



# Global Intelligence Summary

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## IN THIS REPORT

### Americas (AMER)

Reports that the **US** is considering drone strikes on cartels in **Mexico** will **likely** strain bilateral relations and provoke retaliation from cartel groups if authorised.

The gangs' occupation of Mirebalais, **Haiti** is **likely** to be a setback for the government and international forces. It will **almost certainly** give criminal groups more control over aid routes supplying Port-au-Prince.

### Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

Protests in **Spain**, driven by rising living costs, are **likely** to continue over Easter and during this year's high tourism season. While **likely** to be peaceful, there is a **realistic possibility** of isolated cases of harassment.

**Russia** is **highly likely** incentivised to launch its new spring offensive in northeastern **Ukraine** to gain further leverage to achieve its maximalist war goals, but its forces will **likely** struggle to successfully seize Sumy City.

Sustained **Israeli** strikes in **Lebanon** and reports that **Iran** is continuing to resupply Hezbollah through the Port of Beirut are likely to undermine the ceasefire agreement and increase the chances of renewed conflict.

The downing of a **Malian** drone in **Algeria** has precipitated a diplomatic crisis between the two countries. The incident **likely** showcases Algeria's deteriorating position in the Sahel and vis-à-vis the junta states.

A return to civil war in Yemen, if unconfirmed reports of preparations for a ground offensive in **Yemen** are accurate, **likely** pose risks of renewed long-range strikes by the Houthis against **Saudi Arabia** and the **UAE**.

Al-Shabaab **unlikely** to imminently take control of **Mogadishu, Somalia**, but is **likely** to conduct more attacks in the capital amid significant territorial gains.

### Asia-Pacific (APAC)

Multiple ceasefire violations in **Myanmar almost certainly** indicate that both sides are exploiting the aftermath of the earthquake to consolidate territory and advance under the cover of relief efforts.

## Americas (AMER)

### **US and Mexico: Trump administration considers drone strikes on cartels.**

Reporting from current and former US officials indicates that the Trump administration is exploring the possibility of conducting drone strikes as part of a wider effort to counter narcotics trafficking on the US' southern border. Proposals that include the White House, Pentagon and US intelligence agencies are in the early stages but have included the option of directly targeting Mexican cartel leaders in Mexico. Discussions have included the US conducting joint operations with Mexico as well as the potential for unilateral strikes.

Additional reporting indicates that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is currently reviewing its authorities to use lethal force against Mexican cartels in Mexico and in other parts of the world. This has involved consultation with legal experts and operational planners to identify what operations the CIA could theoretically conduct and what would be the potential risks of those operations.

**Assessment:** Since coming to office, President Trump has made combating the illicit flow of narcotics, primarily fentanyl, into the US one his key objectives. Early moves have included the designation of several Mexican cartels as foreign terrorist organisations (FTOs), increased sanctions on cartels, and the deployment of advanced military intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to the border and even over Mexican airspace. These actions have been further supported by the threat of imposing tariffs on Mexico if it does not take action against the cartels, forcing the Mexican government to increase arrests, extraditions, and seizures of cartel members and assets.

Reports suggest that the cartels are under unprecedented pressure and have been forced to adapt their operations as a result of pressure from Mexican operations, which have likely been supported by US intelligence. Advanced US ISR assets capable of signals intelligence (SIGINT) and imagery intelligence (IMINT) have likely afforded the US military and intelligence agencies with a comprehensive understanding of cartel operations, locations, networks and leadership. This has likely allowed the US to develop potential targets, should the use of direct action be sanctioned by the White House.

However, there are likely several factors limiting the US' use of direct action against the cartels. Firstly, there is a realistic possibility that threats to conduct drone strikes and other forms of direct action are part of a gambit to exert increased pressure on Mexico to deal with the cartels independently. Secondly, while lethal force is theoretically permissible, the presence of a large number of US citizens in Mexico, some of whom are involved with the cartels, means the consequences of such actions could be far-reaching. Collateral damage, such as the accidental death of an American citizen, could create significant diplomatic and legal issues for both the CIA and the US government. Thirdly, using lethal force, especially unilaterally, would almost certainly strain relations with Mexico and could lead to a cessation of intelligence sharing with the US, a move that could ultimately weaken counter-cartel operations.

Most importantly, the use of direct action in any form could precipitate a major change in the security environment in Mexico that could threaten US interests, personnel and assets. The cartels may be forced to alter their tactics, which could involve more sophisticated counter-surveillance measures, more innovative ways to smuggle illicit goods into the US or an escalation in violence, both inside Mexico and potentially in the US. The targeting of cartels, especially leadership, is likely to lead to the fracturing of cartels and power vacuums, resulting in cartel infighting, territorial disputes and rival cartels attempting to exploit weaknesses.

In a worst-case scenario, the cartels may perceive increased US involvement as an existential threat to their operations and could respond with a range of retaliatory actions to deter further intervention. There is a realistic possibility that this could include increased cartel violence on the border, attacks on Mexican security services and assassinations of high-profile civilian targets such as politicians and journalists. A more extreme response could involve cartels deliberately targeting US interests in Mexico or beyond. This might include attacks on American businesses, kidnappings of US citizens or deliberate attempts to flood the US with higher volumes of narcotics and potentially more lethal varieties.

