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No Changes This Week:

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:

<http://www.tamus.edu/assets/files/safety/pdf/InternationalTraveltoHighRiskCountries.pdf>

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

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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.

<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/06/29/frequently-asked-questions-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states>

- **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 Kasai Central province.
- **Egypt:** North Sinai governorate.
- **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 Guerrerro.
- **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, Enuge 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.



December 11, 2017

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Africa

CAMEROON (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Paramilitary Officer Killed in Separatist Militant Attack on Mamfe, Southwest Region**

Gendarme (paramilitary) forces killed at least six separatist militants who attacked their headquarters in Mamfe, Southwest Region, around 2300 Dec. 7. At least one paramilitary officer died, and five others sustained injuries during the skirmish.

The surviving assailants stole a gendarme vehicle and abandoned it on the road to Bamenda. The gunmen reportedly approached the security facility by boat on a nearby river. The casualty count could increase. Mamfe is around 195 km (121 miles) north of Douala.

Analysis: Heightened security measures are in place across the surrounding Manyu Division, and armed forces will likely conduct search operations. Exchanges of gunfire are possible, should police or soldiers locate the perpetrators. Security personnel may establish roadblocks, conduct vehicle searches, and enforce curfews and movement restrictions without warning. Authorities could also restrict telecommunications networks. Security measures and restrictions could cause delays to ground transportation and freight deliveries. Northwest and Southwest regions are increasing in frequency and scale, and at least 11 security personnel have died amid the escalating violence. The assault on the Mamfe gendarme base marks the first raid on a security facility. Ambushes targeting police and military patrols in Manyu Division Nov. 29 and 30 killed at least six security personnel. Militant attacks began as crude bombings and ambushes of isolated checkpoints or individual security personnel, but are gradually becoming more sophisticated. Residents claim that gunmen are extorting travellers on major roads and that members of the armed forces are committing abuses during counterinsurgency operations. Many Anglophones have fled the Northwest and Southwest regions and sought refuge in Nigeria. Security forces' violent suppression of Anglophone protests over the past year has considerably worsened relations between Cameroon's francophone government and its English-speaking regions. The protests began as requests for government resources and expanded to include demands for the devolution of political power. Security forces have reacted to activists with heavy-handed responses on multiple occasions. The government's refusal to adequately address local grievances appears to have increased local support for separatist elements, some of which are increasingly adopting violent tactics. Stringent security measures - including curfews, mass arrests, and public assembly bans - are likely, increasing the support of moderate Anglophone activists for armed resistance. Over the past year, the government has used increasingly violent tactics to suppress protests in the two Anglophone regions.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (Country Risk Rating: **High) - At Least 14 UN Peacekeepers Die in Attack on UN Base, Beni Territory**

At least 19 people died - 14 UN peacekeepers and five government soldiers - in a Dec. 7 attack on a UN base located on Mbau-Kamango axis, Beni territory. Authorities have attributed the attack to rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU). All 14 of the killed peacekeepers were from Tanzania. At least 53 other UN soldiers were wounded in the incident.

Analysis: The UN will likely deploy additional troops to the area. Though the peacekeepers repelled the attack, additional clashes are possible, as troops are likely pursuing the attackers. Security conditions remain poor in parts of North Kivu Province, including Beni territory. Elements of the ADF-NALU have previously been responsible for several attacks in Beni. The Ugandan armed group targets both civilians and military facilities. The ADF-NALU attacked a UN base in the Mamunjoma area of Beni territory Oct. 9 - an unspecified number of UN troops died in the incident. Armed groups have also targeted UN troops in other parts of North Kivu, such as Lubero territory. Rebel violence in North Kivu had led to the deaths of thousands of people and has displaced tens of thousands of others.

GUINEA-BISSAU (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Opposition Groups Plan Anti-government Protests in Bissau Dec. 14-15**

The Collective of Democratic Political Parties (*O Coletivo dos Partidos Politicos Democraticos*, CPPD) is planning demonstrations against the government of President Jose Mario Vaz in central Bissau, Dec. 14-15. CPPD is holding the events after police forcibly dispersed attempts by activists to rally at the Chapa de Bissau intersection around Dec. 7 before a march to the city centre. Officers allegedly roughed up journalists and an official of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) observing the protest. The government ruled protests may only occur on Sundays, national holidays, and 1300-1900 Saturdays. The opposition coalition consequently cancelled plans for similar demonstrations Dec. 8.

CPPD members will likely once again attempt to rally at Chapa de Bissau and march to the National Assembly (*Assembleia Nacional Popular*), the Presidential Palace, and National Heroes Square (*Praca dos Herois Nacionais*).

Analysis: Expect increased security near the demonstrations. Attempts to protest in defiance of an official ban will significantly increase the likelihood of clashes between police and protesters. Security personnel will likely use force - including tear gas - to disperse crowds attempting to hold unauthorised protests. Protesters could throw stones at police and block roads. Expect transportation and commercial disruptions near any protest activity, which will most likely occur along the Route (Rua) 4 Highway and Francois Mendes Avenue (Avenida Francois Mendes). During previous opposition demonstrations, activists have attempted to march from Osvaldo Vieira International Airport (OXB) to the city centre. Demonstrations against Vaz have been taking place on particular days for several weeks at a time; additional protests on Thursdays and Fridays are likely in the coming month. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will consider sanctions on Vaz's government at a Dec. 12-17 regional summit, after the president failed to abide by an ECOWAS-brokered accord and name a new prime minister. The frustrations are related to a political stalemate over executive power between Vaz and his political opponents in the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC). Due to the dispute, Guinea-Bissau's government has not functioned effectively since August 2015.

MALAWI (Country Risk Rating: **Medium) - Religious Group to Hold Nationwide Protests over Electoral Reform Bill**

Members of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) religious group are set to hold nationwide protests in Malawi Dec. 13. Organisers have called for the protests to demand parliamentary debate on proposed electoral reform bills. PAC officials said that protests would occur in the cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu, and Zomba.

Analysis: Organisers have not publicised specific rally venues; however, protests are likely to materialise in the vicinity of the Parliament building in Lilongwe, as well as near other government buildings in Blantyre, Mzuzu, and Zomba. Demonstrations are also possible in other secondary towns across the country. Security forces will probably increase security and close roads near possible protests sites. Violence is unlikely; however, the possibility of low-level skirmishes between agitators and security forces cannot be ruled out. Localised transport disruptions are likely near any demonstrations. The PAC, opposition parties, and civil society groups initiated their calls for the electoral reform bills to be debated in Parliament after Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs Samuel Tembenu promised to table the bills in early November. PAC officials delivered a petition to President Peter Mutharika and the speaker of the National Assembly during a march to the Parliament building in Lilongwe Nov. 23. The petition gave the speaker and the president an ultimatum to hold the electoral reform bill debate by Nov. 27. In an effort to apply further pressure on the president and the speaker, the opposition party, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), also threatened to boycott National Assembly proceedings if the proposed bills were not taken to Parliament. Further protests are likely if the bills are not debated before the end of parliamentary sittings in mid-December. The electoral reform bills seek to amend the constitution by proposing a 50-plus-one percent majority in presidential elections, and for the elected president and vice president to be sworn-in after 30 days.

