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.

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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.


- **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, 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.

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Africa

COTE D’IVOIRE (Country Risk Rating: High) - Gunfire Reported near Military Base in Bouake

Tensions remain high in Bouake following gunfire near the Third Infantry Battalion camp in the central Sokoura district of the city Jan. 5-6. Soldiers reportedly exchanged fire with members of a joint police and gendarmerie brigade known as the Centre for Coordinating Decision-Making Operations (Centre de Coordination des Operations Decisionnelles, CCDO).

Analysis: The incident apparently stemmed from soldiers’ dissatisfaction over not having been paid their year-end bonuses. Although calm has been restored, additional unrest cannot be discounted. Mutinous soldiers could
hold protests and block roads. Security personnel will likely fire tear gas and live ammunition to quash any demonstrations that may materialise; further exchanges of gunfire between soldiers and paramilitary units cannot be ruled out. Transportation disruptions are likely near any protest activity.

The CCDO will likely respond swiftly with violence to any further soldiers' attempts to demonstrate. On Dec. 31, the government pledged that mutinies would not occur in Cote d'Ivoire in 2018, following several protests by active duty soldiers and demobilised former rebels during 2017. Members of the Forces Nouvelles de Cote d'Ivoire (FNCI) - a former rebel group that integrated into the military - held demonstrations in January and May. The soldiers claimed they were owed back-pay from periods of internal conflict during 2002-2011, when they backed current President Alassane Ouattara. Government financial concessions eventually ended the mutinies. Demobilised former FNCI members also demanded financial incentives, but their protests were forcibly suppressed. Security forces killed four demobilised FNCI members when quelling related unrest in May.

MADAGASCAR (Country Risk Rating: Medium), MAURITIUS (Country Risk Rating: Low) and REUNION (Country Risk Rating: Low) - TS Ava to Move Slowly Away from Southern Regions; Heavy Rainfall and Flooding Possible

Tropical Storm Ava moved off the eastern coast of Madagascar, Jan. 7; the storm will continue moving southward in the Indian Ocean through Jan. 9. While Ava lost considerable strength during its contact with land, and additional landfall appears unlikely, it retains the potential to bring heavy rainfall to much of eastern and southern Madagascar, as well as Reunion and Mauritius.

Meteorologists believe rainfall accumulations in Madagascar could range 10-20 cm (4-8 inches) over much of the affected areas, and localised rainfall accumulations could exceed 30 cm (12 inches). The storm has already displaced more than 10,000 residents and is being blamed for at least one death. The heavy rains caused flash flooding in the capital, Antananarivo, and is likely to cause widespread flooding and mudslides in the country's south and east. Heavy rainfall is likely to continue on the islands of Reunion and Mauritius through at least Jan. 8. Total accumulations of 40 cm (16 inches) are possible.

The government of Madagascar maintains several alerts for much of the eastern and southern half of the island:

- **Red Alert:** Ifanadiana, Ikongo, Mahanoro, Manakara, Mananjary, Marolambo, Nosy-Varika, Vohipano districts. Cyclonic effects likely within 12 hours. Make preparations for imminent impacts.
- **Yellow Alert:** Ambalavao, Ambohimahasoa, Ambositra, Befotaka, Fandriana, Farafangana, Fianarantsoa II, Iakora, Ivohibe, Midongy, Vangaindrano, Vondrozo districts. Cyclonic effects likely within 24-48 hours. Finalise emergency plans.
- **Green Alert:** Amboasary, Ambovombe-Androy, Bekily, Beloha, Betroka, Tolanaro, Tsiombe districts. Cyclonic effects possible in 2-5 days. Review emergency plans.
- **Blue Alert:** All districts in Toamasina Province, eastern Antananarivo Province (including Antananarivo city), parts of eastern Mahajanga Province, southern Antsiranana Province. Cyclonic effects receding. Heavy rains, flooding, mudslides remain possible.