### **Haiti: Gangs take control of Mirebalais, north of Port-au-Prince.**

After more than a week of fighting, gangs associated with the Viv Ansam coalition have taken control of Mirebalais, north of Port-au-Prince. Gangs have subsequently launched an offensive toward Péligré, where a hydroelectric power plant is located, but have been contained by authorities. In Mirebalais and neighbouring Saut-d'Eau, at least 31,000 people have been displaced and more than 500 prisoners freed. Local sources have reported occasional cases of mob violence by local residents against suspected gang members. Moreover, the arbitrary killing of civilians by gangs has continued. Due to the attacks, the hospital in Mirebalais was forced to close and to evacuate all patients.

**Assessment:** Mirebalais is a strategic town located at the intersection of Route 305 and National Road 3, and controls part of the northern trade from the border to Port-au-Prince. It is also on the main route connecting the capital to Cap-Haïtien and, therefore, can be used to control or restrict aid flows to Port-au-Prince. This is especially the case due to the renewed gang attacks on Toussaint Louverture International Airport (PAP), which have rendered the airport non-operational and have therefore increased Cap-Haïtien's importance as the main entry point into Haiti and aid distribution centre. After taking control of the town, the gangs have likely implemented their strategy meant to destroy all civil society and administrative institutions to force the population into a state of dependency. Measures in Mirebalais have included the forced "disappearance" of two journalists, as reported by the Association of Haitian Journalists (AJH), the forced closure of the hospital, and the killing of humanitarian workers, including at least two nuns. Finally, by occupying the town, the gangs are likely seeking to benefit from the smuggling of weapons and ammunition from the border with the Dominican Republic. Improving their position to the north of the capital will likely shape the conditions for a future attack on the remaining territory that the government forces and the Kenyan police mission maintain in Port-au-Prince.

## AMER Summary and Forecast

### Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest

#### **“Hands Off” protests in all 50 US states.**

The protest movement opposes the Trump administration’s policies, particularly the cuts to government agencies being spearheaded by billionaire and government advisor Elon Musk. The “Hands Off” protests have been supported by multiple smaller organisations and movements, like the 50501 movements and other bodies adjacent to the Democratic Party. On 5 April, estimates of nationwide attendance reached three million across more than 1,000 locations. No notable violent incidents were recorded during the protests. The protests constitute the largest civil unrest instance since the beginning of the current administration. Organisers have called for a second large-scale demonstration on 19 April.

#### **Large-scale mobilisation for Ecuador’s presidential elections.**

Ecuador's military is mobilising 1,800 reservists to provide extra security during the second round of presidential elections on 13 April, after the first round resulted in a tie. The reservists will be deployed to protect polling stations. The government has yet to announce what additional security measures will be in place. However, the first round resulted in temporary border closures with Colombia and Peru to limit the influence or organised crime, and curfews were imposed in 22 municipalities. There is a high likelihood of similar measures being introduced during the second round, with Ecuador currently struggling to contain a wave of violence attributed to transnational organised crime groups.

#### **Peruvian transport workers strike over endemic crime.**

On 10 April, major transport disruptions were recorded in Lima, Peru, after transport workers went on strike. Transport workers marched on Congress to demand action against a surge in crime in the country, with much of the crime involving the extorting of public transport. This has involved attacks on public transport networks after companies have refused to pay the extortion, resulting in high rates of civilian casualties. Much of the crime has been linked to well-financed and organised transnational criminal groups like Tren de Aragua. The government has recently declared a national emergency in the capital and has introduced emergency measures that will grant the Peruvian National Police greater powers to combat organised crime.

#### **Indigenous groups stage multi-day protest in Brazilian capital.**

An estimated 10,000 indigenous people from across Brazil have amassed in Brasília to advocate for land demarcation and to protest a 2023 law that limits their land rights and makes it more difficult for tribes to reclaim lands they were forced to abandon. The protests were organised from 7-11 April and have remained largely peaceful. However, on 10 April, Brazilian police used tear gas against the protestors after they approached government buildings in the capital. Observers have indicated that it is highly likely that indigenous groups will target the upcoming COP30 which is set to be held in the northern Brazilian city of Belem in November.

## Security, Armed Conflict and Terror

### Colombian dissidents agree to disarm.

A dissident faction of the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Comuneros del Sur, has agreed to demobilise and hand over its weapons as part of President Petro's objective of securing total peace. While this will be viewed as a win for the incumbent administration, the Comuneros del Sur is only a minor rebel group with an estimated 100-300 fighters, dwarfed by the ELN, which is still fighting an insurgency in multiple parts of Colombia. The agreement will likely only be viewed as a symbolic win and is unlikely to have any significant security considerations for Colombia as a whole.

## Environment, Health and Miscellaneous

### Third measles death reported in Texas.

It is the third death to occur in the space of months, after ten years during which measles caused no fatalities in the US. Around 650 cases have been recorded so far this year, 500 of them in Texas, as part of an outbreak that likely started in local Mennonite communities, who have extremely low vaccination rates. Washington has deployed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assess possible responses to the multi-state outbreak. However, the CDC and the Department of Health, which is led by "vaccine-sceptic" R.F. Kennedy Jr., face severe challenges, including mass layoffs and trust issues among the most at-risk communities, which are likely to make response efforts more complex.