NIGERIA (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Anti-police Brutality Protests to Take Place Nationwide**

Activists plan to hold protests calling for the dissolution of Nigeria's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) nationwide Dec. 11 due to alleged human rights abuses. The so-called "end SARS" demonstrations will take place simultaneously in cities in each of nine of the country's federal states, including: Abuja, Awka, Ibadan, Jos, Kaduna, Lagos, Makurdi, Owerri, Port Harcourt, and Warri.

Analysis: Expect increased security, including potential road closures, in central areas of the above-mentioned protest locations. Police will likely disperse protesters using tear gas and water cannon. Protesters could hurl stones at police and vehicles passing near confrontations with officers. Anticipate traffic and commercial disruptions in the cities where protests take place. The SARS unit, which works under the country's police department, was established to deal with cases of robbery. However, activists allege that some members of the task force have become instruments-for-hire to settle private scores, as well as to intimidate opposition politicians. Following a series of petitions to the country's senate, an ad hoc committee on security was mandated to

investigate the allegations of human rights abuses by the SARS unit. Despite this, reports of isolated cases of SARS-related abuse persist.

SENEGAL (Country Risk Rating: **Medium) - Supporters of Former Mayor Could Protest in Dakar**

Supporters of prominent opposition politician Khalifa Sall could stage protests in Dakar in the coming days after a judge rejected a motion by Sall's lawyers to release him on bail Dec. 7. The judge ordered that Khalifa and seven of his co-accused remain in prison pending their trial; the date for the trial is yet to be announced.

Analysis: The former mayor's supporters could take to the streets to denounce the judge's decision, urging that Sall be freed. Previous protests supporting Sall have taken place in the downtown area, including the Place de la Nation (formerly Place de l'Obelisque). Security personnel could disperse unauthorised demonstrations, potentially leading to clashes. Expect localised transport disruptions near potential rally sites. Authorities have held Sall since March 2017 and accuse him of embezzling public money during his term as Dakar's mayor. His supporters claim the charges are politically motivated - an attempt by the government of President Macky Sall to prevent Sall from running in the 2019 presidential elections. Sall's incarceration has generated interest across the country, especially in Dakar. On Nov. 25, Senegal's National Assembly voided the parliamentary immunity for Sall. Minor clashes erupted between Sall supporters and police in front of the National Assembly; police used tear gas to disperse the demonstrators. Supporters of the former mayor will likely continue to urge authorities to free him, carrying out protests, including in front of the High Court when the official trial begins.

SUDAN (Country Risk Rating: **High) - US Embassy in Khartoum Warns of Possible Protests Nationwide**

The US Embassy in Khartoum issued a security message warning of possible protests across Sudan as of Dec. 8, in response to US President Donald Trump's official recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Diplomatic staff are advised to minimise nonessential travel in Khartoum, where there is a heightened threat of demonstrations. Hundreds of protesters gathered to stage demonstrations after midday prayers Dec. 8 in Khartoum.

Analysis: Additional demonstrations could occur outside foreign embassies and rapidly escalate into violent unrest. Police may fire live ammunition and tear gas to disperse crowds. Protesters may pelt stones at security personnel and vehicles passing near demonstrations, and block roads with burning debris.

TOGO (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Opposition Reschedules Protests for Dec. 13, 14, and 16**

A coalition of 14 political opposition groups has called for protests to take place nationwide in Togo Dec. 13, 14, and 16, after postponing their Dec. 7 nationwide protests. The protests form part of an ongoing campaign to demand President Faure Gnassingbe implement desired political and constitutional reforms. Additionally, the protests will denounce violent altercations between security forces and demonstrators in Lome Dec. 2.

Analysis: Protests will almost certainly take place in Lome and other major urban centres, including Anie, Atakpame, Bafilo, Dapaong, Kara, Mango, Noepe, Sokonde, and Vogan, where the most recent opposition demonstrations have occurred. In Lome, previous protests have taken place in the Adewui, Agoe, Attikoume, Baguida, Be-Gakpoto, and Kodjoviakope districts. The rallies have the potential to attract thousands of participants; expect severe transport and commercial disruptions. Violence is possible if security personnel are provoked or use force to disperse any unauthorised demonstrations, particularly in the northern cities of Sokodo, Bafilo, and Mango where protests have been banned. Security forces are likely to use tear gas and stun grenades to disperse dissenting protesters. Togo has been facing a period of heightened instability and volatility since August when opposition and civil society groups stepped up pressure on the Gnassingbe regime. The opposition coalition has repeatedly staged related demonstrations over the past three months, which often resulted in clashes with security personnel. Several people have died from gunshots during related violence. As tensions remain high over unresolved ongoing political issues, both planned and unannounced protests will continue to take place across Togo in the coming weeks or months, especially in Lome. These gatherings have generally been well-attended, and the opposition's momentum has shown no signs of abating. Opposition parties plan to boycott a referendum on proposed constitutional amendments endorsed by the legislature in September. Opposition

politicians have rejected initiatives the government has presented, as proposed presidential term limits were not retroactive, allowing Gnassingbe to run in 2020 and 2025. Officials have not announced a date for the vote. Gnassingbe has been in power since 2005 when he replaced his late father, who had ruled Togo since a 1967 military coup.

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Asia

AFGHANISTAN (Country Risk Rating: Extreme) - Authorities Indicate Explosion in Sar-e-Karez Market, Kabul Likely Accidental

Ministry of Interior and police officials have said that the explosion at the Sar-e-Karez market in southwestern Kabul Dec. 8 was probably accidental. Authorities said the blast was likely caused by malfunctioning gas cylinders; however, security personnel continued to investigate the incident to conclusively determine the cause of the explosion. At least seven people were killed and 16 others were wounded in the blast.

BANGLADESH (Country Risk Rating: High) - Several Groups Announce New Anti-US Protests Nationwide

Several organisations have announced plans to hold anti-US demonstrations in Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh over the US announcement that it would recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and relocate the US Embassy. The Islami Andolon Bangladesh Islamist group plans to demonstrate Dec. 11, while the Jatiya Party will stage demonstrations Dec. 13. The Hefazat-e-Islam Islamist group has called for demonstrations Dec. 13 and said it would lay siege to US Embassy in Dhaka. Further, unannounced protests are also possible and could continue beyond Dec. 13.

Analysis: The largest gatherings will likely take place in Dhaka, though sizeable rallies are also possible elsewhere in the country. Possible protest venues include outside local press clubs, prominent mosques, and at popular public parks and squares. Protesters may conduct marches in the area, which will prompt localised disruptions. In Dhaka, Islamist groups may gather at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque and will probably march towards the US Embassy; however, historically marches and demonstrations have concluded at the Gulshan II traffic circle and are not allowed to enter the diplomatic enclave.