**Analysis:** Widespread power and telecommunications outages are likely in areas most heavily affected by the storm and associated flooding. Electricity disruptions could adversely affect security measures at facilities without power redundancy for devices such as alarm systems and electronic fences; criminal activity historically increases during power outages. Transport disruptions are likely, as floodwaters and debris could block roads and damage bridges. Flight disruptions may occur at Toamasina's Tamatave Airport (TMM), Antananarivo's Ivato International Airport (TNR), Manakara Airport (WVK), Mananjary Airport (MNJ), and Tolanaro's Marillac Airport (FTU). Long-haul flights to these airports could be diverted or cancelled. Dangerous sea conditions will likely prompt officials to curtail operations at the ports of Toamasina and Mananjary.
SOUTH AFRICA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Egyptian National Stable after Stabbing in Noordhoek Beach Area of Cape Town

Unidentified assailants robbed and stabbed a male Egyptian national at Noordhoek Beach, Cape Town, Jan. 6 - not Dec. 31, 2017, as previously indicated. The victim suffered multiple stab wounds during the attack, which took place at approximately 2030. He was later taken to the hospital and is reportedly in stable condition. The assailants apparently stole the victim's wallet, travel documents, and rental car keys.

Analysis: Criminal activity poses a severe threat to both local and foreign nationals in South Africa, particularly in the country's major urban centres of Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban. Violent crime, including armed robberies, murder, and carjackings, are also common. The threat of both violent and petty crime is particularly acute during the country's peak holiday season, which coincides with the summer months from November through March. During this period, higher numbers of tourists visit the country and are often targeted by criminal elements due to a perception that they are wealthy. Most crimes occur when the opportunity arises; the threat of crime is most pronounced during evening hours as well as along isolated beach areas and in poorly lit areas of cities.

Officials have reported several violent robberies affecting foreign travellers in the Noordhoek Beach area since November 2017. In another recent incident, an Austrian couple was stabbed multiple times during a robbery at Noordhoek Beach on Nov. 30, 2017. Although the couple survived the attack, they were hospitalised with severe injuries.

SOUTH SUDAN (Country Risk Rating: Extreme) - US Embassy Issues Travel Restriction for Diplomatic Staff in Juba following Rebel Raid

The US Embassy in Juba has imposed travel restrictions on its diplomatic staff in the capital until 0630 Jan. 8 following a rebel raid on the city's northwest outskirts. Embassy personnel are required to complete official travel by 2030 and personal travel by 1900 during this period. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) troops attacked soldiers positioned in the Kubri Haboba and Lemon Ghaba areas of the Gudele outskirts around 2200 Jan. 4. Government troops repelled the attack - at times using artillery - and pursued the SPLM/A-IO fighters toward Wunduruba.

Analysis: Government security personnel will likely increase their presence in Juba in the coming days. Roadblocks are also likely on major roads in the outskirts of the capital. Although fighting near Juba is rare, additional raids by small SPLM/A-IO commando units cannot be ruled out. Intermittent clashes continue in pockets across South Sudan, despite the signing of a bilateral ceasefire Dec. 21, 2017. The accord is aimed to enable further negotiations that could resuscitate an all-but-collapsed 2015 peace deal; however, the government and the SPLM/A-IO have signed several agreements that have failed to end the civil war that began in 2013. Furthermore, the conflict has evolved from a dispute between two sides into several geographically separated rebellions where multiple armed groups vie for power. Neither the SPLM/A-IO nor the government are likely to respect the 2015 deal, nor does the deal address armed groups that have emerged since its signing. On Jan. 4, the South Sudan Patriotic Army - loyal to former government Joint Chief of Staff Paul Malong - joined the armed opposition, suggesting that other groups aligned to President Salva Kiir may defect in 2018. Increased competition for resources amid an economic crisis is likely to catalyse such factionalization in the coming months.

SUDAN (Country Risk Rating: High) - Violent Protests Erupt Nationwide after Food Price Increase

Violent protests are erupting in parts of Sudan in response to a sharp increase in bread prices implemented Jan. 5. As of Jan. 7, protests have been confirmed in the Al-Sahafa, Al-Kalakla, Al-Giraf, and Burri neighbourhoods of Khartoum; the Al-Mazad, Shendi Foug, Al-Hilla, Al-Jadida, and Al-Dibaga neighbourhoods in Wad Medani; and the main market in Sennar. Similar demonstrations may erupt in the coming days in other major towns and cities, including Kerma, Singa, Omdurman, El Obeid, and El Gedaref. Opposition groups, including the Umma Party, the Communist Party, and the Sudanese Congress Party are urging members to stage anti-government protests in response to the price hike.
**Analysis:** Security personnel will likely respond to protests with force, and may fire live ammunition to disperse crowds. As of Jan. 7, reports indicated that police were primarily using tear gas to disperse demonstrators, but control tactics could escalate if the protests intensify. Security personnel have detained an unknown number of protesters, and reports suggest that several people have been injured. Protests are also producing commercial and transport disruptions. Some demonstrators are blocking roads with burning tyres and debris. Nearby businesses and markets typically close during protests due to the high potential for violence.

