Please be aware System Risk Management has asked all members to prohibit travel to extreme risk countries and regions. Please reference memorandum from the Chancellor regarding procedures relating to international travel to be followed by all System members found at this link:


Should you have any questions, please contact me directly. Thank you.

Henry Judah, AIC CPCU CLU ChFC | Associate Director
System Risk Management
hjudah@tamus.edu

1262 TAMU | College Station, TX 77840-7896
Tel. 979.458.6234 | Cell 979.820.2006 | Fax 979.458.6247 | www.tamus.edu

Country Travel Advisory List:

Any travel to the below listed countries requires an International Travel Questionnaire submission to System Risk Management for review.

- Afghanistan
- Central African Republic
- Cuba
- Gaza Strip
- Libya
- North Korea
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Syria
- Yemen
Any travel to the specified regions within a country noted below requires an International Travel Questionnaire submission to System Risk Management for review.

Information on Travel Restrictions From Listed Countries: Sudan, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia and Yemen.


- **Armenia**: Within 2km of the line of contact in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region
- **Azerbaijan**: Within 2km of the line of contact in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region
- **Cameroon**: Far North (Extreme-Nord) region and within 50km of Cameroon's shared border with Nigeria in the country's North (Nord) and Adamawa (Adamaoua) regions.
- **Chad**: Ennedi-Est, Ennedi-Quest, Wadi Fira, Quaddai and Sila (which border Sudan), the southern regions of Logone Oriental, Mandoul, Moyen-Chari and Salamat, the northern regions of Tibesti, Borkou and Ennedi-Qest (which border Libya) and the western Kanem and Lac regions.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo**: The eastern Nord-Kivu, Sud-Kivu, and Tanganyika provinces, as well as the north eastern Ituri, Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele provinces and the southern Kasia Central province.
- **Egypt**: North Sinai governornate.
- **Eritrea**: Within 20km of Eritrea's borders with Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Sudan.
- **Ethiopia**: Within 20km of Ethiopia's border with Eritrea in the Tigray and Afar regions, within 20km of the South Sudan border in the Gambela and Benishangul-Gumuz regions, and the Somali region (excluding the two northern zones of Fafan, formerly Jijiga, and Sitti, formerly Shinile).
- **Iran**: Sistan va Baluchestan province
- **Iraq**: Baghdad, Anbar, Salah ad-Din, Kirkuk, Diyala, Ninewa, Karbala and Babil governorates and the northern Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)-held and disputed territory west of the Green Line.

- **Israel**: Within 2km of the shared Gaza Strip-Israel border in southern Israel and all travel to the Gaza Strip due to the threats of conflict and secondary threats of kidnapping and terrorism.

- **Japan**: Within a 20km radius of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Okuma.

- **Kenya**: Within 50km of the Somali border in the Mandera, Wajir, Garissa and Lamu counties.

- **Lebanon**: An area within 15km of the shared border with Syria in the Bekaa and North governorates and Palestinian refugee camps across the country.

- **Mali**: Gao, Kidal, Mopti and Timbuktu regions

- **Mexico**: Due to the high risks of kidnapping, violent crime and an escalating drug cartel-related conflict, red24 currently advises against non-essential travel to the countryside outside of major cities and primary resort areas as well as the states of Tamaulipas, Michoacan, Coahuila, Sinaloa, Nayarit and Guererro.

- **Niger**: Within a 50km radius of Niger’s shared border with Nigeria in the administrative regions of Diffa and Zinder and to within a 100km radius of Niger’s shared borders with Chad, Algeria, Libya and Mali.

- **Nigeria**: Adamawa, Borno, Yobe and Gombe in the northeast. Rural and remote areas within Kaduna, Bauchi, Plateau, Benue, Zamfara, Enugu and Taraba states in the “Middle Belt” and the Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta and Rivers states in the south.

- **Pakistan**: Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces

- **Philippines**: The southern Mindanao region and the Sulu Archipelago.

- **Russia**: Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria (including the Mount Elbrus region).

- **Saudi Arabia**: Within 10km of the shared border with Yemen

- **Somalia**: Most of Somalia except Puntland and Somaliland.
- **Sudan:** Dafur region, South Kordufan state, Blue Nile state and the disputed Abyei region.

- **Tunisia:** The Djebel Chambi National Park (Kasserine governorate) and South of but not including the towns of El Borma and Dhehiba (Tataouine governorate)

- **Turkey:** Within 10km of the shared border with Syria in the Turkish provinces of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Mardin and Sirnak.

- **Uganda:** Areas within 30km of Uganda’s shared borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, excluding major towns.

- **Ukraine:** The Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and the Crimean Peninsula.