Expect increased security, possible road closures, and traffic delays near likely protest sites. Localised clashes are possible, particularly if demonstrators disobey police orders to disperse; however, major security disturbances are not anticipated.

INDIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Heavy Rain, Snowfall Forecast for Parts of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir States

Meteorologists predict that severe weather will impact Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh states through at least Dec. 13. Forecasts indicate that heavy rainfall will begin the evening Dec. 10, while local officials in Srinagar have warned of widespread snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir State starting Dec. 11.

Analysis: The most substantial snowfall is likely at higher elevations, including Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Kufri, Lahaul and Spiti, and Kinnaur. While heavy rainfall is most likely in Srinagar, Shimla, and Manali, snowfall remains possible in these areas. Heavy rain and snowfall could cause landslides, flooding, and ground transport disruptions. Traffic congestion and public transport interruptions are likely if snowfall occurs in major urban areas. Authorities may close main highways in Jammu and Kashmir, including the Srinagar-Jammu and Mughal Road highways. The Srinagar-Leh highway was closed Dec. 10 for the winter months. Snowfall, landslides, and flooding could block secondary roads throughout Jammu and Kashmir and eastern Himachal Pradesh. Flight disruptions are possible at airports serving Jammu (IXJ) and Srinagar (SXR). Electricity outages are also possible, especially outside urban areas.

INDIA (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Separatist Activists Plan Shutdown Strike in East Maharashtra**

Activists demanding the establishment of the proposed state of Vidarbha plan to launch a shutdown strike in eastern Maharashtra Dec. 11. The action will coincide with the beginning of the winter session of the Maharashtra State assembly, held in Nagpur. Several opposition political parties, including the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), plan to support the agitation. The Dec. 11 shutdown strike will likely prompt significant business and transport disruptions throughout eastern Maharashtra. Markets and businesses could remain closed; transport services could be limited during the strike.

Analysis: Protesters will likely hold demonstrations near Vidhan Bhavan, host of the winter session of the Maharashtra State assembly, in Nagpur. Other possible protest sites include prominent public squares and government buildings. Demonstrators could block roads, highways, and rail lines, intensifying disruptions. Security forces are likely to deploy additional personnel throughout the area; clashes between police and protesters are possible.

INDONESIA (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Activists Stage Anti-US Protests in Various Cities Nationwide**

Activists from the hardline Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) staged a demonstration outside the US Embassy in Central Jakarta at 0900 Dec. 11 to protest US President Donald J. Trump's official recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Muslim activists also held protests outside the US Consulate General in Surabaya from 0900 to 1300. Another demonstration is also expected in Surabaya at 1600; the rally may occur along Jl. Raya Darmo between Taman Bungkul and the former US Consulate General on Jl. Raya Dr. Soetomo. Other unannounced protests may take place near the US Consulate in Medan, and possibly around sites that symbolise the US commercial presence in Indonesia.

Analysis: Expect an increased police presence around announced rallies. Sizeable turnouts will probably lead to localised traffic disruptions. Skirmishes are possible if protesters attempt to break through security cordons or if police forcibly disperse crowds.

INDONESIA (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Police Arrest Three Terrorists in East Java Province**

Densus 88, the country's counterterrorism unit, arrested three suspected Islamist extremists in separate raids Dec. 9. One militant, a member of Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), was arrested on a highway in Sidoarjo district. Officers claim the suspect, who had previously planned to bomb a police building in Surabaya in 2014, had purchased bomb-making materials. Two other extremists had allegedly pledged allegiance to Islamic State (IS); officers arrested one suspect in Surabaya, while the other was arrested in Malang district.

Analysis: At least one of the arrested suspects had previously travelled to Syria to fight with IS, highlighting the risk posed by returning fighters from Syria and Iraq. Authorities are also concerned about domestically radicalised militants conducting operations or travelling abroad for training. Officials have intensified security along the border of North Sulawesi, which has served as an important route for militants to join fighting in the southern Philippines. Densus 88 continues to carry out operations against extremist groups operating in the. Though the counterterrorism unit has foiled several attacks in the country, the threat remains high, especially as more militants are expected to return to the country amid IS losses in Iraq and Syria.

MYANMAR (Country Risk Rating: **Medium) - Landmine Explosions Injure Four Soldiers in Rakhine State**

An army convoy struck three improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted on the Ann-Myebon Highway in Myebon Township, Rakhine State, Dec. 8. The blasts injured four troops. The explosion took place about an hour after Chief Minister Nyi Pu passed the area, but officials do not believe the state leader was the target of the attack.

Analysis: Authorities do not know who is responsible for the attack; the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), other Rohingya militants, and the Arakan Army all operate in the state. The landmine attack is the latest in a series of blasts in the state, suggesting it is becoming the preferred tactic of militants. Officials discovered two IEDs in Mrauk-U planted under a bridge on Dec. 7, while children unearthed bomb-making materials near Kyaut Pandu in Maungdaw Dec. 5. Three buried IEDs targeting a military convoy detonated on the Yangon-Sittwe Road Nov. 15,

injuring one civilian. Amid the growing IED threat, officials have focused on clearing the highway, the main connection point between Sittwe and the rest of the Myanmar.

PAKISTAN (Country Risk Rating: **High) - China Warns of Potential Militant Threat to Chinese Interests**

The Chinese Embassy in Islamabad issued a security message Dec. 8 warning of possible militant attacks on Chinese organisations and citizens in Pakistan. The statement did not specify any time frame, or location within the country, but urged Chinese citizens to limit their movements in public areas. The embassy did not specify details on what prompted the warning or who is behind the perceived threat.

Analysis: Pakistani authorities are likely to boost security around Chinese diplomatic missions, organisations, and nationals in the country in response to the threat. Police may erect checkpoints and/or cordon off roads or individual traffic lanes near potential targets as a precaution. Security personnel may briefly shut down mobile phone towers in select areas, especially while law enforcement operations are taking place. The latest warning comes more than a month after China claimed that an East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) militant had entered Pakistan to assassinate its ambassador, Yao Jing. The ETIM is a Muslim separatist group founded by militant Uighurs, members of the Turkic-speaking ethnic majority in northwest China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region bordering Pakistan. The group is believed to have ties with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other Islamist militant groups operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Beijing has accused ETIM of operating terrorist camps in Pakistan's semiautonomous tribal areas along the Afghan border to train its members to carry out attacks in China, though the Pakistan Army claims that they have eliminated almost all Uighur militants from the country during counterterrorism offensives in recent years.