Media reports suggest that bakeries across Sudan doubled the price of a loaf of bread on Jan. 5 in response to a government decision to nearly triple the cost of a bag of flour. The government has pledged tough economic measures in 2018, which also include the lifting of electricity subsidies. The measures come as many parts of Sudan are already experiencing food and fuel shortages. The cause of those shortages has not been disclosed; however, Sudan may be struggling to guarantee imports amid an economic decline.

**TANZANIA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Intensifying Fuel Shortage on Zanzibar Causing Transport and Business Disruptions**

A fuel shortage on Zanzibar, the semi-autonomous Tanzanian archipelago, has intensified, causing business and transport disruptions Jan. 5. Fuel stations closed across the Pemba and Zanzibar islands as a result of the scarcity, which reportedly began Dec. 29. Demand for petroleum and diesel reportedly doubled during the festive season, likely depleting reserves. The Zanzibar Utilities Regulatory Authority stated that the shortages were exacerbated by an insufficient capacity to offload fuel supplies at the Maruhubi oil jetty, resulting in tankers destined for Zanzibar being redirected to Mombasa.

**Analysis:** Commercial and transport disruptions are possible until just after the shortages end. Fuel scarcity may limit the usage of electrical generators. Disputes over access to filling stations could result in violent altercations between queuing motorists. Consumers could stage protests over fuel shortages and against perceived price-gouging. Police are likely to disperse crowds with tear gas if unrest occurs.

**ZAMBIA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Nighttime Curfew Enacted in Kanyama Township, Lusaka; Public Gatherings Banned in Capital**

Authorities have implemented an 1800-0600 curfew in Kanyama Township, southwest Lusaka, Jan. 7 amid the ongoing cholera outbreak in Lusaka District. The measure is slated to last through at least Jan. 11; officials could extend the curfew beyond that date. Authorities have also enforced a ban on public gatherings throughout the city and ordered street vendors to shut down. Businesses in the Central Business District (CBD) and other areas of the capital have also closed.

**Analysis:** Expect continued commercial disruptions and heightened security in Lusaka. Security forces could use batons, rubber bullets, and tear gas to disperse any unauthorised gatherings. Police and military personnel could set up roadblocks, checkpoints, and detours near sensitive areas. Significant transport disruptions are likely throughout Lusaka District.

**Asia**

**CAMBODIA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Vendors to Stage Protest in Poipet, Banteay Meanchey Province, Jan. 10-13**

The Cambodia Economy Reinforced Association is organising a demonstration in Poipet, Banteay Meanchey Province, Jan. 10-13 to demand authorities reduce fees for crossing the Cambodia-Thailand border. The protesters will rally near the Poipet International Border checkpoint. Demonstrators are also slated to march from the Pailay Pagoda to Poipet town. Organisers claim about 500 people will participate in the four-day protest.

**Analysis:** Authorities will likely increase security around the rally sites. Skirmishes are possible if security personnel forcibly disperse the crowd, especially if the protest proceeds without official permission. Localised
traffic disruptions may occur, particularly if protesters block National Road 5, which leads to the Poipet border checkpoint.

INDIA (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Bus Drivers Continuing Indefinite Strike in Tamil Nadu State

Unionised bus drivers continued an indefinite strike across Tamil Nadu State as of Jan. 7, defying a High Court order immediately to return to the job. The strike, which has continued since Jan. 5, has seen nearly 70 percent of state buses remain off the road, forcing public buses to provide only extremely limited service. Government officials had warned of an unspecified "severe action" if the drivers do not call off the strike by the evening of Jan. 7; however, unions representing the bus drivers have vowed to continue the walkout until their demands for a salary increase are met.

