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Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 23 AUGUST – 30 AUGUST

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Global Intelligence Summary

Week 35: 23 August – 30 August

Executive Summary

- Following Macron's refusal to appoint a leftist prime minister, it is **highly likely** that unrest will increase in **France.**
- Lone wolf attack in **Germany** with possible connections to IS will **almost certainly** lead to increased security and may inspire similar attacks across Europe.
- Hezbollah's attack on **Israel** was largely thwarted but has **likely** informed a wider attack coordinated by **Iran**.
- The largest terrorist attack in **Burkina Faso's** history is **almost certainly** indicative of a rapidly deteriorating security situation that will be marked by increasing VEO activity.

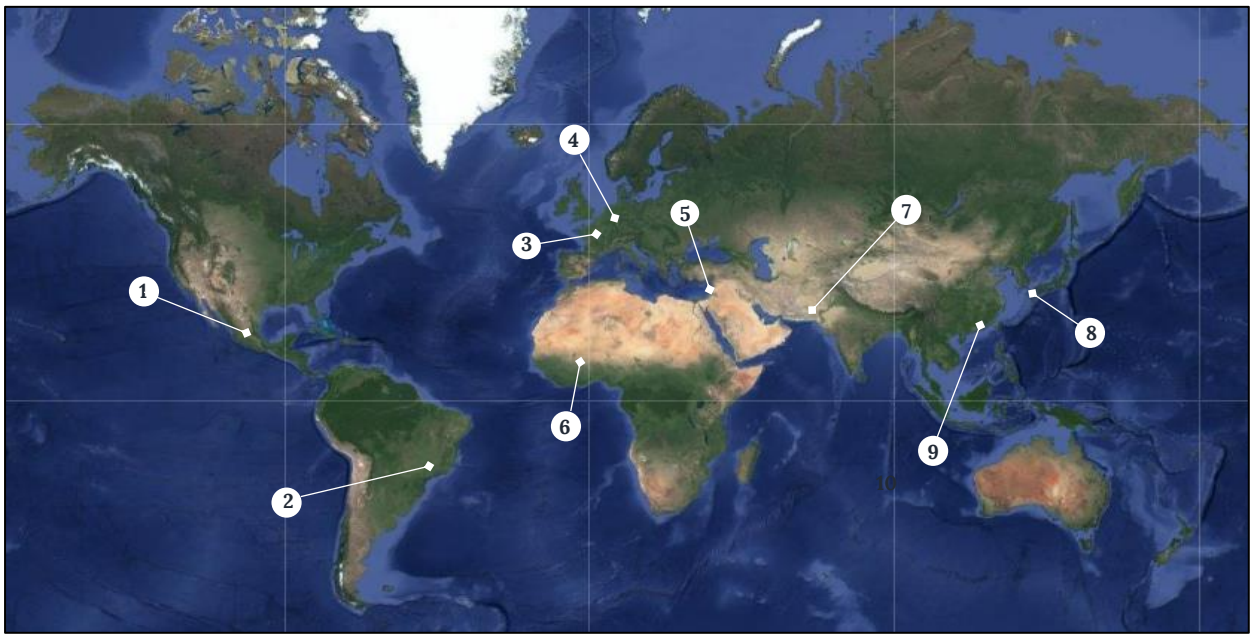

Figure 1: Significant activity identified during the current reporting period.

AMER

1 Mexico: Controversial judicial reform bill approved by commission
2 Brazil: Authorities suspect organised crime behind wildfires

EMEA

3 France: Macron rules out leftist prime minister
4 Germany: Lone wolf kills three at diversity festival
5 Israel, Palestine Lebanon: Hezbollah attack thwarted by pre-emptive strikes
6 Burkina Faso: Largest terrorist attack in country's history

APAC

7 Pakistan: BLA conducts wave of attacks in the western Pakistan
8 Japan: Typhoon Shanshan makes landfall in Kyushu.
9 Hong Kong: Journalists sentenced with sedition

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Americas (AMER)

Mexico:

Congressional commission approves controversial judicial reform bill.
On 26 August, a commission in the lower house of Mexico's Congress approved a judicial reform package, enabling a final debate to take place in the newly-elected Congress next month. The ruling Morena party, who won a landslide victory in June, will hold a two-thirds supermajority in the lower house, the Chamber of Deputies and are only one seat short in the Senate. The most controversial measure in the judicial reform bill involves a plan to have approximately 7,000 judges, magistrates and Supreme Court justices elected by popular vote. Additionally, the bill scraps a 35-year age limit, lowers experience requirements, and reduces the size of the Supreme Court. The overhaul of the judiciary is planned to be enacted in stages, with staggered judicial elections taking place in 2025 and 2027. In reaction, both the US and Canadian embassies expressed serious concerns, which led to Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) announcing a pause in relations with these embassies on 27 August. Unions that represent many of the 55,000 judicial workers in Mexico previously launched an indefinite nationwide strike on 19 August, later joined by Mexico's association of federal judges and magistrates, in protest against the potential reform package.