---

**January 01, 2018**

**News summary**

**Africa**

**CAMEROON** - Army Frees 17 People Held by Bandits in North

**CAMEROON** - Suicide Attack in Far North Region Village Kills One Person, Wounds 28

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO** - Further Protests, Violence Likely after Clashes Kill at least Eight; Mobile Services Remain Blocked

**EQUATORIAL GUINEA** - Increased Security Likely after Alleged Foiled Coup

**LIBERIA** - Weah Supporters Likely to Hold Celebratory Events following Opponent’s Concession

**MAURITANIA** - Pricing Changes Likely as Government Introduces New Currency

**NIGERIA** - Boko Haram Gunmen Kill at least 25 People outside Maiduguri

**NIGERIA** - Suicide Bombers Strike Borno State Village, Killing Eight
SENEGAL - Protests Possible during Former Mayor's Trial

SUDAN - President Declares States of Emergency in Kassala and North Kordofan States

Asia

AFGHANISTAN - Suicide Bombing at Funeral in Behsud, Nangarhar Province, Kills at least 15 People

Central/South America

COLOMBIA - Grenade Attack at Nightclub in Caucasia, Antioquia Department, Injures 31 People

COSTA RICA - Nature Air Plane Crash in Nandayure Canton Kills 12 People

Europe

GREECE - Magnitude-5.0 Earthquake Strikes West-northwest of Athens; No Injuries or Damage Reported

NETHERLANDS and UNITED KINGDOM - Flight Delays Possible at Airports in Amsterdam and London

SWEDEN - Officials Report Measles Exposure at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Gothenburg

TURKEY - Special Security Zones in Tunceli Province Extended through Jan. 15 amid Anti-terror Operations

TURKEY - US Announces Resumption of Full Visa Services

UNITED KINGDOM - Firefighters Continuing to Battle Major Blaze at Echo Arena Car Park in Central Liverpool

Middle East/North Africa

EGYPT - Islamic State Claims Attack outside Coptic Church in Helwan

IRAN - Protests Continue Nationwide; Internet Access Remains blocked, Clashes with Police Reported

JORDAN - King Announces Retirement of Three Senior Army Officers

OMAN and UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - Single MERS Case Reported in Omani Camel Herder at Al Ain Entry Point to UAE

TUNISIA - Authorities Arrest Militants in Ben Guerdane

Russia/CIS

RUSSIA - Islamic State Claims Dec. 27 Blast at St. Petersburg Supermarket
Russia - Supreme Court Upholds Election Ban on Opposition Leader

Africa

Cameroon (Country Risk Rating: High) - Army Frees 17 People Held by Bandits in North

The Cameroonian army freed 17 people from their kidnappers during an operation conducted Dec. 26 in northern Cameroon's Benoue National Park. One person was killed and four others were wounded during fighting between the army and the kidnappers. The kidnappers were apparently not a militant group, but bandits from the Central African Republic (CAR). Cameroonian authorities allege that hundreds of hostages are still detained by various groups.

Analysis: Armed bandits from CAR have long had a presence in Cameroon, crossing into the country even before the start of the 2013 civil war in CAR. Among them, kidnappers usually target individuals who are comparatively wealthy, such as businessmen or cattle ranchers, to extort ransom money from their families. The two counties share a porous border of 900 km (560 miles).

Cameroon (Country Risk Rating: High) - Suicide Attack in Far North Region Village Kills One Person, Wounds 28

At around 0700 Dec. 31, a suicide bomber targeted a cafe in the village of Bia, near the town of Kolofata in Cameroon's Far North region, around 10 km (6 miles) from the border with Nigeria. The explosion killed one person and injured 28 others in the explosion.

Analysis: Although no one has yet officially claimed the Dec. 31 attack, it is likely the work of militant group Boko Haram, which is based in neighbouring Nigeria. Boko Haram poses a very high threat of kidnapping and targeted attack to both locals and foreign nationals across the Far North Region, which is heightened along the border with Nigeria. Most of the group's attacks in Cameroon take place in the Far North region's Mayo-Sava Department. Recent suicide bombings and ambushes suggest that militants are operating from a mountainous area that straddles the border near Kolofata, Cameroon, and Gwoza, Nigeria. The village of Bia has previously seen deadlier attack; during a raid in April 2015, Boko Haram fighters beheaded 19 of its inhabitants. Since 2014, the group's operations in Cameroon have caused more than 2,000 civilian and military deaths in the Far North; additionally, Boko Haram has abducted more than a thousand people.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (Country Risk Rating: High) - Further Protests, Violence Likely after Clashes Kill at least Eight; Mobile Services Remain Blocked

Further violent protests are likely in cities throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo after deadly clashes between demonstrators and security forces left at least eight people dead Dec. 31. Police dispersed religious gatherings at Roman Catholic churches in Kinshasa and other cities, after congregation leaders called on President Joseph Kabila to resign. At least two people died in clashes at Saint-Alphonse de Matete church in eastern Kinshasa's Matete area, while one person was killed and 15 others wounded in the Masina district. Police fired tear gas and live ammunition inside the Notre-Dame-du-Congo cathedral in Kinshasa's northern Lingwala neighbourhood, as well as inside another church in the city centre. In Lubumbashi, two people suffered bullet wounds as security forces dispersed a protest after mass. Some among the crowd responded angrily by burning vehicles and looting stores. Police also opened fire on worshippers in the town of Kananga in central Kasai region, killing one person.