### First confirmed human death from bird flu in Mexico.

Mexico has confirmed its first human death from H5N1 bird flu, as a 3-year-old girl in Coahuila, western Mexico, who died due to respiratory complications from the virus. The case marks the first known human infection in the country, though the exact source of transmission is still under investigation. The girl's case follows a global trend of H5N1 infections, with the virus having spread among birds and a limited number of humans, particularly in the US, where 70 cases have been reported over the past year. The immediate threat to other humans is assessed as low, however, the authorities will almost certainly increase their surveillance and contact tracing to prevent further spread.

### Roof collapse in Dominican Republic kills 221, injures hundreds.

On 8 April, the roof of the Jet Set nightclub in Santo Domingo collapsed during a performance. Search efforts to retrieve the bodies of the victims ended on 11 April. Authorities have launched an investigation to determine the causes of the collapse, which was one of the deadliest disasters in the Dominican Republic's modern history. The investigation is highly likely to have high political visibility and, depending on the findings, could become a driver of civil unrest.

## Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

### **Spain: Large-scale protests against cost of living crisis.**

On 5 April, protests took place in around 40 Spanish cities, with residents calling for policies to reduce growing housing prices. In Madrid, the demonstration was attended by around 150,000 people. The protesters, who are supported by a network of civil society organisations and have increasingly received the support of mainstream left-wing parties like Podemos, made a series of demands including the lowering of rents, the banning of eviction practices, the end to the proliferation of short-term rental contracts aimed at tourists, and the seizing of empty apartments.

**Assessment:** Since the COVID-19 Pandemic, cities in Spain, particularly highly popular tourist destinations like Barcelona, Palma, or Málaga, have had double-digit increases in housing costs, effectively pricing out long-time residents. According to tenants' unions, rents have on average increased by 18 per cent over the past two years. The first notable wave of protests related to this issue began in the Canary Islands in 2023 and rapidly expanded to the mainland. The housing protests are indissolubly linked with a growing anti-tourism sentiment, due to the increased number of properties being taken off the long-term rental market in favour of short-term, tourist-focused contracts. Past waves of protests in 2023 and 2024 have been especially intense during the high tourist season between May and September. Further protests will likely occur during the summer. Large-scale protests are also likely to occur on or near Easter, particularly in cities where Easter celebrations attract large numbers of tourists, such as Seville, Málaga, and Valladolid. While these protests are likely to remain peaceful, there is a realistic possibility of acts of vandalism or harassment against foreign travellers or their property.

### **Ukraine: Russian spring offensive in northeastern Ukraine intensifies.**

In an interview published on 9 April, Ukraine's Command-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi stated that a new Russian spring offensive against the Sumy and Kharkiv Oblasts in northeastern Ukraine 'has effectively already begun'. Syrskyi reported an 'almost doubling' of Russian offensive operations in the past week across multiple sectors on the Sumy and Kharkiv axes. Furthermore, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that 67,000 Russian troops have amassed in preparation for an attack against Sumy City. The Russian Ministry of Defence claimed the capture of the Sumy village of Basivka over the weekend, which was disputed by the Ukrainian State Border Guard Service. Sumy City is only 30 kilometres from the Russian border and had a population of 256,000 in 2022.

**Assessment:** The intensification of Russian ground assaults in northeastern Ukraine is highly likely indicative of a newly launched strategic offensive, which Zelensky has previously indicated was initially planned to be conducted eight months ago but was delayed by the Ukrainian Kursk offensive. The approximately 60,000-70,000 Russian troops and national guardsmen (Rosgvardia) are primarily concentrated in Kursk Oblast, and are likely currently focused on ejecting the last remaining Ukrainian forces from positions south of Sudzha in the Kursk salient. These forces would likely only dedicate fully towards an offensive towards Sumy City once the

Kursk salient has been fully recaptured, with the already ongoing offensive operations against nearby Basivka, for example, likely providing further pressure on Ukrainian forces in Kursk to withdraw. Russian forces will nonetheless likely require additional reinforcements and materiel to successfully seize Sumy City, which Moscow would likely find challenging due to the current significant demands on the Pokrovsk axis in the Donetsk Oblast.

With the senior Ukrainian official Pavlo Palisa reiterating Kyiv's position on 10 April that an absolute red line for Ukraine in any peace talks would be the imposition of curbs to its military, the Kremlin is highly likely incentivised to launch a new offensive to gain further leverage in potential negotiations to achieve its maximalist war goals. Ukraine's ability to repel the offensive would likely be significantly hampered by any further suspensions of US intelligence sharing, with Russian forces having made the most rapid advances in Kursk Oblast during the temporary pause in early March. Moscow will likely continue to leverage the limited and vaguely defined moratorium on long-range strikes against energy infrastructure to gain concessions, with a key goal of pressuring Washington to renew its withdrawal of military aid and intelligence sharing. The Russian Ministry of Defence, for example, stated on 9 April that Ukraine had violated the agreement with six attacks on Russian energy infrastructure over the past day. It is likely that Russian long-range and artillery strikes against the urban centres of Sumy and Kharkiv will continue to increase in the coming weeks, posing significant risks to civilians and foreign nationals deployed in the area.