Assessment: AMLO, the popular outgoing president who has enjoyed high approval ratings and will be replaced by his successor Claudia Sheinbaum in October, frequently clashed with the courts during his presidential term. The Supreme Court in particular, impeded the implementation of several of AMLO's initiatives. In response, AMLO has frequently described the Mexican judiciary as corrupt. Proponents of the judicial reform bill argue that it will address endemic corruption in the judiciary. It is highly likely, however, that the bill will further empower the ruling Moreno party. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) held uninterrupted power for 71 years until 2000, effectively making Mexico a single-party state during this period. While constitutional reform has addressed some of these historic issues in Mexico's democracy, critics of the judicial reform argue that its passage will give the Moreno party too much power without adequate checks and balances.

While purportedly intended to tackle corruption, the bill's passage would likely enable organised crime to exploit judicial elections for their own ends. During Mexico's elections, the cartels regularly assassinate candidates and engage in voter suppression. If judges are directly elected, it is highly likely that cartels will attempt to subvert the democratic process, undermining the strength of the judiciary in tackling organised crime. The strikes against the bill have temporarily weakened Mexico's fragile justice system, and it is likely that the strikes will continue and potentially escalate if the bill passes through both houses.

Brazil:

Large wildfires continue in Brazil, authorities suspect criminal cause.
Record-breaking wildfires are ongoing across the Amazon, Cerrado savannah, Pantanal wetland and the state of Sao Paulo in Brazil. So far, two people have died as a result of the fires, in Urupes. 48 cities declared a red alert due to poor air quality. The smog has impacted cities such as Brazil's capital, Brasilia, as well as Sao Paulo, Manaus, Porto Velho, Rio Branco and Sao Jose do Rio Preto. In Sao Paulo state, a crisis cabinet was set up to tackle the fires, and the Brazilian environment minister declared that Brazil is "at war" with the fires on 25 August.

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Assessment: Authorities suspect that organised crime gangs are largely responsible for the fires. While a federal prosecutor has stated that there is so far no conclusive evidence that the arson has been coordinated, there are several indications that criminal gangs are likely involved. Firstly, of the 3,500 fire alerts in southeastern Sao Paulo state, over half were raised on the same day, 23 August. The State Agriculture Secretary later told media that the starting of fires in different locations at the same time indicates coordination and criminal intent. Secondly, according to Brazilian President Lula da Silva, no fires caused by lightning strikes were detected by Brazil's national fire monitoring centre. Thirdly, Brazilian police have arrested four people linked to the fires, with two men caught on security cameras setting fires. Some of the suspects have reportedly told police that the fires were set in retaliation against crimefighting efforts. It is likely that the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) gang, one of Brazil's largest and most powerful organised criminal groups, are connected to the fires. Authorities have recently engaged in a campaign to tackle the PCC's illicit adulterated fuels trade, which is the most likely trigger for retaliation by the PCC. In 2006, the PCC unleashed a wave of violence across Sao Paulo state which killed over 150 people. While human involvement in Brazilian wildfires is not uncommon, mainly due to illegal deforestation and agricultural practices, the potential weaponisation of wildfires by criminal gangs is a concerning new development. With a relatively low number of resources, manpower and technical skill, the setting of wildfires can have a significant, highly visible and widespread impact that overstretches resources and capabilities. The effects of the current fires are being felt in several major Brazilian cities, which are covered in smog. It is likely that if the fires are indeed the result of coordinated organised criminal actions, gangs will continue to deploy the tactic in future when the need for retaliation arises. There is a realistic possibility that gangs elsewhere in Latin America may be inspired by the weaponisation of wildfires and deploy the tactic themselves.

AMER Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

Honduras to end extradition treaty with the US.
On 28 August, Honduras announced that it would terminate its century-old extradition treaty with the US following US concerns over a meeting between Honduran and Venezuelan defence officials about drug trafficking. President Xiomara Castro condemned what she saw as US interference in Honduran politics. The treaty had facilitated the extradition of prominent figures, including former President Juan Orlando Hernandez, convicted in the US on drug charges. The treaty's termination likely signals Honduras' alignment with Venezuela and a deterioration in US-Honduran relations which could harm US efforts to combat drugs trafficking.

Protests and government crackdown continue in Venezuela.
Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado called for peaceful protests and international pressure to oust Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, on 27 August. This follows a 22 August decision by the Supreme Court of Venezuela, which is made up of Maduro loyalists, to certify the contested 28 July election result. The election result was highly likely rigged by the regime, with several indications that the opposition won a landslide victory. The regime has since launched a crackdown, and on 27 August, leading opposition figure and lawyer Perkins Rocha was allegedly "kidnapped" by security forces. An opposition demonstration occurred in Caracas on 28 August, attended by Machado, which was smaller than prior protests. There had been a relative lull in unrest in the past fortnight, highly likely due to the impact of government suppression in arresting protest leaders and the threat of reprisals. While Machado's call for a revival of anti-government protests is likely to temporarily increase unrest in Venezuela in the short term, it is likely that the extent of the regime's crackdown will severely curtail the opposition's organisational capability.

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Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

Haitian military starts recruitment drive to combat gang violence.
The Haitian government has launched a huge recruitment drive for its military in a bid to combat escalating gang violence, with gangs controlling 80 per cent of the country. Thousands of Haitian youth are seizing the opportunity, likely as it is one of the few sustainable sources of revenue in a country plagued by poverty and unemployment. However, after being disbanded in 1995 and only reinstated in 2017, it is likely that the military is ill-equipped to deal with the well-armed and organised gangs. Haitian forces have also initiated a joint operation with the recently deployed Kenyan police to oust gangs from one of Port-au-Prince's most dangerous neighbourhoods. However, the Kenyan police have not yet been paid by the UN, which, if this continues, could impact the effectiveness of the intervention force.

US warns of increased violence in Culiacan, Sinaloa.
The US Embassy in Mexico issued a security alert on 29 August warning of violence and security concerns in Culiacan, Sinaloa province. The alert has warned of the potential for violence across the state but has not provided further details. The alert has likely been published in response to the recent arrest of the Sinaloa Cartel's leader, "El Mayo" and the son of El Chapo Guzman which has created a power vacuum in Mexico's most powerful organised crime group.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

Central Bolivia struggles to contain wildfires.
The central Bolivian department of Santa Cruz is grappling with a severe environmental crisis, as over 27 wildfires rage, mainly in the Chiquitania region. These fires, exacerbated by extreme drought and strong winds, have devastated 26 of the department's 56 municipalities and burned nearly 2 million hectares, surpassing the damage caused by the 2019 fires. The situation is particularly dire in municipalities such as San Ignacio de Velasco, San Matías, Santa Ana, and Concepción, where conditions remain favourable for further fire spread. Moreover, Bolivia lacks the personnel and resources to effectively curtail the spread of the fires and will likely be forced to ask for international aid. Fires have significantly worsened air quality, severely affecting vulnerable populations like children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions.

Brazilian state of Rondônia declares state of emergency.
The Brazilian state of Rondônia has declared a state of emergency for 180 days valid from 26 August due to the impact of forest fires. The number of fires has doubled compared to August 2023, with nearly 6000 so far in 2024. The fires have hugely disrupted agriculture, river navigation and the local economy. The state is also suffering from water shortages due to a prolonged drought, which is forecasted to last for the next 90 days. The major city of Porto-Velho has not recorded significant rainfall for three months. Water levels on the Madeira River, which runs through the states of Rondônia and Amazonas, have reached their lowest level since 1964 and will likely disproportionately affect riverine communities.

Widespread power outages reported across Venezuela.
Power outages were reported in at least 17 Venezuelan regions, including the capital Caracas on 30 August. The outages are similar to the ones in 2019 which began just before the presidential election and lasted for several months afterwards. The 2019 outages resulted in at least 43 deaths after disrupting the country's healthcare facilities, transport, industry, and water services. President Maduro blamed both the 2019 and current outages on "sabotage"; however, the likelihood is that Venezuela has suffered a huge reduction in technical expertise following a brain drain of skilled workers.

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Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

France:

Macron rules out appointment of prime minister from New Popular Front.
On 26 August, the office of French President Emmanuel Macron stated that following consultations, Macron has ruled out the appointment of a prime minister from the left-wing coalition New Popular Front (NFP). The June and July snap legislative elections resulted in a hung parliament, with the NFP, Macron's centrist Ensemble party, and the far-right National Rally (RN) parties winning most of the available seats. Of these, the NFP won the most seats. The RN stated earlier on 26 August that the party would block any prime ministerial appointment coming from the NFP. In reaction, the NFP has announced a refusal to engage in any new consultations unless they are to discuss the nomination of their candidate, Lucie Castets, as prime minister.