Analysis: With several anti-government organisations vowing to continue protesting until Kabila steps down, the potential for additional unrest is high. Authorities will almost certainly deploy an increased security presence in major cities to prevent further anti-Kabila protests. The largest such events will probably take place in Kinshasa, where protesters could set up barricades to block major thoroughfares. Additional protests are also likely in Beni, Bukavu, Butembo, Goma, Kananga, Kisangani, Lubumbashi, Mbandaka, Mbuji-Mayi, and Uvira.
Authorities shut down mobile internet and SMS services Dec. 30 to prevent activists from organising; mobile services remained inaccessible as of late Dec. 31. The government could also order phone services to be suspended if the protest movement continues.

The security forces' heavy-handed approach is unlikely to bring the protests to a stop, as the anti-government movement enjoys widespread support, including from religious groups. Tensions are high nationwide over the ongoing election crisis. The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) released its electoral calendar Nov. 5, scheduling presidential, legislative, and provincial polls for Dec. 23, 2018. However, opposition groups, including the Rally of Forces for Change (Rassemblement) coalition, have rejected the timetable, with some calling on Kabila to resign by the end of 2017. Prominent opposition figures, including Rassemblement leader Felix Tshisekedi and exiled former Katanga Gov. Moise Katumbi, allege that the new electoral time frame violates accords signed between President Joseph Kabila's ruling coalition and the opposition in December 2016. Several civil society organisations have asked opposition parties to unite and form a transitional government on Jan. 1, 2018.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Increased Security Likely after Alleged Foiled Coup

Authorities are likely increasing security near sensitive locations across Equatorial Guinea after an alleged coup plot was foiled overnight Dec. 27-28. Security personnel in Cameroon reportedly arrested at least 31 heavily armed Chadian and Central African mercenaries preparing to cross the border into Equatorial Guinea at Ebebiyin. There are unconfirmed reports that Equatorial Guinean troops also detained commandos that had entered the country, and some may remain at large.

Analysis: Security personnel could set up checkpoints, conduct vehicle searches and identity checks, and temporarily close roads near government buildings and security facilities, notably in Malabo, Bata, and Mongomo. Localised traffic disruptions are possible. Officials could close the border at Ebebiyin, which may cause cross-border ground transportation and freight delivery disruptions; the government often closes the border for undisclosed reasons.

The reports of the coup are feasible; authorities thwarted a mercenary-backed attempt to overthrow President Teodoro Obiang Nguema in 2004. There are unconfirmed reports that a Chadian former general led the commandos arrested in Cameroon, and has ties to the leader of Equatorial Guinea's opposition Citizens for Innovation (CI) party Gabriel Nse Obiang Obono. However, exiled opposition party leaders claim that the alleged coup is a ruse to clamp down on Nguema's political opponents. CI maintains police arrested at least 50 of its members Dec. 27 and have surrounded its headquarters in Bata, where other members have sought refuge.

Nguema has ruled Equatorial Guinea since 1979, using the ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) to direct the country's significant oil wealth to a clique of family members and military officials. The PDGE and its 14 allied parties won all but one legislative seat during November elections for the country's two-tier Parliament.

LIBERIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Weah Supporters Likely to Hold Celebratory Events following Opponent's Concession

Supporters of Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) presidential candidate George Weah will likely hold celebratory events across Liberia in the coming days after his opponent conceded electoral defeat Dec. 29. Current Vice President Joseph Boakai - backed by the ruling Unity Party (UP) - accepted the polls' outcome, and the UP states it will not contest the results. The CDC may resume plans for a victory parade in Monrovia, which were suspended Dec. 27 until the run-off presidential election's outcome was determined. Weah's inauguration is expected to occur in January; an exact date for the ceremony has yet to be announced.

Analysis: Additional police will likely deploy near political events in urban centres to control crowds and direct traffic. Localised commercial and traffic disruptions are probable near large parades and rallies. Although no significant unrest has occurred since the start of the campaign period, confrontations between rival political supporters cannot be ruled out.
Boakai’s concession mitigates concerns that the UP could reject Weah’s victory, which may have sparked demonstrations or political violence. The UP challenged the results of the first round Oct. 10 vote in court, delaying the second round, and unsuccessfully petitioned that the run-off be postponed. As the first peaceful transfer of executive power from one elected leader to another since 1944, the CDC candidate’s success marks a historic milestone in Liberia’s progress towards political stability. Current President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf served the constitutionally capped two terms after two civil wars in 1989-1996 and 1999-2005, and a 1980 coup. This history of political violence and clashes during disputed elections that brought, and returned, Sirleaf to power raised concerns of possible unrest at the historic 2017 polls.

Weah will likely be challenged to increase and strengthen the country’s nascent armed forces, amid the anticipated complete withdrawal of a UN peacekeeping mission that supports security personnel in Liberia. The electorate will also have high expectations that the CDC government will alleviate persistent and widespread youth unemployment levels contributing to high crime rates, fight corruption, and encourage economic growth.

MAURITANIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Pricing Changes Likely as Government Introduces New Currency

The government will begin the year-long introduction of a new version of Mauritanian Ouguiya (MRO) Jan. 1 as part of a currency devaluation. New MRO notes and coins will enter into circulation and will be calculated upon a base 10, compared to the current base five financial system. The new MRO currency will be worth a tenth of the existing currency; current MRO-500, MRO-1000, and MRO-2000 notes will be replaced by new MRO-50, MRO-100, and MRO-200 notes.

Analysis: The two currencies will both be accepted for commercial exchange until June 30, and pricing in both old and new MRO is expected during this time. The Central Bank will exchange old notes for new currency until Dec. 31. Although the two sets of notes are visibly distinguishable, unscrupulous traders and money exchangers may present old currency as new notes during transactions.

NIGERIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Boko Haram Gunmen Kill at least 25 People outside Maiduguri

On Dec. 30, Boko Haram gunmen on motorcycles attacked a group of loggers around 20 km (12 miles) from Maiduguri, killing at least 25 people. Initially, reports indicated four people killed, but the bodies of 21 more victims were discovered Dec. 31 near the scene of the attack.

Analysis: The victims had reportedly worked at the logging site for the past seven months but were normally under the protection of soldiers. Boko Haram fighters likely relied on the help of an informant to attack the loggers on a day when they were without any military protection. The logging site itself is accessible from Sambisa Forest in eastern Borno State, known for years to be one of the militant group’s main hideouts, despite several successive army operations. The militant group targeted loggers in the area on at least two previous occasions in 2017, but earlier attacks were not as deadly. The threat of Boko Haram attacks is highest in remote and rural areas of Borno State, where militant operations have increased in recent months. However, the group continues to exhibit both the intent and operational capacity to launch suicide bombing attacks on targets in larger urban areas, including Maiduguri. While not as frequent as in more rural locations, suicide attacks on these cities have also increased in the past months.

NIGERIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Suicide Bombers Strike Borno State Village, Killing Eight

Around noon Dec. 28, two Boko Haram suicide bombers detonated their explosive charge in the village of Amarwa, in the Konduga Local Government Area (LGA) of Nigeria’s northeastern Borno State. The attack left five people dead and 17 more wounded. Three of the wounded victims subsequently died at the hospital, bringing the total number of fatalities to eight. Amarwa is approximately 17 km (10 miles) from Maiduguri.

Analysis: The militant group has attacked Amarwa several times in recent years, although past attacks on the village were generally not as deadly. Competing factions of Boko Haram pose a very high threat of targeted attack in northeast Nigeria, and often target vulnerable villages at the periphery of urban areas such as Maiduguri. Boko Haram suicide bombings occur weekly, and such attacks in northeast Nigeria and bordering countries have
increased significantly over the past six months. The group has also attacked mosques, markets, security checkpoints, and government buildings throughout Borno State. On Dec. 2, three suicide bombers attacked a market in Biu, Borno State, killing at least 15 people and injuring 53.

SENEGAL (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Protests Possible during Former Mayor’s Trial

Protests may occur in Dakar during the corruption trial of the city's former mayor, Khalifa Sall. Initially planned for Dec. 14, the trial was postponed to Jan. 3. It is unclear how long the court proceedings will last.

Analysis: Although no specific plans for demonstrations have been announced, Sall's supporters could stage rallies outside the courthouse where the case is being heard. Rallies may occur at other locations in the Senegalese capital, including Place de la Nation (formerly Place de l'Obelisque) in the city centre. Security personnel could disperse any unauthorised demonstrations that materialise, potentially leading to clashes. Expect localised transport disruptions near protest sites. Authorities have held Sall since March 2017 on charges of embezzling public funds during his term as Dakar's mayor. His supporters claim the allegations are politically motivated and an attempt by the government of President Macky Sall to prevent the former mayor from running in the 2019 presidential election. On Nov. 25, Senegal's National Assembly voided Khalifa Sall's parliamentary immunity - a measure that prompted minor clashes between police and his supporters in front of the legislature building; officers used tear gas to disperse the demonstrators. On Dec. 7, a judge rejected a motion to release Sall on bail, ordering him and seven co-defendants to remain in prison pending their trials.