The threat to Chinese interests and nationals in Pakistan is also high from domestic Islamist and separatist militant groups, who are opposed to Beijing's growing influence in the country. Militant groups in Pakistan have conducted a spate of targeted attacks on Chinese nationals and projects - especially the high-profile Chinese-funded China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) - in recent years. The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the execution of two Chinese nationals who had been kidnapped in Quetta, Balochistan Province, in late May. Following the attacks, the federal government deployed more 15,000 military personnel to protect Chinese nationals and interests in the country. Pakistan is almost certain to take the latest threat seriously and will further augment security around potential targets.

PAKISTAN (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Jamaat-e-Islami Protesters Slated to Reach Islamabad Dec. 12 and Hold a Three-day Sit-in**

The opposition Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party's "long march" from Bab-e-Khyber, in the Khyber Agency in northwestern Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), is expected to reach Islamabad on Dec. 12. Several thousand people have reportedly joined the march. JI leader Sirajul Haq is scheduled to address the participants in the Faizabad area of the capital and later lead the march to D-Chowk, in front of the Parliament House, where activists plan to hold a three-day sit-in demonstration.

Analysis: Expect increased security, as well as traffic congestion and delays along the likely march route, especially on the Grand Trunk Road/N-5 and M1 motorway, and nearby roads. Islamabad authorities are unlikely to allow the protesters to stage a sit-in at D-Chowk due to an ongoing ban on demonstrations in the Red Zone, the location of several foreign embassies and government buildings. Security personnel will likely block Islamabad's entry and exit routes and close roads leading to the Red Zone as the JI march approaches the capital. Localised violence cannot be ruled out, particularly if law enforcement personnel attempt to forcibly disperse JI supporters. Protesters could set up roadblocks, engage in minor arson attacks and vandalism, as well as clash with security personnel. However, widespread violence or disruptions is not anticipated.

JI is demanding the federal government immediately declare FATA a part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and establish a new judicial system in the tribal belt. In March, the federal cabinet under former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved a set of measures for the legislature to vote on that would allow the proposed merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and a 10-year reform package to bring the semi-autonomous tribal region on par with

other developing areas in the country. However, JI and other groups from FATA claim the government has made no significant progress on any of these measures.

PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Abu Sayyaf Militants, Troops Clash in Panamao, Sulu Province

Fighting between security forces and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) militants broke out in Panamao, Sulu Province, Dec. 8. Joint Task Force Sulu soldiers killed three ASG militants in the encounter and injured others; no troops were injured.

Analysis: The clashes occurred as security forces were attempting to find hostages believed to be in the area. The military has been cracking down on ASG since mid-2016 to end the rebel group, which is notorious for kidnap-for-ransom attacks. Officials have identified one of the dead militants as the son of ASG leader Nelson Rajak, while another was related to Peping Jamlul, brother-in-law to Radulan Sahiron, leader of the faction engaged in the firefight. The deaths suggest that retaliatory actions are possible in the coming days. While security operations against the group have led to significant arrests and deaths among its ranks, the extent of the impact on the group's operations remains unclear. The jungle terrain, the ease of escape by sea, and support for the militants from some segments of the local population have prevented authorities from effectively dismantling the group.

PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - NPA Wounds Three Soldiers in Zamboanga del Sur Fighting

Soldiers engaged New People's Army (NPA) rebels in the Gasa area of Lakewood town, about 32 km (20 miles) west of Pagadian City, the afternoon of Dec. 8. The clashes lasted nearly three hours; one NPA rebel was killed in the fighting, while three soldiers were injured.

Analysis: The attack was the latest to occur since President Rodrigo Duterte formally terminated peace talks with the communist rebels Nov. 23. Duterte declared the group a terrorist organisation Dec. 5. NPA rebels fought the military on the border of South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat provinces Dec. 4. Although the NPA is reportedly considering a unilateral declaration of a Christmas holiday ceasefire, the government has ruled out a truce for 2017. Annual ceasefire declarations typically break down every year; the NPA is likely to escalate violence in the coming weeks, and additional clashes are almost certain as the military continues to pursue the group following its designation as a terrorist organisation.

PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Protests Possible Nationwide over Proposed Extension of Martial Law in Mindanao

Activists may stage demonstrations across the Philippines over reports that the president's office will ask Congress on Dec. 11 to extend martial law in Mindanao for at least a year, following recommendations from the armed forces and national police. Opposition lawmakers and rights activists have opposed the move, claiming it violates the limitations set by the constitution and may result in abuses.

Analysis: If protests materialise, the largest gatherings will probably take place in Metro Manila. Possible protest sites include outside the Batasang Pambansa complex, Malacanang Palace, and other government buildings, as well as public parks and squares. Preliminary reports suggest Congress may convene a joint session either on Dec. 14 or 15 to discuss the extension; protests on these days are also possible. Smaller gatherings may occur in other major cities, including Cebu and Davao.

Additional police officers will probably deploy near larger demonstrations, especially those that take place near government offices. Localised traffic disruptions are possible, especially if marches occur. Significant security disturbances are unlikely, though clashes between security personnel and protesters cannot be ruled out.

President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law over the entire island of Mindanao May 23 after fighting broke out between Islamic State (IS)-affiliated militants and government troops in Lanao del Sur's Marawi City. The initial declaration lasted for 60 days but Congress approved Duterte's request to extend it until Dec. 31. Security agencies have recommended the latest extension, arguing that while fighting has ended in Marawi, the terror threat persists due to the presence of the communist guerrillas, Islamist militants, and separatist groups. The president's spokesperson has said, based on intelligence reports, that IS militants were planning to attack another,

unspecified city. Congress is expected to decide on the extension by Dec. 15 as lawmakers are due to go on a recess Dec. 16-Jan. 14. An extension of the martial law is likely given that Duterte has majority support in Congress.

SRI LANKA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Railway Workers Continue Indefinite Strike

Railway Locomotive Operative Engineers and Drivers Association members continue their open-ended, nationwide strike as of Dec. 11. The union is protesting the recruitment of railway engine assistants outside the stipulated protocol. Government officials attempted to intercede with union representatives to end the ongoing labour action; however, union leaders on Dec. 10 said that negotiations had failed and that the strike would therefore continue.

Analysis: The strike has caused significant rail service disruptions nationwide. Sri Lanka Railways has implemented contingency plans to minimise disruptions at key stations, including Colombo's Fort Railway Station, but delays and cancellations have been widespread. Authorities have deployed replacement buses at main railway stations to provide alternative transport. Despite such measures, the strike has led to increased road congestion, especially in Greater Colombo, as many train commuters use taxis, app-based ride-hailing services, and private vehicles for alternative transport. Crowded conditions are likely to persist on alternative forms of public transportation as the strike continues.

Striking workers could stage protests at major stations by picketing entrances and ticket booths. Clashes between striking workers and security forces are possible; skirmishes between striking workers and stranded commuters could also occur.

THAILAND (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Officials Reopen Nakhon Si Thammarat Airport after Flooding

Nakhon Si Thammarat Airport (NST) reopened in southern Thailand Dec. 10. Officials shut down NST, located about 105 km (65 miles) southeast of Surat Thani, Dec. 7 after flooding covered the airport's runway and caused electrical damage. Workers have pumped water from the runway and erected sandbag barriers, which authorities believe will prevent additional flooding. As of the morning of Dec. 11, flights were operating normally.