**Analysis**: Demand for alternative transport that remains available, such as rail, taxis, and app-based ride-hailing services, is extremely high. Already-high traffic congestion has been exacerbated, especially during peak travel hours, as commuters are forced to rely on private vehicles; multihour traffic jams are possible.

Striking transport workers may stage protests during the strike. Specific actions have not been announced, but likely gathering spots include outside Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) offices, bus depots, and government buildings. Any protests will almost certainly exacerbate ground travel disruptions. Clashes between protesters and police cannot be ruled out, especially if police try to clear any demonstrations by force.

MYANMAR (Country Risk Rating: **Medium**) and INDIA (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Magnitude-5.5 Earthquake Strikes in Border Region

A magnitude-5.5 earthquake struck in the India-Myanmar border area, approximately 98 km (61 miles) east of Imphal, India, at 1247 Jan. 7. The quake struck at a depth of 22 km (12.5 miles). The epicentre was located in a remote area; however, weak to light shaking was felt as far away as Imphal.

**Analysis**: There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries; however, damage is possible in areas close to the epicentre.

INDONESIA (Country Risk Rating: **Medium**) - Shooting Targets PTFI Vehicles on Mining Road near Tembagapura in Papua Province

Gunmen opened fire on a convoy of mining vehicles on the main road between Timika and Tembagapura leading to PT Freeport Indonesia (PTFI)'s Grasberg mine in the Mimika regency in Papua Province, Jan. 1, according to belated reports. Authorities said the incident took place as the vehicles were headed toward Mile 61 on the mining road. No one was injured in the incident, and the gunmen fled the scene.

**Analysis**: Though periodic shootings have long occurred on the mining road, incidents have surged since the second half of 2017. Most of the shootings have targeted PTFI vehicles. Police have blamed the incidents on armed civilian groups but have not provided further details. Dozens of unsolved shootings have occurred near the Grasberg mine; security forces have previously blamed the West Papuan Liberation Army (TPN) for such attacks. The TPN has said that the closure of the mine is a key goal, along with independence. Papua and West Papua provinces have seen a low-level separatist insurgency for decades, with rebels frequently targeting police and military personnel, which the rebels perceive as representing a Javanese-dominated and majority-Muslim state.

KOREAN PENINSULA (Country Risk Rating: Not Rated) - Pyongyang Agrees to Official Talks with Seoul

Pyongyang agreed Jan. 5 to join officials talks with Seoul in the border village of Panmunjom Jan. 9. North Korea responded to Seoul's offer for direct dialogue after the US and South Korea announced a delay in the annual Key Resolve and Foal Eagle military exercises slated for February. Authorities say the exercises - which North Korea regards as rehearsal for an invasion - were delayed so security personnel could focus on securing the Olympics.
Analysis: The talks are expected to focus on the possible visit of a North Korean delegation to the upcoming Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. However, South Korean officials are reportedly hoping to expand the scope of the discussion. The events are the latest in a series of signals that suggest Pyongyang and Seoul are eager to reduce tensions for the Olympic Games. The two sides exchanged hotline calls across the demilitarised zone Jan. 3, and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un indicated that he was open to dialogue during his New Year's Day address. While the meeting will likely be hailed as progress in the ongoing dispute, major progress is unlikely in the near term. Neither side is likely to raise North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons tests, which have spiked tensions in the region. However, the outcome of the talks, especially agreement on sending North Koreans to the Olympics, could be a key indication of North Korea's behaviour during the upcoming Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games.

MYANMAR (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Rohingya Rebels Claim Responsibility for Attack on Security Forces in Rakhine State

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) claimed responsibility for an ambush on the military in Rakhine State in Myanmar Jan. 5, which wounded six soldiers. The claim was made in a rare posting on its official Twitter account Jan. 7. The government reported that more than 20 insurgents used homemade bombs to attack a truck containing government troops from Taungpyo Township.

Analysis: The ambush is the first attack in weeks in the restive region, since the last reported attack Dec. 8, when an army convoy struck three improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted on the Ann-Myebon Highway in Myebon Township. Tensions in the northwestern state have been high since an estimated 1,000 militants attacked 30 police posts and an army base Aug. 25, killing 12 security personnel. ARSA claimed responsibility for the attacks, stating that it was seeking an end to policies it perceived as repressive for the country's Rohingya minority. Subsequent security operations to clear Rakhine State of militants led to additional violence and attacks, resulting in massive displacement and destruction. Tatmadaw officials claimed they had killed over 500 Rohingya insurgents in the security crackdown. While the fighting capacity of ARSA is unclear, reports suggest that the group may attempt to regroup and draw on Rohingya refugees for future operations.