SUDAN (Country Risk Rating: High) - President Declares States of Emergency in Kassala and North Kordofan States

On Dec. 30, Sudan President Omar al-Bashir issued a decree declaring a six-month state of emergency in the states of Kassala and North Kordofan. He gave no reason for the move, though it might be related to disarmament campaigns that started in Darfur and Blue Nile in October. Parliament must approve the decree by Jan. 12 for it to take effect.

Analysis: A state of emergency had already been in place in seven other Sudanese states: the five states that make up the Darfur region, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile states. The government has been fighting rebels since 2003 in Darfur, and against insurgents since 2011 in the other two states.

Asia

AFGHANISTAN (Country Risk Rating: Extreme) - Suicide Bombing at Funeral in Behsud, Nangarhar Province, Kills at least 15 People

A suicide bombing at about 1400 Dec. 31 in Behsud, eastern Nangarhar Province just north of Jalalabad, killed at least 15 people and wounded 14 others. The blast occurred during a funeral ceremony for a former Haska Mina district governor at the Muqam Khan cemetery.

Analysis: Expect localised traffic disruptions as authorities investigate the incident. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but the Islamic State (IS) and the Taliban are known to operate in Nangarhar Province.

Central/South America

COLOMBIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Grenade Attack at Nightclub in Caucasia, Antioquia Department, Injures 31 People
A grenade attack at the Bora Bora nightclub in Caucasia, northern Antioquia Department, early Dec. 29 injured at least 31 people, four critically. Authorities said that two assailants on a motorcycle hurled the grenade into the nightclub before fleeing; the explosion prompted a stampede, which caused some of the injuries.

**Analysis:** Authorities launched a security operation following the attack and have detained two suspects. An investigation into the attack is ongoing, but local officials claim the blast was likely the work of the Gulf Clan drug-trafficking organisation. The nightclub was reportedly targeted after the owners refused to pay an extortion bid to the Gulf Clan. The nightclub is situated almost adjacent to National Route 25, which is part of the Pan-American Highway and the primary north-south highway in the area. Transport disruptions are possible as authorities continue their investigation.

COSTA RICA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Nature Air Plane Crash in Nandayure Canton Kills 12 People

A Cessna 208B Grand Caravans aircraft operated by Nature Air (5C) crashed in a mountainous area near Nandayure canton in Guanacaste Province, Dec. 31. The accident took place at about 1215 as the plane was travelling from Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO) in San Jose to Punta Islita Airport (PBP) on Costa Rica's Pacific coast. Authorities have confirmed that all 12 persons on board - 10 foreign passengers, and two Costa Rican crew members - died in the crash. Recovery efforts are ongoing.

**Analysis:** Although Nature Air's fleet consists of only six aircraft, the carrier is one of Costa Rica's largest domestic airlines, serving 15 destinations. The company also offers charter services. It remains unclear whether the aircraft involved in the Dec. 31 crash was operating one of the airline’s regularly scheduled domestic routes or a charter flight.

Europe

GREECE (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Magnitude-5.0 Earthquake Strikes West-northwest of Athens; No Injuries or Damage Reported

A magnitude-5.0 earthquake struck about 78 km (48 miles) west-northwest of Athens at a depth of 10 km (6.2 miles) at 0602 Dec. 31. Some light shaking occurred in the Athens area, but authorities reported no damage or casualties.

**Analysis:** Local officials may temporarily shut down transportation infrastructure in the tremor zone to check for damage. Minor disruptions could occur during shutdowns, but service will likely resume quickly if no damage is found. Aftershocks are possible in the region in the coming days and could lead to similar disruptions. Power outages cannot be ruled out near the epicentre.

NETHERLANDS (Country Risk Rating: Low) and UNITED KINGDOM (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Flight Delays Possible at Airports in Amsterdam and London

Flight delays are possible at airports in Amsterdam (AMS) and London (LCY) early Jan. 1.

- Amsterdam (AMS/EHAM) - Low delays*
- London City (LCY/EGLC) - Low delays*
The rating reflects average anticipated delays; many individual flights may be on time or - alternatively - delayed for longer periods.

Delay Index

Very High (greater than 45 min)

High (30-45 min)

Moderate (15-30 min)

Low (less than 15 min)

SWEDEN (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Officials Report Measles Exposure at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Gothenburg

Swedish health officials reported an ongoing measles outbreak Dec. 26 at Sahlgrenska University Hospital in Gothenburg, where eight cases have been identified since Dec. 10. The most recent case was identified Dec. 26. Individuals who visited Sahlgrenska University Hospital Dec. 26 may have been exposed.

Analysis: Measles is a very contagious viral disease. The virus spreads through airborne droplets created when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can survive up to two hours in an airspace or on a surface where an infected person has coughed or sneezed. Symptoms of measles can develop up to 21 days after exposure and typically begin with a fever, runny nose, sore throat, red eyes, and/or cough, followed by a rash that spreads all over the body. Infected individuals are most contagious five days before and four days after the measles rash erupts. Recovery generally occurs within 10-14 days, but serious complications, including pneumonia, may occur. Complications are most likely in children younger than five years old, adults older than 20 years, and people whose immune systems are weakened by other acute or chronic health conditions.

Symptoms of measles can develop up to 21 days after exposure. Therefore, individuals who visited the hospital and who have not been vaccinated against measles, or do not know their vaccination status, should monitor themselves for symptoms until approximately Jan. 16, 2018.

TURKEY (Country Risk Rating: High) - Special Security Zones in Tunceli Province Extended through Jan. 15 amid Anti-terror Operations

Authorities extended a declaration imposing 30 special security zones in various parts of Tunceli Province to remain in force through Jan. 15; the original measure, which went into effect Dec. 2 as part of a series of anti-terror operations to be conducted by security forces, had been extended through Dec. 31 upon expiring Dec. 16. The specific locations to which access will be restricted under the extension will remain largely the same, although some minor changes in the precise boundaries may have been made. The affected areas include the following: seven zones in Tunceli-Centre District, 18 in Ovacik District, two in Pulumur District, one in Hozat District, and two in Nazimiye District.

Analysis: According to information released by the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, security operations within Tunceli Province for the period of Dec. 18-29 consisted primarily of locating and destroying hideouts and supply caches used by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) terror organisation. No significant armed clashes between security forces and militants were reported during that period.

Expect a strong military and police presence in and around the declared special security zones. Sporadic armed clashes between security units and insurgent bands are highly likely. Plan for supply chain disruptions along the D885 motorway, as well as potentially along the section of the E80 motorway forming the northeastern border of Tunceli Province. Authorities may declare further extensions to the security zone order near the middle of January, if warranted by the operational situation in the province.
The Turkish administration has routinely used its power to impose curfews and provisional special security zones in various locations within the country’s southeastern provinces since hostilities between PKK militants and the Turkish government resumed in 2015 after a two-year ceasefire. While the measures are ostensibly used to limit civilian casualties and the destruction of private property during security operations, they also provide the military and local officials with additional authority. Turkish authorities may restrict entry to the affected areas as well as confiscate or expropriate any property in a designated security zone as necessary. Such zones are declared by civilian, provincial-level authorities and may be extended as deemed fit - typically for periods of 15 days at a time. While the law does contain provisions for access to provisional security zones with the express permission of the Office of the Governor for the province in question, such authorisation is rarely granted. Although civilian business interests and assets are rarely targeted by PKK insurgents in Turkey’s southeast, they can incur significant collateral damage from attacks if in the proximity of preferred targets, such as military formations or gendarme posts. On Dec. 19, officials in Elazig Province, which borders Tunceli Province to the south, announced that the 15 special security zones currently in force within their jurisdiction would be extended at least through Jan. 5, 2018.

**TURKEY** (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - US Announces Resumption of Full Visa Services

The US Embassy in Ankara announced Dec. 28 that full visa services are resuming with Turkey, though it did not disclose a specific start date. Authorities said that "the Department of State is confident that the security posture has improved sufficiently to allow the full resumption of visa services in Turkey." Ankara announced hours later that it would also resume full visa services with the US. Demand for visas may increase once services resume as travellers rebook cancelled trips.

**Analysis:** The US indefinitely suspended all nonimmigrant visa services at US diplomatic missions in Turkey Oct. 8, prompting a tit-for-tat move by Ankara, who froze such services at Turkish diplomatic missions in the US hours later. Embassies of both countries said that the move was intended to "reassess" the other's commitment to the security of their mission facilities and personnel. Officials from both countries resumed processing non-immigrant visas on a limited basis on Nov. 6.

The visa service suspensions occurred after Turkish authorities detained a Turkish employee of the US Consulate in Istanbul in early October on charges of espionage and links to the July 15, 2016 coup attempt. Washington condemned the move, which may have been a contributing factor to its nonimmigrant visa suspension.

**UNITED KINGDOM** (Country Risk Rating: **Low**) - Firefighters Continuing to Battle Major Blaze at Echo Arena Car Park in Central Liverpool

Firefighters are continuing efforts to extinguish a major blaze at a parking garage next to the Echo Arena on King's Dock in Liverpool early Jan. 1. Emergency services first responded to the scene at 1700 Dec. 31; according to Merseyside Police, the fire subsequently spread to all levels of the multistoried parking facility. Authorities estimate as many as 1,600 vehicles may have been destroyed.

Emergency responders have evacuated several surrounding buildings as a precaution, including the Jurys Inn hotel. Police have imposed several road closures in the immediate vicinity. While the precise cause of the fire has not yet been confirmed, initial investigations suggest that the blaze was accidental. No casualties have been reported.

**EGYPT** (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Islamic State Claims Attack outside Coptic Church in Helwan

Late Dec. 29, Egypt's Islamic State (IS) affiliate, Wilayat Sinai, claimed responsibility for an earlier attack outside a Coptic Church in Helwan that killed at least nine people and wounded five others. The group made the announcement through the IS media mouthpiece *Amaq News Agency*, but did not offer any proof of the claim.
Analysis: Expect heightened security in Helwan, at prominent churches, and predominantly Coptic neighbourhoods in and around Cairo. Police could establish checkpoints and roadblocks in the area, causing localised ground transport disruptions. Early Dec. 29, at least two gunmen opened fire on worshippers outside the St. Mina's Coptic Church in Helwan. Police shot and wounded one assailant, while the other reportedly fled. Wilayat Sinai has previously targeted Coptic Christian places of worship and has threatened to carry out additional attacks. Wilayat Sinai first launched a high-casualty attack against Coptic Christians in December 2016, when militants bombed Botroseya Church in Cairo's Abbassia District, killing 25 people. The group later released propaganda encouraging its supporters to launch additional attacks against Christians in Egypt. Shortly after the call to action, the group claimed responsibility for the twin bombings April 9 targeting churches in Tanta and Alexandria, and the May 26 shooting targeting a bus carrying Coptic Christian passengers in Minya.

IRAN (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Protests Continue Nationwide; Internet Access Remains blocked, Clashes with Police Reported

Anti-government protests continue to spread in Iran Jan. 1 as government security forces employ heavy-handed means to quell them. Government security forces have also begun resorting to mass arrests and live ammunition in some locations to suppress protests. At least two protesters were shot dead by Revolutionary Guards in Dorud Dec. 30; additional reports of protesters injured or killed are impossible to verify at this time. Police have used tear gas and water cannon to disperse some demonstrations, while hundreds of people have been arrested nationwide. The government has cut off internet access to mobile phones to prevent protesters organising via social media. The Iranian government has imposed travel restrictions and a near-total media blackout nationwide in an attempt to slow down the spread of the protests. State-run media outlets are forbidden to report on the protests, making confirmation of facts difficult.

Analysis: The heavy-handed response by authorities is only serving to escalate protests. Demonstrations have been reported in dozens of cities and towns nationwide, and they are likely to continue to grow in size and number in the coming days. Anti-government rhetoric appears to be growing more virulent as well, as protesters openly criticise the government for ignoring domestic economic issues.

Protests could erupt virtually anywhere, but likely protest locations include public squares, universities, government buildings, and mosques. Anti-corruption demonstrations are also possible outside religious establishments connected to regime officials, including mosques and related businesses. Expect heightened security and localised transport disruptions near any demonstrations. Police will almost certainly increase their presence near likely protest venues. Security personnel or protesters could block roads, prompting localised transport disruptions. Hardliners may also deploy the Basij volunteer militia to confront protesters. Any confrontations between security forces and protesters could become violent without warning.

Anti-government demonstrations erupted Dec. 29 in Ahwaz, Birjand, Hamadan, Kashmar, Kermanshah, Khorramabad, Mashhad, Nishabur, Qazvin, Qom, Rasht, Sari, Shahroud, Tehran, and Yazd. The protests were triggered by a demonstration in Mashhad Dec. 28, which was attended by hundreds of people. The protests spread to dozens more cities Dec. 30. Demonstrators chanted anti-government slogans and clashed with police, who responded with the use of tear gas, water cannon, and physical force. Discontent linked to socioeconomic causes has been on the increase due to general disappointment with promised economic benefits associated with the sanctions relief regime under the 2015 nuclear deal. Critics say regime insiders have disproportionately benefited. Protesters have criticised Iran's involvement in regional conflicts, which has cost the country billions of dollars that they say should have been spent domestically. Furthermore, food prices have been on the increase in recent months amid rising inflation.

Anti-government demonstrations could also escalate in response to government policy changes, security actions against protesters, or in response to calls from opposition activists for further gatherings.

JORDAN (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - King Announces Retirement of Three Senior Army Officers

On Dec. 26, King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein announced the retirement of three high-ranking princes who held senior military

Analysis: King Abdullah II reportedly asked the three princes to retire as part of a push to professionalise the country's armed forces. This is not the first time that the King has asked for the resignation or retirement of senior military officers. In October 2016, the King replaced the Chief of the Army, citing threats from terrorism as a basis for the changes.

OMAN (Country Risk Rating: Low) and UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Single MERS Case Reported in Omani Camel Herder at Al Ain Entry Point to UAE

The WHO reported a single asymptomatic case of MERS Dec. 22 in an Omani national who transported camels between Oman and the UAE at the Al Ain entry point. The case was initially identified Dec. 11. The man is quarantined at his home in Oman; all close contacts of the individual tested negative for MERS.

Analysis: The man likely contracted MERS from the camels he was transporting. The likelihood of becoming infected with MERS remains low for healthy individuals who are up-to-date on routine and recommended immunisations and who limit their exposure to camels. MERS infections typically cause symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Pneumonia is common, and severe illnesses often require intensive care and mechanical ventilation. Gastrointestinal symptoms have also been reported. The virus appears to cause more severe disease in people with weakened immune systems, older individuals, and those with chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and lung disease. No immunisation or specific treatments exist for MERS; experts simply recommend diligence in personal health precautions.

TUNISIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Authorities Arrest Militants in Ben Guerdane

On Dec. 28, security forces dismantled a 10-person militant cell in Ben Guerdane. The militants reportedly had links to an Al-Qaeda affiliate in Libya. Ben Guerdane is approximately 30 km (18 miles) from Tunisia's border with Libya.

Analysis: Militants have previously been active in Ben Guerdane. In March 2016, dozens of Islamic State (IS) militants based in Libya attacked the town, with the intention of seizing it. Security forces repelled the IS attack, which left seven civilians, 13 police officers, and more than 35 militants dead. Since then, Tunisian forces have periodically carried out counterterrorism operations in the region. Weapons smuggling in border towns remains a concern despite intensified counterterrorism efforts. Residents of border cities, including Ben Guerdane, often rely on cross-border smuggling and trade due to high levels of unemployment in the area.

Russia/CIS

RUSSIA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Islamic State Claims Dec. 27 Blast at St. Petersburg Supermarket

The Islamic State (IS) militant group, through its media mouthpiece Amaq News Agency, claimed responsibility for the Dec. 27 blast in a Perekrestok supermarket in St. Petersburg, Russia. The group provided no evidence to verify its claim. Heightened security, including police raids, are possible throughout St. Petersburg, including at major transportation hubs, as authorities seek information regarding the perpetrator of the apparent attack. The area remains cordoned off late Dec. 29 as an investigation into the attack continues.

Analysis: The circumstances behind the incident remain unclear, though police opened a criminal investigation into the explosion after finding a small, homemade, improvised explosive device in the storage room after the blast. The power of the explosion was roughly equivalent to around 200 grammes (7 ounces) of TNT. Russian President Vladimir Putin described the explosion as a terrorist act. The blast occurred around 1845 in a storage room of a supermarket on Kondratyevskiy Avenue; at least 13 people who were in the building were injured, one of them critically. The Dec. 27 attack would not be the first terror attack in St. Petersburg; on April 3, 2017, a suicide
bombing in the St. Petersburg metro killed 14 people. Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAK) named the suspected attacker as a Russian national of Kyrgyz origin who had links with radical Islamist groups. North Caucasus-based Islamist militants operate in Russia and have carried out attacks in the country. Such groups typically target government buildings or personnel, security forces, and crowded civilian locations, including transport infrastructure; while such incidents are concentrated in the North Caucasus republics of Dagestan and Ingushetia, attacks have also occurred in major cities, including Moscow and St. Petersburg. Also, Russian military support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad means that lone, radicalised individuals either working with or inspired by groups such as IS could also seek to target the country.

RUSSIA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Supreme Court Upholds Election Ban on Opposition Leader

On Dec. 30, Russia's Supreme Court upheld a lower court's decision to bar opposition leader Alexei Navalny from running in the country's 2018 presidential election. Navalny had been legally prevented from registering as a candidate due to an earlier embezzlement conviction that he maintains was politically motivated. Navalny said he would ask the Supreme Court to reconsider its unanimous decision and file a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights. He has also threatened to call for a boycott of the election.

Analysis: Navalny's petition before the court will almost certainly fail, and even if the European Court of Human Rights rules favourably on his behalf, the Court's ruling is not binding. So far, Russian authorities are doing all they can to block Navalny's message calling for a boycott of the election, going so far as to block Navalny's social media messages. While Navalny will undoubtedly continue to call for protests in the run-up to the March 18 election, local authorities will likely continuously harass his supporters at his rallies, even though Navalny himself will probably not be arrested. Calls for a boycott could generate support, but since there is no longer a minimum turnout requirement to validate the election, it is ultimately pointless. Incumbent President Vladimir Putin will almost certainly be re-elected, and would become the longest-serving Russian leader since Josef Stalin when Putin's new term expires in 2024.