Analysis: Several domestic airlines provide service between NST and Bangkok's Don Mueang International Airport (DMK). The Thai Meteorological Department has forecast additional rainfall for the area through at least Dec. 11, and flooding and unannounced flight disruptions remain possible.

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Central/South America

VENEZUELA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Low Voter Turnout in Nationwide Municipal Elections

Municipal elections took place in Venezuela Dec. 10 to elect approximately 335 mayors, as well as a new Governor of Zulia State. Though authorities deployed around 140,000 security personnel to maintain order for the vote, the election was marred by a low voter turnout; approximately 48 percent of eligible voters cast ballots on the day. The ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) took the majority of the state's mayoral positions, winning in 41 of the country's 42 cities.

Analysis: The municipal poll follows the nationwide election of governors Oct. 15; 18 governors of the PSUV party were elected, and five opposition governors. Major opposition-led protests, mainly from the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), have not taken place ahead of the elections. The MUD's call for a boycott of the Dec. 10 polls was well-observed as voter turnout dropped by at least 11 percent from 58 percent in the 2013 municipal elections. Months of violent, anti-government protests took place after Venezuela's Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) attempted to strip the opposition-led National Assembly of lawmaking powers in late March. The fervour fuelling the protests mostly diminished in August, after the National Constituent Assembly (ANC) declared itself Venezuela's only legislative body, rendering the National Assembly powerless. Violent anti-government

demonstrations left about 125 people dead, and the government has accused some opposition figures of organising demonstrations for perceived personal gain rather than the betterment of the country.

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Europe

ALBANIA (Country Risk Rating: **Medium**) - Ongoing Disruptions due to Flooding in Southern Regions

Authorities continue to report ongoing disruptions in the southern regions of Albania following several days of flooding Nov. 30-Dec. 3. As of Dec. 11, floodwaters were receding, with areas in Fier and Vlore counties remaining the worst affected. Flood warnings remain in effect for the Vjose River due to additional forecast precipitation; further resultant landslides are possible.

Analysis: Emergency and cleanup operations are ongoing, and utility services are subject to intermittent disruptions. A number of roads and bridges in the affected areas were damaged, and further road travel disruptions are likely in the immediate term.

Authorities are forecasting additional rains for recently affected areas including Bera, Fier, and Vlore counties; saturated ground in the area has the potential to result in additional flooding over the near term. Further disruptions to localised travel and public utilities remain possible in the coming days.

EUROPE (Country Risk Rating: **Not Rated**) - Protests in Major Cities against US President's Announcement on Jerusalem

Activists plan to gather in cities across Europe to protest US President Donald J. Trump's executive order that the US will recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Announced protests include:

Budapest, Hungary

- 1130, Dec. 11: Avenue de la Joyeuse Entree

The Hague, Netherlands

- 1200, Dec. 12: Lange Vijverberg

Madrid, Spain

- 2000, Dec. 12: US Embassy on Calle Serrano

Antwerp, Belgium

- 1700, Dec. 12: Graaf van Hoornestraa

Helsinki, Finland

- 1200, Dec. 12: Lange Vijverberg

Malmö, Sweden

- 2000, Dec. 12: US Embassy on Calle Serrano

Toulouse, France

- 1800, Dec. 12: Jean-Jaures

Brussels, Belgium

- 1700, Dec. 13: US Embassy on Boulevard du Regent 27

Melbourne, Australia

- 1800, Dec. 13: State Library of Victoria

Santiago, Chile

- 1930, Dec. 15: US Embassy on Avenida Andres Bello 2800

Waterford, Ireland

- 1700, Dec. 15: Barronstrand Street

Manchester, UK

- 1200, Dec. 16: Piccadilly Gardens

Further protests are possible elsewhere in Western Europe, especially outside US diplomatic missions. Attendance will vary, though the events have the potential to draw crowds in the low thousands. Large numbers of people and related security restrictions could impede entry and exit to some diplomatic missions. Authorities may suspend consular services at short notice. Crowd-control measures, including security cordons and traffic restrictions, could be introduced near protest venues. Violence is unlikely, though isolated scuffles are possible if rowdy elements attempt to breach police cordons or otherwise provoke a police response. While foreign nationals are unlikely to be targeted, bystanders could face incidental risks near any violence.

IRELAND (Country Risk Rating: **Low) and UNITED KINGDOM (Country Risk Rating: **Low**) - Ice and Snow to Continue Causing Widespread Transport Disruptions**

Winter weather is continuing to cause significant transport disruptions in the UK and Ireland. As of early Dec. 11, light snow was continuing in northwestern Ireland, Northern Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, Wales, and the Midlands region in England. While precipitation is forecast to taper off by midday, widespread icy conditions are expected, especially in parts of Scotland, Wales, and south-central England through at least 1100.

Ireland Weather Warnings (Dec. 11) :

- **Orange Low Temperature Warning (1000 Dec. 10-1000 Dec. 11):** All counties

UK Weather Warnings (Dec. 11):

- **Yellow Ice Warning (0400-1100):** East Midlands, East of England, London & South East England, North West England, South West England, Wales, West Midlands, Yorkshire & Humber
- **Yellow Snow & Ice Warning (1200 Dec. 10-1200 Dec. 11):** Central, Tayside & Fife; Grampian; Highlands & Eilean Siar; Northern Ireland; Orkney & Shetland; SW Scotland, Lothian Borders; Strathclyde

Snow, sleet, and rain are expected to persist through the morning commute in southern England, and driving conditions may be hazardous on secondary roads and bridges and overpasses. Freezing rain is likely in some areas before daytime warming occurs. Although many roads have been cleared, driving conditions may be difficult in Ireland and any locations where snow melted and re-freezing occurred during the overnight hours. In Ireland, the coldest temperatures were expected in east Connacht, Leinster, and Ulster.

Analysis: Widespread public transit disruptions are likely until conditions moderate. A number of rail operators ran empty trains to clear tracks during the night of Dec. 10-11, but services may operate at reduced speeds. Heavy snow caused very long delays and hundreds of cancellations at a number of airports in the UK on Dec. 10, and related disruptions are expected to continue until at least the afternoon of Dec. 11 as airlines accommodate thousands of stranded passengers and reposition aircraft and flight crews to resume normal services. Some carriers have pre-cancelled a number of flights scheduled for Dec. 11.

ROMANIA (Country Risk Rating: **Medium) - Opposition Activists Stage Large Demonstration in Bucharest**

Opposition activists associated with various organisations staged a large demonstration in Victory Square (*Piata Victoriei*) Dec. 10. Additional opposition protests are likely to occur in Bucharest at short notice in the coming weeks.