NEPAL (Country Risk Rating: High) - Health Official Reports First Ever Laboratory-confirmed Case of Lyme Disease

On Jan. 2, a health official reported the first ever laboratory-confirmed case of Lyme disease in Nepal. Information about where the individual likely acquired the infection was not provided; therefore, it is unclear if the infection was locally acquired or imported.

Analysis: Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted through the bite of infected *Ixodes* ticks. Even though this is the first ever laboratory-confirmed case in Nepal, Lyme disease is likely more prevalent than reported. *Ixodes* ticks are present in Nepal and many people who develop symptoms following a tick bite do not seek treatment. Furthermore, laboratory testing is expensive in Nepal and not readily available. Symptoms of Lyme disease vary depending on the stage of the disease. Initial symptoms typically begin three to 30 days after exposure. These symptoms include fever, chills, and a red rash shaped like a bullseye. People treated with appropriate antibiotics in the early stages usually recover rapidly and completely. However, lack of treatment can lead to complications later in life such as arthritis and neurological problems.

PAKISTAN (Country Risk Rating: High) - Afghan Politician Kidnapped in Peshawar Released following Three Months in Captivity

Afghan officials have confirmed the release of kidnapped deputy governor of Kunar Province Qazi Mohammad Nabi Ahmadi. Ahmadi was walking in the Dabgari Gardens area of Peshawar Oct. 27 when assailants abducted him and forced him into a car; his brother was also seized. Ahmadi was returned to his family in Kunar Province following his release late Jan. 4; his brother remains missing.

Analysis: Ahmadi was reportedly seeking medical treatment in Peshawar when he was seized. The deputy governor said that his kidnappers never identified themselves; it is unclear if he remained in Pakistan during his
captive, or if the assailants transferred him across the border into Afghanistan. Family members received a ransom demand from the perpetrators; it is unclear if any payment was made.

While the abduction could have been carried out by militants or political rivals, the ransom payment suggests that it was the work of a criminal group. Though it is unclear if a ransom was provided, the assailants may have released Ahmadi on the condition that he arrange payment to secure the freedom of his brother.

Prominent Afghan government officials have been kidnapped in Pakistan in the past. In February 2016, assailants kidnapped the former governor of the Afghan provinces of Kunar and Herat in Islamabad; he was rescued by Pakistani security personnel two weeks later in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

PAKISTAN (Country Risk Rating: High) - Hardline Religious Supporters to Launch Indefinite Sit-in in Central Lahore

Supporters of hardline religious leader Pir Hameeduddin Sialvi plan to launch an indefinite sit-in at Daata Darbar in central Lahore Jan. 9 to demand the resignation of Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah. Participation in the event will likely be high, as other religious leaders and some opposition parties are also calling for Sanaullah's resignation. Sialvi has vowed to maintain the sit-in until the law minister leaves office.

Analysis: Authorities will undoubtedly boost security in the vicinity of Daata Darbar as a precaution. Past protests have seen demonstrators deliberately block traffic on major thoroughfares; significant ground travel disruptions are probable if Sialvi's supporters engage in a similar action. Localised clashes are possible, especially if security personnel try to disperse the protesters by force.

The protest is the latest in a series since November demanding Sanaullah's resignation and his appearance before the court of Sunni Ullema (religious scholars). Multiple religious groups are angry at a proposed amendment in Khatm-e-Nabuwwat clause, an oath sworn by elected officials. Although the amendment in the Khatm-e-Nabuwwat clause was quickly withdrawn, leaders of Pakistan's Sunni Bareli sect - including Sialvi and Tehreek-e-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah Pakistan (TLYRAP) chief Khadim Hussain Rizvi - have been demanding action against those involved in the change, accusing them of blasphemy. The TLYRAP withdrew its protracted sit-in demonstration at the Faizabad Interchange between Islamabad and neighbouring Rawalpindi Nov. 27 after Federal Minister of Law and Justice Zahid Hamid - who Rizvi and his followers accuse of blasphemy - resigned from office.

PAKISTAN (Country Risk Rating: High) - Officials Report Ongoing Dengue Fever Activity in Karachi

Pakistani health officials reported 229 cases of dengue fever in Karachi Dec. 1-18, 2017, including 70 new cases during a single week. These cases bring the total to 2,825 cases in Karachi since January 2017. While dengue fever is considered a year-round risk in Pakistan, however, the risk is typically highest during and immediately following the June-September monsoon season.

Analysis: The ongoing transmission in Karachi during December and into January highlights the importance of diligent mosquito bite prevention measures in Pakistan, regardless of season. Dengue fever is a potentially fatal virus transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitoes. Dengue infection produces a spectrum of clinical symptoms ranging from influenza-like illness to severe and potentially fatal haemorrhagic fever. Individuals suspecting dengue infection should not use aspirin products, as these could exacerbate bleeding tendencies associated with the disease.

PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Authorities Boost Security for Sinulog Festival in Cebu

Authorities have boosted security in Cebu City for the annual Sinulog Festival through Jan. 26. Additional security personnel from other regions are deployed to further augment security, particularly at checkpoints and entry points to the city, as well as the Mactan-Cebu International Airport (CEB). While the festival kicked off Jan. 7, the main events will take place Jan. 20-21. Thousands of Roman Catholic devotees will likely participate in the Solemn Procession, which will depart from the Basilica del Santo Nino at 1400 Jan. 20. The Sinulog Grand Parade will take place a day later and begin at the Gen.
Maxilom Avenue at approximately 0730. Participants from the various contingents will gather at different assembly points before converging on Gen. Maxilom Avenue. They will then travel along a 4-km (2.5-miles) route that passes Fuente Osmena rotunda and Osmena Boulevard, before ending at Cebu City Sports Centre.

**Analysis:** Expect street closures and significant traffic disruptions in downtown Cebu Jan. 20-21. Large crowds will likely gather to view the parade; the festival drew more than 1 million visitors in 2017. Increased pickpocketing and petty theft are possible in crowded areas. Violent security disturbances are unlikely, although authorities have identified the festival and other major Catholic events as potential terror targets in the past. Authorities said that cellular networks may be shut down as a security precaution along the parade route Jan. 21 if high-ranking officials decide to attend.

Sinulog is an annual religious festival that takes place in Cebu City every January. While the hallmark of the festival is the grand parade, other events include concerts involving celebrities and school groups, dances, pageants and competitions, and street parties.

**PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Firefighting Efforts at Mall in Central Cebu Ongoing**

Efforts to extinguish a large fire at the Metro Ayala Centre mall in Cebu Business Park, central Cebu, are ongoing. The blaze broke out on the third floor around 2145 Jan. 5. Officials said that the fourth floor of the building has collapsed, complicating efforts to fight the fire. The Cebu City Fire Department declared its highest alarm level Jan. 6, and said that the fire is unlikely to be fully extinguished before at least Jan. 8. The fire has been contained to the department store building.

**Analysis:** Police have deployed to Cebu Business Park to prevent potential looting. Law enforcement personnel are also directing traffic on adjacent streets due to heavy smoke from the fire. City officials issued a haze alert early Jan. 6, noting poor visibility and potential health threats within a 2 km (1.2 mile)-radius of the fire. Authorities urged anyone in the area with cardiovascular problems to evacuate. There have been no reports of injuries from the fire. Managers said that all customers and workers were evacuated after the fire started, which was shortly before closing time, reducing the number of individuals in the area.

**PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Landmine Explosion Hits Military Truck in Compostela Valley**

A landmine explosion struck a military truck transporting soldiers in Monkaya town in Compostela Valley, Philippines, Jan. 7. There were no reports of casualties. Police said the bomb went off as the truck passed through a road in Sitio Libuton at about 1100. Police also recovered an unexploded landmine near the blast site.

**Analysis:** Authorities suspect that the New People's Army (NPA) could be responsible for the bombing. The latest attack came days after NPA rebels harassed a village detachment in Barangay Cabuyoan in Mabini in Compostela Valley, resulting in a firefight. NPA has been launching regular attacks, mainly targeted at security forces, since President Rodrigo Duterte formally terminated peace talks with the communist rebels and declared the group a terrorist organisation Dec. 5. Despite both sides declaring unilateral ceasefires during the 2017 year-end holiday period, several attacks - allegedly perpetrated by the NPA - took place. Additional attacks by the rebels and armed clashes with government troops are likely to continue as both sides intensify their operations.

**PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Nationwide Protests Possible over Tax Reform Law Implementation**

Activists may stage demonstrations in the Philippines in the coming days and weeks over the implementation of the new Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law, which would lead to an increase in the prices of goods and services. Workers from Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP) held a demonstration at the Mendiola Bridge in Metro Manila Jan. 1 to protest the law. Transport groups in Metro Manila and Northern Mindanao, including Piston and No to Jeepney Phaseout Coalition, have also threatened to stage protests in the coming days. If protests materialise, the largest gatherings will probably take place in Metro Manila. Possible protest sites include near Malacanang Palace, other government buildings, and public parks and squares.
Analysis: Additional police officers will probably deploy near larger demonstrations, especially those that take place near government offices. Localised traffic disruptions are possible, primarily if marches occur or transport groups stage protests. Significant security disturbances are unlikely, though clashes between security personnel and protesters cannot be ruled out.

SRI LANKA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Unionised Postal Workers to Launch Indefinite, Nationwide Strike

Unionised postal employees have threatened to launch an indefinite nationwide strike Jan. 10 to press for multiple demands. The Joint Postal Trade Union Front is sponsoring the walkout, which could lead to significant disruptions in mail processing, distribution, and delivery across Sri Lanka.

Analysis: The postal department will likely have contingency plans in place for a rapid return to normal operations following the work stoppage; however, delays in mail service could last for several days after the strike ends. Postal employees may stage demonstrations during the strike. Supporters may gather outside of Colombo's General Post Office and Central Mail Exchange or other local postal offices. However, such actions are unlikely to result in significant disruptions or unrest. The Joint Postal Trade Union Front is organising the strike to protest the alleged failure by postal department authorities to provide solutions to persisting administrative issues, especially recruitment.

THAILAND (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - German National Found Dead under Suspicious Circumstances in Park in Pattaya

Authorities discovered the body of a German national along a path at the Khao Phra Yai park in Pattaya around 1000 Jan. 5. While the investigation is ongoing, police have deemed the death "suspicious," and are trying to determine whether it was murder or suicide. The victim was found with a belt around his neck and severe burns on his legs. Medication was found adjacent to his body, while a bag believed to contain his clothing was recovered a short distance away.

Analysis: While petty crime targeting foreigners occurs regularly in tourist areas of Thailand, violent crimes are less common, with most incidents tied to personal or business disputes. Violent crime poses a higher threat in Pattaya, where a nexus exists between illegal drugs, prostitution, illegal immigration, and tourism; nevertheless, most crimes involving foreign nationals in the city are nonviolent, such as purse-snatching, pickpocketing, and theft of unattended property. Police are usually quick to respond and arrest suspects in crimes involving foreign nationals to protect the country's vital tourist industry.

Caribbean

HAITI (Country Risk Rating: High) - Activists to Continue Holding Nationwide Political Protests

Opposition leaders have called for renewed nationwide protests in Haiti starting Jan. 9 to demand the resignation of President Jovenel Moise and denounce the reinstatement of the Haitian army.

Analysis: The largest rallies are likely to occur in the cities of Cap-Haitien and Port-au-Prince. Within Port-au-Prince, particularly disruptive demonstrations have occurred in the Petion-Ville and Delmas communes.

Demonstrators could block major roads with burning tyres and debris. Rallies may occur outside government buildings. Clashes could occur between security personnel and protesters. Demonstrators have previously thrown rocks at journalists and bystanders, set fire to vehicles, and damaged businesses near protest sites during previous anti-Moise rallies. Police could use tear gas, water cannon, and rubber bullets to disperse demonstrators. Similar anti-government protests are likely to be held sporadically for the foreseeable future.
BOLIVIA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Truck Drivers to Launch Indefinite Strike and Roadblocks

Truck drivers are planning to launch an open-ended nationwide strike Jan. 8. The work stoppage, which is slated to begin at 0001, is in protest of the recently approved criminal code, which is scheduled to take effect in June 2019. In addition to the strike, truck drivers have threatened to stage roadblocks during the action. It is unclear how long the roadblocks will remain in place.

Analysis: Expect transportation disruptions along major national routes in Bolivia, particularly in La Paz, Potosi, Santa Cruz, Oruro, and Chuquisaca departments. Widespread unrest is unlikely; however, low-level security disturbances are possible, especially if police use force to remove truckers from roadways.

Truck drivers' groups, such as the Autotransporte Pesado Nacional (Ceatpenal), are opposed to the article in the new law that allows the imprisonment of drivers who cause a deadly accident. The criminal law has also resulted in unrest in other sectors, notably in the healthcare sector. Medical students and doctors, who launched a strike in late September, are opposed to sections of the new law that allows the government to imprison doctors who, through negligence and malpractice, cause the death of a patient. President Evo Morales announced that he would call for the repeal of two articles in the criminal code affecting the medical and transportation sectors; the Chamber of Deputies is set to meet Jan. 8 to discuss the potential repeal of the contentious articles.


The government declared a state of calamity in Rio Grande do Norte Jan. 6, amid the ongoing strike by the state's Military Police (PM) and Civil Police (PC). The state of calamity allows the government to pay for emergency services and forego the bidding process when signing contracts. The decree could remain active for up to 180 days, but the government has yet to specify how long the measure will remain in place.

Officials cite an insufficient number of police officers and increase in violent crime as the reasons they declared the state of calamity. Armed forces officers continue patrolling the streets of Mossoro and Greater Natal during the strike, but law enforcement presence remains limited outside the metropolitan area. Military troops are scheduled to leave Rio Grande do Norte Jan. 12. PM officers have agreed to return to work, but their presence in the state remains very limited; members have said they would resume working only as vehicles and equipment in adequate condition become available to them. Meanwhile, PC members have refused to return until they receive pay owed.

Analysis: Homicides and robberies in Rio Grande do Norte increased after the strike started Dec. 19, particularly in Natal and Mossoro. The crime rate later decreased after the government sent 2,800 armed forces officers to the two cities Dec. 29, but major security concerns persist. About half of all 911 calls have gone unanswered since the strike started. Anecdotal reports also indicate that criminals have been taking advantage of the lack of police presence in interior areas and conducting robberies along roadways and on bridges leading in and out of smaller cities and towns. The lawlessness has prompted businesses in some areas to operate on a limited schedule.

The PM and PC officers initiated the strike to demand better equipment and back pay for November and December. The state government has missed several self-imposed deadlines to repay officers. In late December, state officials requested approximately BRL 600,000,000 (USD 185,802,000) from the federal government to pay the striking officers, but the Ministry of Finance denied the request. Negotiations between strike leaders and the government continue. No striking officers have been arrested, despite a Dec. 25 court order declaring the work stoppage illegal.

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Europe


Flight delays are possible at airports in Ankara (ESB), Brussels (BRU), Lisbon (LIS), London (STN), Paris (ORY), and Vienna (VIE) early Jan. 8.

- Ankara Esenboga (ESB/LTAC) - High delays*
- Brussels (BRU/EBBR) - Moderate delays*
- Lisbon (LIS/LPPT) - Moderate delays*
- London Stansted (STN/EGSS) - Moderate-to-high delays*
- Paris Orly (ORY, LFPO) - Low-to-moderate delays*
- Vienna (VIE/LOWW) - Moderate-to-high delays*

* The rating reflects average anticipated delays; many individual flights may be on time or - alternatively - delayed for longer periods.

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FRANCE (Country Risk Rating: Medium) and GERMANY (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Flooding and Shipping Delays Persist in Storm Eleanor’s Aftermath

The effects of Storm Eleanor - also known as Burglind in Germany - had largely abated as of Jan. 5, though localised flooding and transportation issues remain. The storm affected Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG), Frankfurt International (FRA), and Amsterdam Schiphol (AMS) airports most heavily. While flight operations have largely normalised, passenger and cargo backlogs could persist in some areas.

Analysis: Localised flooding remains in many areas. While Germany and Belgium have allowed flood warnings to expire, France maintains several Orange flood warnings (the second highest level) in 15 departments in the country's northeast. Flooding in the Meuse, Moselle, Rhine, