentenced for protesting own government in UAE.**

The UAE has sentenced 57 Bangladeshi migrant workers for holding protests within the Gulf State. The protests were aimed at the Bangladeshi government over the recent student protests, not at the Emirati government. However, protests not authorised by the UAE's Ministry of Interior are highly illegal with the government likely attempting to deter other forms of unrest or future activity that challenges or undermines its rule.

### **Anti-corruption protestors warned by Uganda's hardline president.**

Uganda's hardline President Yoweri Museveni, who has ruled the country for almost four decades, has warned protesters that they are playing with fire and anti-corruption demonstrations were organised across the country. The Ugandan authorities have already arrested several protestors and have recently cracked down on the opposition. The country's main opposition leader, Boni Wine, commands a lot of influence among the country's youth and the government likely fears that Uganda could face protests of a similar scale and nature as the ones that are ongoing in Kenya.

## **Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:**

### **UK radical Islamist preacher convicted.**

Radical Islamist preacher Anjem Choudary was found guilty of directing a terrorist organisation by a British court. Choudary, despite serving a prior conviction for supporting the Islamic State (IS) and contributing to radicalising individuals in the UK, continued to head a renamed iteration of the banned organisation al-Muhajiroun, which also established a chapter in the US. The arrest and later conviction were the product of a joint investigation involving UK, US, and Canadian counterterrorism units.

### **US bombers conduct patrol over Finland near Russia's strategic assets.**

US Air Force B-52 strategic bombers conducted their first-ever flight over Finland on 21 July whilst being escorted by Finnish fighter jets. The nuclear-capable were intercepted by Russian fighter jets after flying close to Russia's strategic Kola Peninsula, home to multiple NATO-facing military bases, Russia's Northern Fleet and much of the Kremlin's submarine-based nuclear deterrent. The event is almost certainly reflective of the geo-political shift that has occurred after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, causing Finland to renege decades of neutrality and join NATO.

### **German national sentenced to death in Belarus.**

A German national has been sentenced to death in Belarus, the only country within Europe that still applies the death penalty, according to Germany's Foreign Ministry. The Belarussian authorities have not stated on

what grounds he has been charged, however, rights groups suggest that it is related to the Kalinouski Regiment, a group of anti-government Belarusian exiles fighting for Ukraine.

#### **Rare mass shooting in Croatia.**

A man allegedly killed five at a retirement home in **Daruvar**, killing at least six on 22 July. It is possible that the case will result in similar anti-gun protests as those seen in Serbia following another recent attack.

#### **US reporter guilty of espionage in Russia.**

A Russian court found US reporter Evan Gershkovich guilty of “espionage” and sentenced him to 16 years in a penal colony. Gershkovich is the first US journalist sentenced for espionage since the Cold War. It is almost certain that, as with other recent examples, the case results were doctored and skewed by Russian officials in order to put further pressure on US diplomacy. It is highly likely that Moscow will now seek to exchange Gershkovich for useful nationals currently held in US detention.

#### **No progress made concerning north Cyprus.**

The 50th anniversary of the Turkish invasion of north Cyprus did not result in the hoped renewal of dialogue between the Cypriot and Turkish sides. Turkish President Erdogan reiterated Ankara’s long-standing stance of the rejection of a federal unitary state in favour of a two-state solution for the island.

#### **Canadian citizen flies to Israel to attack IDF.**

A Canadian citizen was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers after allegedly trying to attack them with a knife near the Gaza border. The incident is likely to strain diplomatic relations between the two countries and will likely drive civil unrest in Canada.

#### **IED at Kenya border town likely detonated by Somalia-based al-Shabaab.**

At least five people were injured at a restaurant in the Kenyan town of Madera after an IED was initiated. The attack was likely conducted by al-Shabaab militants operating in the area which is near to the Somali border near al-Shabaab strongholds. Local police have suggested that the restaurant is often frequented by non-locals who were likely the target of the attack.

#### **Al-Shabaab attempt to seize three army bases in southern Somalia.**

On 22 July, al-Shabaab militants attempted to take over three Somalian army bases in the south of the country in a region only recently captured by government forces. Government forces claim to have repelled the attack and killed over 80 militants after receiving intelligence of the attack, leading them to abandon the army bases and then encircle al-Shabaab’s fighters. Al-Shabaab is likely attempting to reassert its influence in the Jubaland region after ceding territory to the government which has developed alliances with local clans.

### **Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:**

#### **Landslides kills over 200 in southern Ethiopia.**

On 21-22 July, two landslides in southern **Ethiopia’s Gofa Zone** have killed at least 257 people. The death count is likely to increase as rescue operations continue with some assessments suggesting as many as 500 dead. The first landslide is thought to have killed as many as 50 people, with the remaining deaths largely caused by the second landslide which engulfed many attempting to assist with rescue efforts. While landslides are common during Ethiopia’s July to September rainy season, experts have suggested that they will become more common as a result of climate change.

#### **Severe weather forecasted in South Africa’s Western Cape.**

Severe weather is expected to persist in Western Cape Province through July 27, with Orange Level 5 and Yellow Level 4 rain warnings in effect. Flooding, landslides, and strong winds are likely to cause disruptions, including potential evacuation orders, utility service interruptions, and impacts on transportation and businesses.



## Asia Pacific (APAC)

### Myanmar:

#### **Rebel forces seize junta government's regional military command headquarters.**

On 25 July, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) released a statement claiming that it had seized the Tatmadaw junta's Northeastern Regional Military Command headquarters in Lashio, the largest city in Myanmar's northern Shan State home to around 150,000. The ethnic Kokang rebel group claims that the headquarters was seized after intense fighting with junta forces which surrendered en masse and claimed that "the liberation of Lashio will mark a historic victory in our revolution." The commander of Burmese People's Liberation Army, another group fighting alongside the MNDAA, confirmed the capture of the regional military command headquarters. MNDAA forces are now conducting clearance operations throughout the city.

**Assessment:** The capture of the junta's headquarters Northeastern Regional Military Command headquarters in Lashio was the MNDAA's primary objective in its war with the junta and if confirmed marks the first military command to fall since the 2021 coup. The loss is also the first major defeat for the junta since the collapse of a Chinese-brokered ceasefire in May. Such a defeat will almost certainly embolden Myanmar's other rebel groups which are conducting a multi-axis offensive across the country. MNDAA's control of Lashio will enable it to secure a strategic foothold in Shan State that will help facilitate future operations. Despite much damage to roads and reports of landmines, the MNDAA could leverage the city's infrastructure to establish or improve supply lines and strengthen its command and control. Holding the city will also likely help drive both propaganda and recruitment efforts. Lashio also sits along a major trade route between Myanmar and China. China maintains good relations with the junta but reports also suggest that it benefits greatly from informal trade and cross-border smuggling associated with rebel forces. If the MNDAA's capture of Lashio leads to a more stabilised Shan State, Beijing may be deterred from intervening in any capacity. The state's stabilisation may additionally result in improved access for humanitarian organisations. However, after such an embarrassing defeat, it is likely that junta forces, which are afforded complete air superiority, will respond with increased air strikes on rebel forces in Lashio resulting in high levels of civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure.

### Taiwan and Philippines:

#### **Typhoon Gaemi causes significant flooding in the Philippines, before making landfall in Taiwan.**

On 24 July, Typhoon Gaemi made landfall in Taiwan. The typhoon reached maximum wind speeds of 231 kilometres per hour. Forming in the Philippine Sea, Typhoon Gaemi initially tracked past the Philippines between 20-23 July. The tropical cyclone worsened seasonal monsoon rains in the most populous island in the Philippines, Luzon. Torrential rainfall caused flooding and landslides, with at least 20 fatalities. Manila experienced significant flooding which caused widespread disruptions. Approximately 600,000 people in the Philippines have been displaced by the torrential rains. In Taiwan, at least three deaths have been reported, with hundreds of injuries. The typhoon caused mass power outages, flooding, school and office closures, flight disruptions and the closing of financial markets. Additionally, a tanker and cargo ship were sunk due to the strong winds, with three other vessels running aground. The most serious of these is the sinking of the Philippines-flagged MT *TERRA NOVA*, which was carrying approximately 1.4 million litres of industrial fuel oil. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) is currently attempting to contain the oil spill.

**Assessment:** Typhoon Gaemi is the most powerful tropical cyclone to impact Taiwan in eight years, reaching a maximum classification of Category 4 before making landfall. In addition to the high wind speeds, the impact was exacerbated by an unusual looping path that meant the typhoon's inner core hit Taiwan's east

coast twice. Taiwan is highly typhoon-resistant, due to considerable investment into typhoon-resistant infrastructure and comprehensive disaster preparedness and response plans. While disruptions were widespread, it is almost certain that Taiwan's typhoon resiliency measures spared the island from a far greater impact. While the typhoon did not make landfall in the Philippines, the considerable flooding caused a far greater impact than in Taiwan, illustrating the Philippines' vulnerability to severe weather. In the days preceding the typhoon, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr highlighted flood prevention in his State of the Nation address. While he has since ordered authorities to expedite disaster response efforts, it is likely that the typhoon's impact will raise further questions about the Philippines' weak disaster preparedness. Furthermore, the oil spill resulting from the sinking of MT *TERRA NOVA* stretches several kilometres, and a spokesman of the Philippine Coast Guard warned that the spill could be the largest in the country's history if not contained. Gaemi made landfall in Fujian province in mainland China on 25 July, prompting authorities to suspend transport services and close schools. While Gaemi has weakened to a Tropical Storm, heavy rainfall will likely continue to cause disruptions in China over the coming days.

## APAC Summary and Forecast:

### Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

#### Relative calm in Bangladesh following Supreme Court decision.

Following large-scale violent unrest in Bangladesh sparked by a high court decision to reimpose controversial public sector job quotas, there has been relative calm since the Supreme Court overturned the decision on 21 July. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has attributed the recent deadly unrest in the country to political opposition, asserting that the imposition of a curfew was a necessary measure for public safety. The violence resulted in over 150 fatalities and the arrest of more than 1,000 individuals, including several senior opposition leaders. The government has stated that the curfew will be lifted and internet services reinstated when the situation improves. However, protestors have demanded the resignation of Hasina and government accountability for the violence, indicating that future demonstrations are likely.

#### Cambodia opposition leader convicted of defamation.

A Cambodian court has convicted opposition leader Teav Vannol of defamation and imposed a USD 1.5 million fine for comments he made about the country's democracy. In an interview with Nikkei this February, Vannol, president of the Candlelight Party, criticised the administration of Hun Manet, the son of long-time leader Hun Sen. The Candlelight Party was excluded from last year's general election, which saw Hun Sen's party win a landslide. The court's decision, which Vannol intends to appeal, reflects ongoing concerns about political freedom in Cambodia. The move indicates the severe consequences for dissent and follows similarly harsh verdicts against environmental activists deemed critical of the government.

### Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

#### Vietnamese frigate docks in Russia in sign of growing military cooperation.

The Vietnamese missile frigate, the HUNG DAO, conducted a port call in Russia's Vladivostok on 24 July. The Russian-made vessel's port call is likely reflective of growing military cooperation between the two countries and follows the recent trip of President Putin to Vietnam. Russia is likely trying to entice Vietnam into its sphere of influence and covets long-term access to Vietnam's deep-water port at Cam Ranh Bay, a facility used extensively during the Cold War which enabled Russia's Pacific Fleet to conduct bluewater operations.

#### Taiwan begins annual war games.

Taiwan began its annual Han Kuang war games on 22 July, aimed at stimulating the repelling of a Chinese invasion. This year's iteration is designed to be as realistic as possible, dialling down on military pageantry and focusing on crucial elements like nighttime operations and operating with severed lines of communication. The drills also include live fire exercises on Taiwan's outlying islands near the Chinese coast, as well as a civil defence drill in major cities. This comprehensive approach likely aims to demonstrate Taiwan's capability to leverage all its resources and strategies in a unified effort to deter a Chinese invasion at a time when tensions are increasingly strained.



### **The Philippines and China reach an agreement in the South China Sea.**

On 22 July, the Philippines and China reached an agreement to de-escalate tensions at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea. The deal aims to manage the dispute through dialogue without either party compromising on their territorial claims and follows a series of aggressive actions from the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) and Chinese Coast Guard toward the Philippines Navy. The deal will allow the Philippines to resupply its forces at the shoal but denies Manila the right to bring in construction materials used to fortify the area. The deal may set a precedent for other Southeast Asian nations that have territorial disputes in the South China Sea, including Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei.

### **Islamist militants attack government forces in the south of the Philippines.**

On 20 July, Dawlah Islamiya militants attacked Filipino forces with small arms fire in Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Mindanao. One soldier reportedly died in the attack. Dawlah Islamiya (DI), formerly known as the Maute Group, is affiliated with Islamic State (IS) and regularly launches attacks against security forces on the southern island of Mindanao. In March, DI militants ambushed army personnel in the same region, Maguindanao del Sur, killing four. It is highly likely that the group will continue to launch attacks in Mindanao over the coming months.

## **Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:**

### **Several dead in Pakistan during Hyderabad heatwave.**

According to local sources, at least eleven people have died due to a heatwave in Hyderabad, Pakistan. The death toll is likely to further increase in the coming days, as the region continues to record temperatures of around 40 degrees Celsius, likely worsened by high humidity levels. If the casualties increase considerably, there is a realistic possibility of localised civil unrest breaking out.

### **Major bridge collapses in Shaanxi province, China.**

A bridge in the Shaanxi province collapsed on 19 July, killing 11 people. The collapse was caused by floods, which are affecting much of north and central China, as well as by poor infrastructure standards. It is highly likely that, as China continues to be unable to resolve long-standing issues of poor construction quality and materials, further episodes will occur.

### **18 dead in plane crash in Kathmandu, Nepal.**

A Saurya Airlines plane crashed shortly after take-off from Kathmandu on 24 July, killing 18 people and injuring the pilot who was the sole survivor. The plane was heading for maintenance in Pokhara and crashed in challenging conditions with low visibility, factors that will likely raise questions concerning the safety record of Nepal, an impoverished country that has to rely heavily on air travel due to its mountainous terrain.

### **Severe weather forecasted in eastern and northern regions of Japan.**

Severe weather is forecast to impact most of Japan through 26 July, with warnings for landslides and flooding in eastern and northern regions, and potential lightning, tornadoes, strong winds, and hail in western and northern areas. Evacuation orders are in effect for tens of thousands in affected areas, with significant flooding and landslides reported. Disruptions to transport, utilities, and businesses are expected, and flight delays and port closures may occur due to adverse weather conditions.