Analysis: Anticipate localised traffic disruptions near any protests that do take place. Authorities may deploy increased security as a precaution. Police may also close or restrict traffic on nearby streets. Isolated clashes between protesters and police cannot be ruled out. Foreign nationals are not likely to be targeted, though bystanders could suffer collateral injury if violence erupts.

Opposition activists are engaged in an ongoing campaign to denounce the ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD). Trade unions, civil society groups, and opposition organisations have staged anti-corruption and anti-government demonstrations since February, when the PSD attempted to pass a controversial emergency decree intended to decriminalise some forms of official misconduct.

On Dec. 6, the PSD-dominated Parliament voted to change the country's justice laws and establish a department to investigate crimes committed by magistrates; opposition representatives claim that the changes jeopardise judicial independence. Magistrates are preparing to counteract the vote in the coming days.

UNITED KINGDOM (Country Risk Rating: **Low**) - Taxi Drivers Scheduled to Hold Go-slow Protest in Downtown Leeds

Taxi drivers are scheduled to hold a go-slow protest from 0600 Dec. 11 in Leeds city centre over several issues, including high fines. Drivers are slated to gather at Kirkstall Morrisons before making their way into the city centre. The organisers, Leeds Private Hire Drivers Organisation, indicate that the protest will last up to four hours. Some 100 drivers are expected to participate in the demonstration.

Analysis: The protest is likely to cause significant congestion in the Leeds area during the morning rush hour. Expect limited taxi availability during the protest and likely knock-on effects on alternative transport modes in the city due to increased demand.

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Middle East/North Africa

EGYPT (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Islamic State-affiliate Claims Execution of Civilian near Rafah

On Dec. 8, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the execution of a civilian in the neighbourhood of Ahrash, north of Rafah. The militants accused the victim of collaborating with security forces. Rafah is near Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip, approximately 300 km (miles) northeast of Cairo.

Analysis: The claim marks the third time that IS militants have executed a civilian in North Sinai since Dec. 6. It is likely that militants are targeting civilians more frequently in response to local tribes increasing their participation in counterterrorism efforts. On Nov. 26, the Union of Sinai Tribes - an informal coalition of tribal groups in the Sinai Peninsula - encouraged young men in the region to assist the military in operations near Rafah. The announcement was issued in response to the Nov. 24 attack on Al Rawdah mosque in Bir al-Abed, which left more than 300 people dead. However, tribes in North Sinai first began to actively work against militant groups beginning in May after tensions between the Tarabin - Sinai's largest tribe- and IS militants increased during a spate of reciprocal kidnappings and other disputes. The Tarabin tribe, along with Sinai's second largest tribe - known as al-Sawarka, then entered into direct conflict with IS militants. Local tribes in Sinai have previously been reluctant to fight against IS, and have served as potential recruits for the organisation due to their historical grievances with the Egyptian government. However, as recent incidents demonstrate, indiscriminate violence by local militants plays a role in undermining their potential support base. Continued violence has led many locals to share information about militants operating in the area with the Egyptian Army.

ISRAEL (Country Risk Rating: **High**) and PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Tensions High following US Decision to Endorse Jerusalem as Capital of Israel

Tensions have increased significantly in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip following the US administration's Dec. 6 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. In response to the declaration, Hamas - the governing authority in Gaza - called for a new *intifada* (uprising) against Israel.

Analysis: The US administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, as well as Hamas' call for action, greatly increase the possibility of lone-wolf-style attacks - including stabbings, vehicular assaults, and possibly shootings - throughout Israel and the Palestinian territories. While foreign nationals are not typically targeted, some have been injured and even killed in similar incidents after being mistaken for Israelis. There is also an elevated risk of rocket attacks in Jerusalem and Israel, though the chance of rockets reaching Jerusalem is slim. Due to the high number of militant groups operating in Gaza with access to unsophisticated rockets, frequent rocket sirens are likely; however, most projectiles will land near or even within the Gaza Strip. The Israeli multi-tiered missile defence system is capable of intercepting long-range ordnance but is less-effective against short-range mortars and rockets. The risk of bombing attacks is ever present in Israel and the West Bank, particularly on public transportation. The increase in militant Palestinian nationalism following US President Donald J. Trump's announcement will facilitate recruitment of possible bombers, increasing the threat.

Israel has maintained de facto sovereignty over all of Jerusalem since mid-1967, but both Palestinians and Israelis continue to assert that they will accept no other city as their capital, and control of the city is extremely important to both groups. All recent US presidents have promised to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the US Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem during their campaigns, and Trump was no exception. However, once assuming office, previous presidents have declined to act on the issue due to concerns about a potentially violent backlash and negative effects on relations with Muslim countries, as well as because recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital could encourage extremism and undermine US credibility as a mediator between Israelis and Palestinians. The US government has historically sidestepped the issue, avoiding official references to Jerusalem as part of Israel, and maintaining an embassy in Tel Aviv and a consulate in Jerusalem.

KUWAIT (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Authorities Deny Permit Request for Demonstration at US Embassy in Kuwait City

On Dec. 8, the Interior Ministry announced that it denied an official request for a permit to demonstrate Dec. 10 in front of the US Embassy in Kuwait City. The protest was intended to reject the Dec. 6 announcement that the US administration recognises Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Analysis: The decision is in line with Kuwaiti laws on organised demonstrations, despite the fact that government officials have also formally condemned the controversial decision of the US administration. Irada square in Kuwait City is the only venue where citizens are legally permitted to organise demonstrations, and security forces typically promptly disperse unauthorised public gatherings that take place outside of the square. However, the US administration's decision remains unpopular in Kuwait, as evidenced by the Islamic Constitutional Movement's - a major political opposition party - call for a mass rally in Irada Square to denounce the designation of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

LEBANON (Country Risk Rating: High) - Activists Stage Demonstrations near US Embassy in Awkar

Demonstrations in Awkar turned violent on Dec. 10 as protesters threw projectiles at security forces and set fires in the street near the US Embassy. The protests were in response to the controversial decision by the US administration to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The US Embassy in Lebanon had warned of possible protests near its compound and had "cancelled all nonessential movements for that day" as a precautionary measure. Security forces dispersed the protesters with tear gas and water cannon. Awkar is 12 km (7.5 miles) north of central Beirut.

Analysis: On Dec. 6, US President Donald J. Trump announced that his administration recognises Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Israel has maintained de-facto sovereignty over all of Jerusalem since mid-1967, but both Palestinians and Israelis continue to assert that they will accept no other city as their capital, and control of the city is extremely important to both groups. All recent US presidents have promised to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the US Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem during their campaigns, and Trump was no exception. However, once assuming office, previous presidents have declined to act on the issue due to concerns about a potentially violent backlash and negative effects on relations with Muslim countries, as well as because recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital could encourage extremism and undermine US credibility as a mediator between Israelis and Palestinians. The US government has historically sidestepped the issue, avoiding official references to Jerusalem as part of Israel, and maintaining an embassy in Tel Aviv and a consulate in Jerusalem.

LEBANON (Country Risk Rating: High) - Hizballah Calls for Protests in Southern Suburbs of Beirut

Hizballah has called for a protest in the Dahieh (southern suburbs) area of Beirut Dec. 11 to condemn the Dec. 6 announcement by US President Donald J. Trump recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Hizballah will likely carefully control the protests; apart from anti-US and anti-Israel rhetoric, the likelihood of violence is low.

Analysis: Expect increased security and traffic disruptions in Dahieh. Some protesters may try to block roads leading to Beirut-Rafiq Hariri International Airport (BEY), which lies just south of Dahieh. Israel has maintained de facto sovereignty over all of Jerusalem since mid-1967, but both Palestinians and Israelis continue to assert that they will accept no other city as their capital, and control of the city is extremely important to both groups. All

recent US presidents have promised to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the US Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem during their campaigns, and Trump was no exception. However, once assuming office, former presidents have declined to act on the issue due to concerns about a potential violent backlash and negative effects on relations with Muslim countries, as well as the fact that recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital would probably encourage extremism and undermine US credibility as a mediator between Israelis and Palestinians. The US government has historically sidestepped the issue, avoiding official references to Jerusalem as part of Israel, and maintaining an embassy in Tel Aviv and a consulate in Jerusalem that provides diplomatic representation for that city, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

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North America

UNITED STATES (Country Risk Rating: **Medium**) - Thomas Fire Undergoes Rapid Growth in Southern California

A red flag warning remains in effect for Los Angeles and Ventura counties in Southern California through 2000 PST Dec. 11. Critical fire conditions will continue since relative humidity levels remain very low and high winds are expected. Strong Santa Ana winds caused the Thomas Fire to undergo explosive growth in Ventura County on Dec. 10. The fire was 15-percent contained in the morning, but the fire expanded rapidly and was only 10-percent contained by the end of the day. The fire has been generating its own pyrocumulus clouds since Dec. 8; this is a dangerous situation because rising columns of hot air could collapse at any time and create unpredictable wind shifts in any direction.

By the end of Dec. 10, the Thomas Fire had burned about 93,077 hectares (230,000 acres) and destroyed more than 840 structures. The fire is now threatening Carpinteria in Santa Barbara County. Mandatory evacuation orders have been expanded to Carpinteria, Montecito, Summerland, and eastern parts of the city of Santa Barbara. The fire has destroyed major transmission lines, and roughly 80,000 customers have been experiencing intermittent power outages in Santa Barbara County.

The wildfires have not affected flight operations at Los Angeles-area airports, but air traffic has been prohibited below FL010 above active fires to facilitate a safe environment for aerial firefighting efforts.

Thomas Fire (Dec. 10)

- **Affected Areas:** Ventura, Santa Barbara counties
- **Size:** 93,077 hectares (230,000 acres)
- **Containment:** 10 percent
- **Start Date:** Dec. 4
- **Note:** Mandatory evacuations extended to portions of Santa Barbara County Dec. 10. Route 150 closed from Santa Paula-Ojai and Route 192-Santa Ana Road.

In addition to destroying hundreds of homes, the Thomas Fire has caused extensive damage at oil and gas fields in Ventura County. Operators have not released information about the extent of damage to specific installations, but the Thomas Fire has burned areas where numerous wellheads, storage tanks, and waterflood, wastewater, compression, transmission, and loading and offloading facilities are located at the Ventura, San Miguelito, and Rincon fields. The fire has also damaged several smaller fields near Ojai. The fire perimeter has also expanded westward to the DCOR Rincon, PACOPS La Conchita, and the Venoco Carpinteria processing facilities. If these plants are damaged or destroyed, oil and gas cannot be transferred onshore from platforms A, B, C, Gail, Grace, Habitat, Henry, Hillhouse, Hogan, and Houchin in the eastern Santa Barbara Basin. The fire has most likely compromised pipelines in Ventura County, which could significantly affect crude deliveries to refineries in Los Angeles County.

Creek Fire (Dec. 10)

- **Affected Areas:** Los Angeles County (Angeles National Forest, San Fernando Valley)
- **Size:** 6,321 hectares (15,620 acres)
- **Containment:** 90 percent
- **Start Date:** Dec. 5
- **Note:** All evacuation orders and warnings lifted

Rye Fire (Dec. 10)

- **Affected Area:** Los Angeles County (Santa Clarita Valley)
- **Size:** 2,448 hectares (6,050 acres)
- **Containment:** 90 percent
- **Start Date:** Dec. 5

Lilac Fire (Dec. 10)

- **Affected Area:** San Diego County (Bonsall-Pala Mesa area)
- **Size:** 1,659 hectares (4,100 acres)
- **Containment:** 60 percent
- **Start Date:** Dec. 7

Skirball Fire (Dec. 10)

- **Affected Area:** Los Angeles County (Sepulveda Pass, Bel Air)
- **Size:** 171 hectares (422 acres)
- **Containment:** 75 percent
- **Start Date:** Dec. 7
- **Note:** All road closures lifted

Transport

Many local roads are impassable within wildfire perimeters, and others could be closed due to firefighting and emergency response efforts. All major highways were open as of late Dec. 10, but US 101 could be closed on short notice near the Ventura/Santa Barbara county line. The closure of the highway would cause major transport and logistics disruptions, as it is the only direct highway link between Santa Barbara County and Los Angeles. The shortest alternative route between the two cities is roughly 245 km (150 miles) longer through Kern County.

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Russia/CIS

RUSSIA (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Maritime Services between Vanino and Kholmsk Suspended in Far East due to Severe Storm**

High winds and heavy snow prompted the suspension of maritime passenger and freight services between Kholmsk on Sakhalin Island and the port of Vanino, Khabarovsk Krai, in the Russian Far East at 1200 Dec. 10. Winds of up to 83 kph (52 mph) and rough seas are expected through at least Dec. 12. The Vanino-Kholmsk ferry service operated by SASCO provides regular commercial connections between ports on Sakhalin and the main Trans-Siberian rail line in Khabarovsk, making it critical for the movement of Ro-Ro cargo to and from mainland Russia. Authorities recently announced plans to upgrade both ports and construct larger ferries to accommodate more vehicles and rail cars by the end of 2019.

Analysis: Storm-related power, communications, and transport disruptions are possible in coastal areas along the Strait of Tartary. Local branches of the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations are on high alert.

RUSSIA (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Severe Storm Warning Issued for Parts of Primorsky Krai in Far East**

The Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations has issued a severe snowstorm warning for the central, eastern, and southeastern parts of Primorsky Krai, including the Lazo, Olga, Kavalerovo, Terney and Dalnegorsk districts. The warning is in effect for Dec. 10-11. The storm system may produce winds of up to 115 kph (71mph) and whiteout conditions in some areas. Coastal shipping disruptions are possible, as the system will likely produce very rough seas in the northern Sea of Japan.