### **Israel and Lebanon: Hezbollah exploiting maritime routes to rebuild.**

Western security sources have indicated that Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Units have been supplying Hezbollah with arms, equipment and money through maritime routes. The Quds Force Units reportedly involved in the smuggling, Units 190 and 700, are units known to be involved in the facilitation of lethal aid from Iran. The report suggests that Hezbollah maintains an established network of operatives at the Port of Beirut, enabling the organisation to smuggle weapons into the city without restriction. The Lebanese government has rejected the claim, asserting that the Port of Beirut has the same level of inspections and security as Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport.

**Assessment:** Since the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria and the banning of Iranian flights landing at Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport (effective February 2025), Hezbollah has effectively been isolated from its traditional ground lines of communication (GLOCs) and air lines of communication (ALOCs). As a result, Tehran has almost certainly prioritised the rearmament of its primary proxy force via sea lines of communication (SLOCs), with the Port of Beirut serving as the largest and most important port in Lebanon. Recent reporting also suggests that Hezbollah has restarted domestic weapons manufacturing in Lebanon, including the resumption of activity at an arms production facility concealed beneath residential buildings in Beirut, a site previously targeted by Israeli airstrikes in November 2024.

These reports contradict claims made by Hezbollah on 8 April that it is willing to disarm entirely if the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) withdraw from its positions on the five hills it currently holds in southern Lebanon and halts its strikes throughout the country. Moreover, the involvement of the Quds Force in the smuggling of arms

into Lebanon likely indicates that the rearmament of Hezbollah has become a strategic priority for Iran. Iran is currently scheduled for talks with the US over the abandonment of its nuclear programme. If an agreement is achieved, moves to disarm Hezbollah would almost certainly be unacceptable for Tehran, with the proxy group serving as one of its main deterrents against Israel. This reality is almost certainly understood by key decision makers in Israel, which view Hezbollah's military capability as an extension of Iranian influence on its northern border.

Israel is unlikely to agree to Hezbollah's demands for a withdrawal from southern Lebanon, particularly in light of reports regarding renewed arms smuggling from Iran and Hezbollah's resumption of weapon production. Israel has also demanded that it will not withdraw until the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) can fully secure southern Lebanon from Hezbollah, an objective the LAF is unlikely to achieve in the immediate future. To counter the threat of Hezbollah, Israel will likely maintain its positions in southern Lebanon and continue its strikes throughout the country, a course of action that could jeopardise the fragile ceasefire agreement.

Throughout April, the IDF has conducted multiple strikes in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley and several strikes in Beirut against high-value targets within Hezbollah, including against a senior figure responsible for coordinating external attacks against Israel with Iran, strikes that are likely increasing the chances of Hezbollah attacks on Israel. There is a realistic possibility that the recent evidence of the Iranian sustainment of Hezbollah will result in Israel increasing its strikes within Beirut, including strikes on the Port of Beirut and weapon production facilities in the city to counter Hezbollah's attempts to regroup.

### **Algeria and Mali: Tensions increase after Algeria shoots down Malian drone.**

On 6 April, Malian authorities accused their Algerian counterparts of "exporting terrorism" after Algerian forces shot down a Malian drone which allegedly entered Algerian airspace. In response, Algiers announced a complete airspace closure with its southern neighbour, halting flights between the two countries. According to Malian authorities, the drone was shot down while still in Malian airspace, and as it was carrying out an operation against Azawad fighters present in the area. In addition to Mali, Alliance of Sahel States (AES) members Burkina Faso and Niger also recalled their ambassadors from Algeria over the diplomatic crisis.

**Assessment:** Mali is currently fighting multiple jihadist and independentist insurgent groups. Several Azawad independentist groups operate in the country's north under the Strategic Framework for the Defense of the People of Azawad (CSP-DPA) and maintain ties with Jamaat Nusratul Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), a jihadist coalition of al-Qaeda-affiliated groups. Mali's junta has deployed significant resources to root out CSP-DPA, including systems provided by its Russian allies. These have so far been unsuccessful, with the junta forces suffering several notable defeats. In July 2024, Azawad militants, later joined by JNIM fighters, ambushed a convoy of Malian forces and Wagner Group operatives in Tinzaouaten, killing over 80 while suffering small losses.

Algeria's relations with Mali have significantly worsened following the latter's January 2024 withdrawal from the 2015 Algiers Accords. Algiers is also highly likely sceptical of Russia's involvement in the south. While Moscow is one of Algeria's key allies, the deployment of Russian personnel under the Wagner Group (and later Africa Corps) banner has resulted in a series of atrocities against Tuareg civilians, which have likely increased local support for independentist Azawad groups. While these are mostly active south of the border, Algeria likely assesses that the insurgency has the potential to spill into its territory. Seeking to avoid a confrontation with Russia over Wagner's destabilising impact, Algeria has so far maintained a balancing approach to diplomacy. However, the downing of the Malian drone likely demonstrates that Algiers is willing to adopt a more assertive approach towards Mali.