Assessment: The NFP is an electoral alliance between the far-left France Unbowed (LFI), the Socialists, the Greens and the Communists. Of these, Mélenchon's LFI has the most seats. While Castets, is affiliated with the centre-left Socialist Party, it is likely that her confirmation that she would appoint LFI ministers led Macron to conclude that her appointment would be politically unworkable. This is due to the threat of no-confidence motions against a government with LFI ministers. In recent political history, since the establishment of the French Fifth Republic's strong presidential system in 1958, coalition negotiations have not been a common feature of the French political process. The current stalemate is unlikely to be resolved with a stable, lasting solution. The NFP and NR are likely to both seek to exploit the political chaos to oust Macron, whose presidential term is set to end in 2027, via a call for an early presidential election, should the stalemate not be resolved. The LFI has called for large demonstrations on 7 September, a day before the end of the Paris Paralympic Games, and the Communists have called for a "big popular mobilisation" in the coming days. It is highly likely that civil unrest will increase in France, after a lull during the Olympic Games. Due to the high-security measures that will be enforced during the Paralympic Games in Paris, it is likely that demonstrations will be met with a vigorous police response, which would in turn likely lead to violent clashes.

Germany:

Lone wolf attack kills three and injures several others at German festival.
On 23 August, a lone wolf assailant conducted a mass stabbing attack at the City Festival in Solingen, North Rhine-Westphalia in northern Germany. The festival was a three-day event that celebrated Solingen's 650th anniversary, labelled as a "Festival of Diversity", and was immediately cancelled. The attacker stabbed at least nine people in the neck. Three victims were pronounced dead at the scene and several others were admitted to hospital with severe injuries. After a manhunt lasting just over 24 hours, the assailant handed himself in at a local police station. The attacker, known as "Issa", has been described as a Syrian refugee who was claiming German asylum. The attacker claims to have connections to the Islamic State (IS) and reportedly stated that he had pledged allegiance to IS to "avenge Muslims in Palestine and everywhere". German intelligence has indicated that the attacker was not previously identified as an Islamist extremist.

Assessment: IS' official media outlet, Amaq, was quick to claim a connection to the attacker but has not provided any evidence to substantiate a prior connection. Moreover, it is atypical for a member of IS to hand themselves in after an attack, potentially highlighting the assailant's mental state and motivations. IS is likely claiming an affiliation with the attacker partially because the attack was successful but more importantly, is seeking to use it to bolster its propaganda. IS'

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ability to conduct complex external attacks was greatly diminished due to coalition efforts at degrading the group and forcing it into an insurgency. The recent attack in Moscow, which was almost certainly orchestrated by the Afghanistan-based affiliate Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), may indicate a resurgence in these capabilities. However, the group's capability to conduct terrorist attacks in Europe is currently likely primarily achieved through its ability to inspire low-sophistication lone wolf attacks- attacks that are challenging to pre-empt or disrupt and can occur almost anywhere. IS continues to call on potential followers to use methods like stabbing, car-ramming, and arson to project the idea that it is everywhere despite a reduction in its ability to conduct more complex attacks. The group is almost certainly capitalising on current sentiment and division caused by the war in Gaza and Western nations' support for Israel. Multiple media outlets tied to IS have called for further attacks in Europe, and it is almost certain that enhanced security measures will be put in place at upcoming high-profile events like the Paris Paralympics, Munich's Oktoberfest, and a multitude of late summer festivals. The attack has been leveraged by both the far-right and the opposition in Germany to demand change, especially as the attacker was due deportation. With regional elections upcoming, Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) will likely exploit the attack for political gain, which could inspire protests and even far-right attacks. In response, Chancellor Scholz has held a meeting with the opposition to explore increased deportations, changes to Germany's knife laws and changes to its immigration policies. However, there is a realistic possibility that increased public discourse over immigration and the threat of deportations will increase extremist attacks in Germany.

Israel, Palestine and Lebanon:

Hezbollah strike on Israel disrupted by IDF strikes.
On 24 August, Lebanese Hezbollah conducted a reprisal attack for Israel's assassination of Fuad Shukr. The layered attack consisted of approximately 200-300 projectiles, including rockets, missiles and one-way attack drones. The attack consisted of two waves, with the first wave designed to overwhelm Israeli air defence, targeting Israel Defence Force (IDF) positions in northern Israel. The second wave was designed to bypass air defence and penetrate deeper into Israel, including military installations near Hadera and Tel Aviv. However, the scale of Hezbollah's attack was intended to be much larger but was reduced by pre-emptive IDF strikes. According to Israeli sources, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) deployed over 100 warplanes and destroyed thousands of Hezbollah launch sites and munitions 30 minutes before the attack. The IDF assesses that between 50 and 67 per cent of munitions set aside for the attack were destroyed. Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah has claimed that the attack was just the initial phase of retribution. A spokesperson for the Houthi Movement has also stated that their retaliation for Israel's strike on al-Hudaydah is "definitely coming". The Pentagon has warned that Iran is still planning a major attack on Israel with help from its Axis of Resistance in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq and Syria.

Assessment: The IAF's pre-emptive strikes on Hezbollah likely indicate the effectiveness of Israeli intelligence which is almost certainly being bolstered with external help. However, if Iran and its proxies are to launch a major strike from multiple axes, it is almost certain that the IDF does not have the combat power to conduct multiple pre-emptive strikes on several fronts. It is likely that Hezbollah's two waves of strikes were not its main retaliation but part of Iran's wider strategy. The Hezbollah attack has likely fixed IDF resources in the north of Israel and likely been used to conduct reconnaissance in force- a deliberate military action designed to test and understand the enemy's force disposition and identify any vulnerabilities. Iran and its proxies have likely learned lessons from the Hezbollah attack that will inform how it plans and conducts a wider attack. Iranian forces, media, and senior officials continue to act and posture themselves in a manner suggesting an imminent attack, likely delaying action to plan, coordinate, and, crucially, evaluate the progress of ongoing peace talks. The White House has reiterated its commitment to defend Israel and continues to maintain an enhanced force posture in the region. The US defence of Israel will likely foster greater political division in the States and will likely result in reprisal

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attacks on US forces from Iranian proxies throughout the Middle East, a development that could further escalate tensions.

Burkina Faso:

Al-Qaeda-linked militants killed hundreds on road to capital.
On 24 August, the Burkinabe town of Barsalogho was targeted in a major militant attack. Current estimates assess that as many as 200-500 people were killed in the attack and hundreds injured, most of whom were reportedly civilians. The attack has been claimed by the al-Qaeda-linked Jihadist group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). The military government was reportedly aware of an impending attack and ordered troops, Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP) and civilians to hastily erect defences. JNIM ambushed the defenders in the open, firing indiscriminately on those within the defensive area until reinforcements of Burkinabe troops and the VDP managed to repel the attack.

Assessment: The Barsalogho attack marks the worst terrorist attack in Burkina Faso's history and clearly demonstrates how much the security situation has deteriorated since the expulsion of Western forces. Moreover, with the junta government's expulsion of Western forces in neighbouring Niger and Mali, violent extremist organisations (VEOs) have been presented with favourable conditions to achieve their objectives. JNIM in particular have exploited the regional destabilisation to expand their operations across the Sahel. Whilst VEOs like JNIM do not typically govern territory in the same manner as a state, it is now assessed that JNIM controls approximately 40 per cent of Burkina Faso as well as huge parts of Mali and Niger.

The attack has almost certainly increased pressure on the junta government and forms part of JNIM's strategy to target isolated government-held towns to undermine the junta's authority. Barsalogho is strategically important because the next town is Kaya, located in north-central Burkina Faso, which hosts the last major government military base before reaching the capital, Ouagadougou. JNIM is likely to continue to employ such brutal tactics to further undermine the regime and also to force civilians to flee as it advances towards Ouagadougou. The current Islamist insurgency, which involves multiple VEOs, has led to multiple coup attempts. This is likely to result in the junta prioritising regime security over counter-insurgency efforts, leading to greater instability and more attacks. After the expulsion of Western forces, the junta has relied on external support from Mali under the recently formed Alliance of Sahel States and to a lesser extent Russian mercenaries. With Mali facing a similar situation, it is not in a position to send serious reinforcements without jeopardising its security. Russian forces are currently conducting more offensive operations in Mali with limited success. The junta may look to the Kremlin for additional support, although with the war in Ukraine, Russian forces are likely overstretched. If Burkina Faso fails to secure significant external support, it will likely set the conditions for VEOs to expand their operations into the northern parts of coastal West African states like Benin, Ghana and Togo.

EMEA Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

Strike set for UK's busiest airport.
On 31 August, more than 600 Border Force passport control workers at London Heathrow, the UK's busiest airport, will go on strike for four days. This will then be followed by nearly three weeks of work-to-rule action where workers will do no more work than what is contractually obliged. The strike will almost certainly lead to significant disruption and could have knock-on effects for other UK-based airports.

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State elections in Germany's Thuringia and Saxony.
On 1 September, state elections will be held in Thuringia and Saxony. Recent polls indicate that the German far-right party, Alternative for Germany (AfD) is leading the race and has likely capitalised on the recent attack in Solingen. However, they are unlikely to win a majority, and the remaining parties will be highly reticent to form a coalition with the AfD. Another party polling well is Sahra Wagenknecht's new Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) party, a left-wing nationalist, populist and Eurosceptic party. If both parties perform well, the remaining parties will face a challenging decision on coalition partners, as both parties advocate for agendas that significantly diverge from those of the central government.

Azerbaijan to hold parliamentary elections.
On 1 September, Azeris will go to the polls in parliamentary elections after President Ilham Aliyev dissolved parliament in June. Over fears of electoral fraud, nearly 300 election monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will observe the polls, an organisation that recently criticised the 2024 presidential election for its lack of transparency and choice. Aliyev's New Azerbaijan party will almost certainly win the election and may increase its current majority.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

CENTCOM kills al-Qaeda affiliate leader in Syria.
On 23 August, forces from the US Central Command (CENTCOM) killed the Hurras al-Din senior leader Abu-'Abd al-Rahman al-Makki in a targeted kinetic strike in Syria. Al-Makki was a Shura Council member of the al-Qaeda affiliate responsible for conducting terrorist operations in Syria. The killing could temporarily disrupt Hurras al-Din's operations but may also inspire reprisal attacks on US forces in the region.

Israeli forces conduct largest operation in West Bank in months.
On 27 August, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) began an extensive military operation in the West Bank, launching raids in Nablus, Qabatiya, Silat al Khartia, al Fara refugee camp, Jenin refugee camp, and Nour al Shams refugee camp. The operation has involved hundreds of personnel accompanied by drones, making the operation the largest in the West Bank for months. On 29 August, Israeli forces killed five alleged Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) militants, reportedly in a home next to a mosque in Tulkarm near the Nour al Shams refugee camp. According to the IDF, one of those killed was Mohammed Jaber, known as Abu Shujaa, a commander of the local PIJ branch. Abu Shujaa is suspected to have been involved in several terror attacks, namely the June murder of an Israeli citizen in the city of Qalqilya, West Bank. Local media reports that at least 17 people have been killed in this week's West Bank operation thus far. The IDF has generally refrained from regularly conducting such large-scale operations in the West Bank, and the United Nations (UN) has issued a statement urging Israel to cease the operation. It is likely that such targeted operations in the West Bank will continue, due to its use as a base of operations for terrorist attacks against Israel. While the Fatah-controlled Palestinian National Authority (PA) in the West Bank are highly unlikely to react to the operation with any military response, it is likely that the relatively substantial IDF presence in the West Bank will generate civil unrest.

Egypt delivers arms to Somalia.
Egypt has delivered military aid to Somalia for the first time in over four decades in a move that will almost certainly escalate relations with Ethiopia. The move follows a recent security pact between Egypt and Somalia, partially motivated by Ethiopia's deal with Somaliland, which seeks independence from Somalia. Egypt has also offered to send troops to Somalia for a new peacekeeping mission, raising the risk of a proxy conflict between the two nations that have been at odds for years over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

AU and UN planning new Somali peacekeeping mission.

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The African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) are planning a new AU-led peacekeeping mission in Somalia, set to replace the current mission which ends in late 2024. The AU endorsed this successor mission in June 2024, developed a strategic plan in August, and submitted it to the UN Security Council for approval. This new mission, named the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), will maintain a similar force size to its predecessor, ATMIS, with around 11,911 personnel. AUSSOM will focus on ongoing peace-building efforts, such as providing security and countering al-Shabaab, while international partners and the Somali Federal Government (SFG) will handle state-building tasks. If the peacekeeping mission does not materialise, al-Shabaab and other militant groups will almost certainly be in an advantageous position to increase their attacks, expand their influence and undermine the SFG.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

Torrential rain leads to major landslide near Naples, Italy.
A catastrophic landslide caused by torrential rain has killed at least two people near the town of San Felice a Cancello, located approximately 30 kilometres (19 miles) northeast of Naples, Italy. The area that collapsed had already been severely weakened by a wildfire that destroyed much of the vegetation. Southern Italy has been facing extreme temperatures and heavy rainfall, creating conditions ripe for flash floods, landslides, and other environmental disasters, which have been further worsened by deforestation.

World Food Program to launch investigation in Sudan.
The UN's World Food Program (WFP) has launched an investigation into senior officials in Sudan for alleged fraud and for obfuscating the Sudanese army's role in obstructing aid deliveries. Other allegations include mismanagement, misleading donors, and the disappearance of resources. Sudan is now facing its worst humanitarian crisis in decades as a result of the civil war. 80 per cent of health facilities are out of service, millions have been displaced and around 20 million are faced with food insecurity.

Dozens killed by bursting dam in eastern Sudan.
At least 30 people have been killed and hundreds missing in eastern Sudan after a dam burst which flooded at least 20 villages. Surging waters caused by torrential rain overwhelmed the Arbaat Dam on 25 August, just 40km north of Port Sudan, the country's current de facto capital and home to the central government alongside international diplomats, aid agencies and thousands of displaced people. The dam was the main source of water for Port Sudan, which is also home to Sudan's largest port and working airport, where most international aid is received. Flooding caused by the collapsed dam will almost certainly hinder humanitarian efforts which have already been greatly impeded by the civil war.

Houthis to allow assistance to damaged oil tanker in the Red Sea.
The Houthis have reportedly agreed to tugboats and rescue vessels accessing the stricken oil tanker SOUNION (IMO: 9312145) in the Red Sea. The Houthis are responsible for immobilising and damaging the Greek-flagged vessel during an attack on 21 August, and the tanker has since been abandoned. On 29 August, the Houthi media published footage showing Houthi militants boarding the abandoned vessel and detonating explosives on deck. Carrying 150,000 tonnes of crude oil, there are serious concerns that unless controlled, the leaking of oil could lead to a "potential environmental catastrophe". A major spill from the vessel could potentially be one of the largest vessel oil spills in history. The Pentagon has stated that the vessel appears to be leaking oil, however, Aspides, the EU mission in the Red Sea, has since stated that the area around the SOUNION is free of oil. If an oil spill occurred, Houthi Yemen would highly likely be impacted considering its dependence on fishing, which has highly likely motivated the Houthi decision to allow assistance to the vessel.

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Asia Pacific (APAC)

Pakistan:

BLA conduct series of attacks under "Operation Herof".
On 25 August, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) launched "Operation Herof" in the Balochistan region. The operation began with a complex attack that used vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) at Bela Camp to gain access to the Pakistani military facility. This was followed by BLA squads entering the compound and killing 24 Pakistani soldiers with small arms fire. BLA militants then conducted a series of attacks across the region targeting Pakistan's security services, and critical national infrastructure (CNI) including railways, and the seizure of major highways. The BLA's Commander-in-Chief, Bashir Zeib Baloch, stated that the declared intent of the operation was to force the Pakistani government into ceasing its operations in Balochistan. The operation included at least 800 BLA militants, took place in 12 cities across nine districts, and according to the BLA, resulted in the deaths of over 100 Pakistani troops. The BLA established roadblocks and checked the identities of people on highways, shooting 23 identified as non-local migrant workers from the Punjab region.

Assessment: The attacks began on the 18th anniversary of the death of a Baloch nationalist leader, likely suggesting that the BLA are continuing a trend of conducting attacks on important Baloch dates. The series of BLA attacks was likely organised to demonstrate the group's growing capabilities and ability to launch multiple coordinated complex attacks. The successful partial seizure of a Pakistani military camp and control of highways are further evidence of the BLA's capabilities and will likely jeopardise Pakistan's attempts to incorporate the region into China's Belts and Roads Initiative (BRI). The targeting of essential elements of the BRI, such as roads and railways, was likely designed to deter foreign investment and to send a strategic message that the BLA will not allow the exploitation of local resources. The purported mass execution of Punjab labourers was also likely aimed at achieving these objectives. The central government is increasingly having to turn to labour imported from other parts of Pakistan due to Baloch resistance. High-profile BLA attacks on non-Baloch labour are highly likely to increase to deter future migration into the region. The overall success of the BLA attacks and its ability to provide real-time information about the attacks combined with sophisticated propaganda videos are likely to drive BLA recruitment and funding, further contributing to its operational capabilities.

Japan:

Typhoon Shanshan makes landfall in Kyushu.
The strongest typhoon in the 2024 Pacific typhoon season thus far, Shanshan had maximum windspeeds of 213 km/h and average windspeeds of 157 km/h just before landfall. The typhoon made landfall on the southwestern Japanese island of Kyushu on 28 August. Over 5.2 million people were given evacuation orders. At least four deaths and 45 injuries have been reported thus far, with three of the deaths being attributed to landslides. Kagoshima and Miyazaki Prefecture were the most severely impacted areas, with damaged residences, overturned cars, flooding, and landslides. Over 250,000 people were left without power, primarily in Kagoshima Prefecture. Several major international companies suspended operations at their facilities in the area. No impact was reported at Sendai Nuclear Power Plant. In Oita Prefecture, level 5 emergency warnings, which indicate threat to life, were issued for the cities of Yufu and Usa, after the Miyakawa River burst its banks and possible flooding from the Yakkan River.

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Assessment: Authorities have described Shanshan as one of the strongest storms to ever hit Kyushu. After moving through Kyushu, Shanshan weakened into a tropical storm and is currently moving through Shikoku island. While the storm caused mass disruptions, the level of humanitarian impact has been low relative to the storm's strength. This is due to Japan's low vulnerability to tropical cyclones, as the country has comprehensive preparedness and resiliency measures. The mass evacuation orders issued by authorities almost certainly significantly reduced the death toll. The storm is forecast to further weaken into a tropical depression and continue moving eastwards over the weekend. While substantially weakened, authorities are concerned that the warm and moist air around the storm that caused heavy rainfall far from the main body in Kyushu will continue to cause adverse weather over the coming days. On 30 August, tens of thousands were asked to evacuate Tokyo due to landslide warnings, with three Tokyo rivers, the Meguro, Nogawa and Sengawa being issued level 4 warnings. It is highly likely that torrential rain will continue across large areas of Japan over the weekend, disrupting travel and causing factory and office closures.

Hong Kong:

Pro-democracy journalists charged with sedition.
On 29 August, two editors who led a pro-democracy newspaper, Stand News, were tried by a Hong Kong court and found guilty of sedition. Chung Pui-kuen and Patrick Lam, could now face up to two years in prison. The case marks the first ruling against journalists in Hong Kong since the territory's handover from the UK to China in 1997. The ruling has been condemned by rights groups as a nefarious campaign against the freedom of the press.

Assessment: The case forms part of a wider campaign in Hong Kong aimed at suppressing dissent, and freedom of speech and will likely serve as a precedent for future rulings as Beijing consolidates its control over the territory. Beijing's ability to stifle the opposition in Hong Kong has been greatly augmented since the introduction of the controversial National Security Law (NSL), which has been in effect since 2020. The NSL was introduced under the justification of combating secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion of foreign forces, although Beijing's interpretation of these acts likely differs vastly from many in Hong Kong. Whilst the NSL has been greatly successful at curbing dissent, the Stand News editors were actually charged under a colonial-era sedition law. Beijing's tactic was likely an attempt to deflect from the NSL by adhering to existing legal frameworks but with the same outcome. The case and the wider effort to suppress dissent are unlikely to provoke civil unrest after the crackdown following the 2019-20 protests. However, it will likely damage Hong Kong's reputation and contribute to deterring foreign investment in one of the world's major business hubs.

APAC Summary and Forecast:

Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

Myanmar junta commits to 2025 elections.
Myanmar's military junta has promised to hold a general election in late 2025 but with voting to be staggered due to security concerns. However, junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has made the same promise since 2021 when the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party remains disbanded. The announcement has been largely dismissed by the opposition who likely assess that it will be mired in fraud and only used as a mechanism to legitimise military rule. The junta is also likely using the promise of elections to deter the ethnic rebel forces that continue to seize territory from the military.

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BJP strike paralyses transport in India's West Bengal.
On 28 August in West Bengal, thousands of protesters, mainly Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers, blocked trains, halted buses, and forced shops to close in response to the brutal rape and murder of a trainee doctor. The BJP called for a 12-hour state-wide protest strike, following clashes with police who used tear gas and water cannons to disperse a recent march. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP party is in opposition in the state and may seek to conduct further protests to undermine the All-India Trinamool Congress coalition which leads the eastern state.

Thailand's Pheu Thai to exclude military-backed party from coalition.
Thailand's Pheu Thai Party will exclude the Palang Pracharat Party from its coalition in forming the next government after Palang Pracharat leader Prawit Wongsuwon's absence from a key parliamentary vote. Despite this, Pheu Thai is confident of securing a strong coalition with over 300 seats. This decision underscores ongoing tensions with military-backed factions, reflecting deeper political rifts and potentially impacting the stability of the new government as Pheu Thai aims to consolidate power and distance itself from military influences.

Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

Multiple attacks through Indian union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
Throughout the reporting period, there have been multiple attacks and counter-terrorism operations throughout multiple districts in the Indian-administered union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The territory is set to hold its first elections in over a decade starting in mid-September. Militant attacks are likely to increase in the run-up to the elections, with violent extremists' intent on influencing the elections.

PLA to conduct military exercises on China-Myanmar border.
China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has initiated joint air-ground patrols along the border with Myanmar after property in China was damaged by cross-border artillery fire. On 27-29 August elements from the Southern Theater of the PLA conducted live-fire exercises, likely aimed at sending a message to rebel ethnic forces. China is likely becoming increasingly concerned over an overspill of the conflict and the war has decreased cross-border trade. Beijing's ultimate objective is likely to pressure the warring sides into peace talks, a development that will likely increase its influence in the country.

Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

Cholera warning across Nepal.
The Ministry of Health and Population in Nepal has advised all residents to boil water or purify it before use after identifying 22 cholera cases in the past two weeks. The real number is almost certainly higher as most of the country is not under active surveillance for the disease. The ministry has also warned of increased transmission rates as the dry season approaches due to the increased mixing of waster with decreasing water sources.

Mass flooding in Bangladesh causes devastation.
Heavy rainfall resulting from annual monsoon conditions has caused significant floods, with Noakhali, Cumilla, Laxipur, Feni, Chattogram and Moulvibazar being most impacted. Over 5.7 million people have been affected, with around 500,000 displaced. So far, at least 20 people have died. It is highly likely that the death toll will continue to rise, with rescue and relief operations are ongoing. Water from upstream rivers in India has worsened the floods, with Indian authorities releasing water from dams. Because of this, it is likely that anti-Indian sentiment will increase in Bangladesh, which could result in further attacks on Hindus.

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