Analysis: Strong winds could disrupt power, communications, and transport throughout the region, but the storm is not forecast to cause major disruptions in the cities of Nakhodka or Vladivostok.

RUSSIA (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Severe Weather Forecast across Kamchatka Peninsula**

The Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations has issued a severe storm warning for the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and other parts of the Kamchatka Peninsula, as two storm systems are expected to bring high winds and heavy, wet snow to the region.

Analysis: Winds of up to 100 kph (62 mph) will likely produce blizzard conditions in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky through at least Dec. 12. Authorities have warned that snow removal equipment may be inadequate to cope with the storm, and emergency services may not be available to the public. Flights to Petropavlovsk Airport (PKC) may be diverted, and flight operations may be suspended on short notice due to gale-force winds and very low visibility, which could drop to 500 metres (1,640 feet) or less. Expect hazardous driving conditions. Heavy wet snow will likely lead to communications, ground transport, and electricity disruptions. The avalanche threat will be high in mountainous areas. Authorities will periodically block local roads when avalanche control work is occurring. The storm is forecast to produce waves of up to 10 metres (33 feet) along the Pacific Coast. Rough seas and very strong winds will likely affect operations at the Port of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.

UKRAINE (Country Risk Rating: **High) - Supporters of Detained Mikheil Saakashvili Plan Protest in Kyiv**

On Dec. 10, several thousand supporters of Movement of New Forces party leader Mikheil Saakashvili staged demonstrations in central Kyiv to protest his detention by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). Protest organisers are demanding the release of Saakashvili from custody and the resignation of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine Yuriy Lutsenko. The next opposition rally in central Kyiv is slated for Dec. 17.

Analysis: Large protests could result in clashes between protesters and police, as well as transport disruptions in downtown Kyiv. Rallies are likely near the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament), Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) and the Prosecutor General's office. During previous demonstrations, the government has cut off electricity and cellphone service to limit protesters' ability to coordinate. Security personnel will likely conduct searches of vehicles and personal belongings of motorists driving into downtown Kyiv from outlying areas. Street closures and heightened security could increase driving time between the city centre and Boryspil International Airport (KBP). Saakashvili is a former president of Georgia and former provincial governor of Ukraine's Odesa region. As the leader of the Movement of New Forces party, he has organised a series of anti-corruption protests that have led to increased opposition against President Petro Poroshenko and his government. Several opposition groups have been calling for Poroshenko's resignation and demanding the creation of a legal framework for impeachment and the establishment of an anti-corruption court. On Dec. 5, the SBU attempted to detain Saakashvili at his home in central Kyiv. Clashes erupted between police and protesters, and Saakashvili was able to escape, protected by chanting crowds. He was detained again late Dec. 8 and transferred to an SBU detention facility at 13 Askoldiv Lane. Saakashvili is accused of providing assistance to criminal organisations and covering up of their activities. According to his lawyer, Saakashvili has launched a hunger strike and called on supporters to continue protests in central Kyiv to demand Poroshenko's removal.

South Pacific/Oceania

AUSTRALIA (Country Risk Rating: **Low**) - Significant Delays Ongoing on Sydney's Train Network

Significant delays continue to affect Sydney's rail network following a reported fatality at Wentworthville Station near Parramatta at 0630 Dec. 11. An investigation is ongoing at the crime scene, but police are not treating the incident as suspicious. The T1 Western Line between Blacktown and Richmond remains closed. The incident has also affected service on the T1 North Shore and Northern, T2 Inner West and Leppington, T3 Bankstown, T5 Cumberland, and T8 Airport & South Line lines.

Authorities are providing buses for commuters along the affected section of the Western Line. Buses are also available between Hornsby and Berowra on the Northern Line and between Penrith and Emu Plains on the Blue Mountains Line. Sydney Trains has advised commuters to allow additional travel time and regularly check on the train status.

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA (Country Risk Rating: **Low**) - Magnitude-6.1 Earthquake Occurs East of Yap

A magnitude-6.1 earthquake occurred in the western Federated States of Micronesia at 0114 CHUT Dec. 10. The epicentre was about 235 km (146 miles) east-northeast of Yap near the Ulithi Atoll and Fais Island. The tremor occurred at a depth of about 10 km (6.2 miles).

Analysis: Light to moderate shaking was probably felt on nearby islands, but damage is highly unlikely. The quake was the third with a magnitude greater than 6.0 in the same general area in just over 24 hours, and more tremors are possible.

NEW ZEALAND (Country Risk Rating: **Low**) - Accident Blocking All Northbound Traffic on Southern Motorway near Auckland

A commercial truck that wrecked at around 1425 Dec. 11 is blocking all northbound lanes of the Southern Motorway (State Highway 1) south of Auckland. Emergency crews are responding to the accident, and a crane is reportedly being deployed to remove the wreckage. Authorities have closed northbound lanes between Papakura and Takanini. No one was injured in the accident.

The accident is causing extremely heavy congestion on northbound lanes from Drury toward Auckland. Detours are in place via Great South Road. Officials are urging motorists to allow plenty time for travel or to defer nonessential journeys.

NEW ZEALAND (Country Risk Rating: **Low**) - Elevated Pertussis Activity Reported in Auckland and Waikato Areas since September

Health officials in New Zealand have identified 107 cases of pertussis in the Auckland District Health Board (DHB) and Waikato DHB Sept. 29-Nov. 24. This compares to an average of 35 cases reported in these DHBs between October and November 2014-2016.

Analysis: Pertussis outbreaks typically follow a cyclical pattern in New Zealand, with peak activity occurring approximately every three to five years. The last outbreak occurred between August 2011 and December 2013, with activity peaking in November 2013. During this outbreak, health officials reported roughly 11,000 cases. Pertussis activity during 2017 has steadily increased since August, likely representing the start of a new wave. On Dec. 1, the New Zealand Ministry of Health declared a national outbreak. Pertussis - also known as "whooping cough" - is a highly contagious bacterial disease transmitted by respiratory droplets from an infectious person. Pertussis is vaccine-preventable; however, immunity decreases within two years of receiving the vaccination. Health authorities recommend individuals receive a booster vaccination every 10 years. Infections go through several stages. These range from mild illness with low-grade fever and occasional coughing in the early stage, to vomiting, exhaustion, and severe fits of rapid coughing in later stages. Initial symptoms typically begin seven to

10 days after exposure, and the illness may last up to nine weeks before patients fully recover from periodic coughing fits. Infants and children up to four years old are at highest risk, and typically suffer the most severe symptoms. Although the disease is usually mild in adolescents and adults, even mildly ill people can transmit the disease to others.

Visit a doctor to ensure you are vaccinated against pertussis or are immune through previous infection. Emphasise basic health precautions, especially frequent hand washing with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if soap and water are unavailable. If you suspect pertussis infection, call ahead before visiting a doctor to prevent spread at the clinic or hospital.

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