### **Yemen: Potential renewal of civil war poses threat of strikes against Saudi Arabia and UAE.**

A CNN article published on 6 April stated that regional diplomatic sources briefed that preparations are underway by the Republic of Yemen Government (ROYG) for a ground offensive against the Houthis. The article indicates that the offensive 'would be launched from the south and east, as well as along the coast' and that it could involve 'Saudi and US naval support in an attempt to retake the port of Hodeidah'. The potential ground offensive comes amidst an intensified US campaign of aerial strikes against Houthi-controlled Yemen since mid-March. On 8 April, the US Ambassador to Yemen, Steve Fagin, met with the leader of ROYG's Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), President Rashad al-Alimi, to discuss ending the Houthi threat to maritime shipping. On 9 April, the Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan met with the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in the US and, according to an official statement, discussed eliminating the Houthi threat to the region.

**Assessment:** The Yemeni civil war, which was primarily fought between 2014-2022, has been essentially frozen, with a six-month UN-brokered ceasefire having officially lapsed in October 2022 but de facto having held since. The Saudi-led coalition that intervened, consisting of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Sudan, conducted over 25,000 airstrikes against the Houthis, the majority in Sanaa, and primarily using the Saudi military. The campaign, however, failed to dislodge the Houthis, and it is almost certain that airpower without comprehensive and capable ground support is insufficient to defeat the Houthis. Riyadh has highly likely been incentivised to avoid a return to war with the Houthis, with their previous intervention having accumulated high economic and diplomatic costs that likely pose a threat to the Saudi Vision 2030 government program to diversify the economy and make Saudi Arabia an inviting location for both investment and tourism.

Riyadh is likely reluctant to return to war, however, the Trump administration likely has a strategic priority to nullify the Houthi threat, an objective that highly likely could only be achieved with significant regional support and a ground offensive. It is likely that a ROYG ground offensive would be mainly conducted using UAE-backed Southern Transition Council (STC) forces, notably the Giants Brigades, with the formerly separatist STC likely controlling the most powerful forces in internationally recognised Yemen. A return to civil war, depending on the level of Saudi and Emirati involvement, could likewise see a return to Houthi long-range strikes against targets in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In Saudi Arabia, the Houthis previously targeted Saudi Aramco and military

facilities across the country, including in and around Riyadh. In the UAE, the Houthis targeted Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) targets, including the Mussafah facility in Abu Dhabi and ADNOC trucks outside Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH), in addition to a new terminal under construction at AUH, and also targeted Al Dhafra airbase which hosts US forces in Abu Dhabi. A claimed Houthi attack against Dubai International Airport (DBX) was credibly disputed by a Bellingcat investigation.

Between 2015 and 2018, the Houthis conducted long-range attacks across the Arabian peninsula primarily with ballistic missiles, whereas between 2019 and 2022, Houthi attacks were primarily conducted with one-way attack uncrewed aerial vehicles (OWA-UAVs). While Houthi launch capabilities have likely been degraded by recent US and Israeli military action, it is highly likely that the Houthis have gained proficiency in the use of OWA-UAVs and other long-range weapon systems through their anti-shipping and anti-Israel campaign. Saudi and Emirati air defence is proficient, with Saudi Arabia having addressed their likely previous vulnerability to ballistic missiles with the addition of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) systems. Nonetheless, a return to regular long-range Houthi strikes against the Gulf states would likely cause significant air travel disruption with airport and airspace closures, and even successful interceptions can pose risks due to the danger of debris.

### **Somalia: Al-Shabaab make significant territorial gains, threatening Mogadishu.**

In the past week, al-Shabaab seized control of the Afgoye-Mogadishu and Mogadishu-Balcad corridors, tightening control on the outskirts of Mogadishu. The group has also escalated bombing campaigns in recent weeks. On 5 April, mortar rounds landed near the presidential palace in Mogadishu, injuring several people. The following day, al-Shabaab launched mortar strikes, which landed near the airport and near Halane military base, wounding two civilians and triggering flight cancellations from Turkish Airlines. At least six mortar rounds reportedly landed inside the airport compound. Meanwhile, clashes are ongoing across multiple frontlines in the Middle Shabelle region, where a major al-Shabaab offensive has been ongoing since 2025. The government has confirmed it has taken control of Adan Yabaal and a village in Adale. In response to al-Shabaab's strategic gains, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud proposed a platform to unite the fractured national government institutions, regional states, and opposition parties.

**Assessment:** The ongoing al-Shabaab offensive is capitalising on stretched government resources, with the Somali Armed Forces spread between combating al-Shabaab and Islamic State Somalia (ISS) insurgencies, weaknesses in the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), and Houthi support for the group. Since February, attacks have reportedly increased by approximately 50 per cent compared to its 2024 average, with al-Shabaab recapturing several areas of the Middle Shabelle region. AUSSOM has, so far, been relatively ineffective and marred by funding shortages and internal disagreements, with Burundi recently withdrawing from the mission.

Given the weakness of Somalia's armed forces, Mogadishu is heavily reliant on external support. The US has ramped up air support, with President Donald Trump relaxing the rules of engagement for field commanders,

enabling air campaigns against al-Shabaab in the Middle Shabelle region, as well as ISS in Puntland. Turkey, meanwhile, has agreed to provide additional military aid, equipment, intelligence sharing, and the deployment of approximately 5,000 personnel from the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan-aligned private military company SADAT. Turkey's support is likely crucial for ensuring the survival of Somalia's government, with its largest overseas base being in Mogadishu. Continued government survival is of significant interest to Turkey. Turkish companies manage critical infrastructure in Somalia, including Mogadishu's port and airport, and Erdogan has emerged as an influential mediator in regional disputes in the Horn of Africa and a key security partner to Mogadishu.

The loss of the Afgoye-Mogadishu and Mogadishu-Balcad corridors will highly likely precipitate intensified attacks in central Mogadishu, with al-Shabaab likely having more chances to smuggle explosives into the capital. Furthermore, the Mogadishu-Balcad corridor connects Mogadishu to Middle Shabelle, which will highly likely weaken government efforts to counter the ongoing al-Shabaab offensive in the region. The capture of the corridors will also highly likely reduce trade and commerce in the region, driving up consumer costs and increasing pressure on the government. While an imminent complete capture of Mogadishu is unlikely due to the continued international support to the government, it will almost certainly further exacerbate the security situation by weakening government counteroffensive measures and easing al-Shabaab's access to the capital.

## EMEA Summary and Forecast

### Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

#### **Nationwide strike scheduled in Belgium throughout April.**

Nationwide strikes have been organised throughout April in response to the federal government's plans to cut social spending to reduce the federal budget. Following a 7 April nationwide strike, further strikes have been organised throughout the month, with several key sectors involved. Five railway trade unions are planning four 24-hour strike actions every Tuesday in April (8, 15, 22, and 29 April). A planned national strike on 29 April will likely result in major disruptions to public transport and other public services across the country, with previous strikes leading to the suspension of services at both of Brussels' international airports.

#### **Germany's Christian Democrats and Social Democrats agree on coalition deal.**

The so-called "grand coalition" between the Christian Democrat sister parties (CDU-CSU) and the Social Democrats (SPD) was the obvious outcome of the last elections, guaranteeing the survival of Germany's cordon sanitaire against the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), now the second force in parliament. The CDU-led government will likely remain fragile. Chancellor Friedrich Merz has promised his voters harsher measures on migration, also intending to keep the AfD at bay. However, the implementation of these policies, such as turning away asylum seekers at Germany's borders, may indirectly put pressure on the SPD, whose electorate remains opposes Merz on migration, threatening the coalition. Moreover, the new government, whose members recently

agreed on revising Germany's "debt brake" to increase defence spending, will likely have to confront a more pessimistic economic outlook resulting from the trade war with the US.

### **Large-scale protests in Rome against European rearmament.**

Around 80,000 people gathered in the Italian capital on 5 April, under the lead of the populist 5 Star Movement (M5S) and some left-wing parties. The demonstrations opposed the Meloni government's support for ReArm Europe, the EU's military development and procurement plan aimed at reducing reliance on Washington. M5S, which, although founded as a big-tent party, has increasingly established itself as a populist left-wing alternative to the "establishment" Democratic Party (PD), is likely seeking to capitalise on the Italian electorate's relatively high levels of scepticism towards Brussels' support for Kyiv.

### **Thousands rally in Central African Republic (CAR).**

On 4 April, thousands of protesters gathered in Bangui to peacefully protest the Wagner-backed President Faustin Archange Touadera's plans to run for a third term in a rare demonstration of public anger. Demonstrations were organised by opposition parties who reject Touadera's plans for a third term and come amid worsening living conditions and reports of Wagner's extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and looting by Wagner forces. Demonstrators signalled their anger at the governance of Touadera and his Wagner backers, calling for the protection of CAR's sovereignty and for Touadera, and by extension Wagner, to be removed from power. The CAR was the first African country where Wagner established operations, helping the government prevent rebels from taking control of Bangui in 2021, propping up Touadera under the guise of protecting state sovereignty. The growing protest movement reflects an increasing loss of legitimacy for Touadera, who is perceived as dependent on Wagner to hold power, as well as a broader resistance to perceived foreign occupation. While the protest movement is likely to grow, Touadera will highly likely prioritise regime survival and use security forces to crack down on demonstrations with force.

### **Detained South Sudanese vice president ousted by his party.**

On 9 April, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In-Opposition (SPLM-IO) members voted to replace Riek Machar as head of the party with peacebuilding minister Stephen Par Kuol as interim chair until Machar is released. Machar loyalists did not attend the meeting, with some having fled the country. The decision comes approximately two weeks after Machar was arrested following violence conducted by the Machar-linked White Army in Nasir, Upper Nile state. The arrest, triggered by criticism of the presence of Ugandan troops in South Sudan, has threatened to plunge the country back into civil war by violating the 2018 peace agreement, which stipulated power-sharing terms between the two sides. Despite Kuol's reaffirmation of the peace commitments, replacing Machar with Kuol risks undermining the peace agreement by fragmenting the SPLM-IO and weakening its role in the unity government, undermining the division of power stipulated by the agreement's terms.

### **Tanzanian opposition leader arrested.**

On 9 April, Tanzanian opposition leader Tundu Lissu, chairman of the CHADEMA party and a prominent critic of the government, was arrested after a rally in Ruvuma in the south of the country. Lissu has been charged with treason, a capital offence, over allegedly making remarks inciting rebellion and disruption ahead of the 2025

general elections. The charges have been dismissed by the opposition as politically motivated and meant to eliminate Lissu, who had been the runner-up in the 2020 presidential election. The arrest has also drawn widespread international and domestic criticism of President Samia Suluhu Hassan's human rights record after a series of arrests, abductions and the targeting of opposition figures. There is a realistic possibility that the arrest of Lissu will incite widespread and potentially violent unrest in Tanzania.

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

### **Three arrested for planning attack in Dunkirk, France, on behalf of the Islamic State (IS).**

French authorities discovered attack plans and, reportedly, an “explosive vest”. This likely makes the recent plot more sophisticated than other “lone wolf” attack plans and could imply that the suspects had some outside direction. Dunkirk is a high-visibility location due to its political relevance on both sides of the Channel, being both a tourist destination and one of the key transit points for migrants seeking to make the crossing to the United Kingdom.

### **Libyan authorities tell ten aid groups to stop operations helping migrants.**

Authorities claim that the groups violate local law and commit “a hostile activity targeting the Libyan demographics” by helping migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa settle in Libya. The vast majority of migrants entering Libya and neighbouring Tunisia do so with the aim of crossing the Mediterranean. However, since the refugee crisis of 2015, the influx of migrants, who often remain for months or years in local towns prior to making the crossing, has driven a considerable increase in anti-migrant sentiment. The ban is likely to result in a worsening of the already poor humanitarian conditions of the migrants in Libya. Aid organisations provide migrants with essential goods and services like food, clothing, housing, and medical care. Without them, there is a realistic possibility of migrants being forced to rely more frequently on local criminal groups, exposing them to a significantly greater threat of violence and abuse, including enslavement.

### **Reports indicate Boko Haram is gaining ground in northern Nigeria.**

The governor of Nigeria's Borno State, Babagana Zulum, has warned that the jihadist group Boko Haram is staging a comeback. The comments were made after Boko Haram recently staged a series of attacks and seized control of some parts of the north-eastern state. Attacks have targeted Nigerian army bases and police stations, not just the civilian population. Moreover, some operations reportedly involved cooperation with the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP). The central government has downplayed the situation, claiming that security in the region has improved. However, the central government has diverted military resources to the northwest of the country to deal with endemic banditry and the emergence of a new jihadist group linked to Niger, the Lakurawa, a move that has likely overstretched government forces and provided Boko Haram with greater freedom of movement.

## Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

### Severe flooding in Kinshasa, DRC, kills dozens.

At least 33 people have died in the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) after days of heavy rains resulted in widespread flooding. The rains caused the Ndjili River to overflow, posing a particularly severe risk to the informal settlements located near its banks. The floods also temporarily blocked access to the airport, and to severely impacted parts of the city, complicating search and rescue efforts. Responses to the flooding are likely to be complicated by the ongoing conflict in the eastern DRC, which has both stretched Kinshasa's resources and prompted the evacuation of international personnel, including some humanitarian workers, from the country.

## Asia Pacific (APAC)

### Myanmar: Fighting continues despite post-earthquake ceasefires.

After a 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar on 28 March, the National Unity Government (NUG) and the Three Brotherhood Alliance, representing ethnic resistance groups across the country, announced a temporary ceasefire of one month beginning on 1 April. Under the unilaterally declared ceasefire, the rebel groups agreed not to initiate any offensive operations and would only engage in self-defence. After initial attempts to resist a ceasefire, Myanmar's State Administration Council announced that it would observe one from 2 April to 22 April. However, multiple international observers, including the UN, have reported widespread ceasefire violations conducted on both sides. The NUG, a shadow government formed after the coup, has accused the junta military of conducting over 60 airstrikes and artillery barrages since the earthquake, resulting in the deaths of at least 68 civilians. Recent estimates indicate that over 3,000 people have now died, with the toll expected to rise significantly as the rubble is cleared. Hospitals are reportedly overwhelmed, and shortages of medical supplies, fuel, clean water and shelter are hampering relief operations.

**Assessment:** The junta government has a precedent of exploiting ceasefires to contain ethnic rebel groups under the guise of tentative truces. The junta has likely only agreed to a temporary ceasefire publicly to improve both its international and domestic image, with elections planned in late 2025 or early 2026. Reports on the ground even suggest that the junta is actively obstructing relief efforts while expanding operations in earthquake-affected areas. This has reportedly included the hindering of access to aid organisations, the blocking of aid and the seizure of supplies, combined with a continuation of air and artillery strikes.

After months of rebel advances, it is unlikely that the junta will cease offensive operations, likely fearing that the rebel groups will also exploit the ceasefire to regroup and continue their advance. Part of the junta's strategy is

likely to restrict the delivery of aid to areas under rebel control, thus restricting the rebel groups' access to vital supplies such as water, food, medicine and other equipment, especially near the current lines of engagement.

However, with international aid organisations operating near earthquake-affected areas, there is likely more coverage of junta operations on the ground. As a result, the junta may adapt its strategy by increasing the use of airstrikes, targeting rebel-held or strategically significant areas further behind the front lines, such as Kachin State, Shan, and Kayin (Karen) States, which remains a key stronghold for the resistance forces and are critical to rebel supply chains and operations. High-value targets for the junta are likely to include rebel leadership, force concentration, ammo depots and other military targets. However, reports have also indicated that aid convoys have been targeted, as well as critical infrastructure like roads and bridges that sustain rebel operations and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.

## APAC Summary and Forecast

### Politics, Economics and Civil Unrest:

#### South Korean election scheduled for 3 June.

On 7 April, South Korea's cabinet voted to confirm a 3 June election date. The decision follows former President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment and removal from office following his declaration of martial law on 3 December. In the 2022 election, Yoon had beaten opposition liberal Democratic Party Lee Jae-myung by a narrow margin, making him the frontrunner in the upcoming election. However, Lee faces legal challenges due to multiple charges, including violating election law and bribery. Kim Moon-soo will likely lead the incumbent conservative People Power party. A 4 April Gallup poll had 34 per cent of respondents supporting Lee and nine per cent backing Kim.

#### Garment workers' protest in Bangladesh results in more than 50 injuries.

The clashes, which lasted for at least three hours, erupted in Rugganj, near Dhaka, outside a local manufacturing plant. According to local media, at least 120 workers, who had been reportedly fired prior to Eid, had been demonstrating in front of the plant for two days prior to the intervention of authorities. In addition to 50 injuries, at least ten workers have been arrested. Further protests regarding labour disputes during Eid have occurred in other parts of Bangladesh, with the garment industry a particularly notable hotspot for unrest.

#### US academic charged under lèse-majesté laws in Thailand.

The US State Department has expressed its alarm after an American academic, Dr. Paul Chambers, was charged under Thailand's strict lèse-majesté laws. The laws, aimed at suppressing defamation of Thailand's monarchy, can carry sentences of up to 15 years and are often used to suppress the opposition. Dr. Chambers, a lecturer at Naresuan University in central Thailand, was reportedly arrested due to his research on the political relationship between Thailand's monarchy and military. The arrest of a foreigner under lèse-majesté laws is relatively rare,

however, Dr. Chambers was likely viewed as an important target by ultra-loyalist groups, who have targeted him with disinformation and online hate campaigns in the past.

## Security, Armed Conflict and Terror:

### Deportations of Afghans from Pakistan underway.

At least 1,600 Afghans had been deported from Punjab and Sindh by the beginning of the week, and authorities have reportedly detained 5,000 for repatriation. In total, around 9,000 people have been deported from Pakistan since 1 April, and an unspecified number have crossed the border spontaneously. A majority of them have Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs), while a minority reportedly have no identifying documents. Taliban authorities have reacted negatively to the deportations, accusing Islamabad of mistreating its Afghan residents and using them for “political goals”. The deportations are likely to increase tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. There is a realistic possibility that the worsening security environment will drive terrorism in Pakistan. In Afghanistan, extremist groups like the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), which is particularly active in the country’s southeast, may seek to target returning Afghans to destabilise the Taliban government.

### Mob violence in Bangladesh continues to rise.

*The Daily Star*, Bangladesh’s most circulated English-language newspaper, reported that, between February and March, cases of mob violence, including killings, have doubled across the country. This follows a widespread increase in insecurity and crime, particularly violent crime, that has accelerated since the August 2024 ousting of Sheikh Hasina. Recent notable cases of mob violence include an attack on the properties of Awami League (AL) party members in Sylhet, and vandalism of American-owned businesses in Chittagong during a pro-Palestine demonstration. While mob violence – and “bulldozer justice” – are long-standing issues in Bangladesh, the fall of Hasina’s Awami League has almost certainly created a security vacuum. Police forces, which were previously staffed by Hasina loyalists and dependent on AL support, are now at the centre of an often violent, political competition led by the remaining major parties, who seek to govern post-Hasina Bangladesh.

### China conducts naval drills at Cambodian naval base.

On 6 April, the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) conducted naval drills outside of the recently enlarged naval base at Ream, Cambodia, in the Gulf of Thailand. China’s presence in the Gulf of Thailand has raised concerns that the PLAN is establishing a permanent footprint to the south of the South China Sea and will lead to a major increase in Chinese naval and coast guard activity in the contested waters, likely increasing the chances of escalation. Cambodia has repeatedly denied reports that it has agreed to a clandestine deal with China to station its forces at the base, reiterating its stance that it is open to hosting military vessels from other countries.

## Environment, Health and Miscellaneous:

### **Eruption at volcano in central Philippines leads to school closures and NOTAM.**

On 8 April, the Kanlaon volcano on the island of Negros in central Philippines erupted, leading to a 4,000 metre high ash plume drifting southwest. A level three out of five alert issued by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), which indicates a high level of volcanic unrest, has been in effect for Mount Kanlaon since another eruption in December 2024. The level three alert recommends all residents within a six-kilometre radius of the volcano to evacuate, with the evacuations having previously taken place in December, which almost certainly reduced the immediate danger of possible casualties. Philippine authorities reported that approximately 48,000 people were impacted by the 8 April eruption. Several precautionary measures have been implemented, including the suspension of schools in four districts west of the volcano in Negros Occidental, and the issuance of a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) by the Philippines Civil Aviation Authority for flights near Kanlaon volcano.



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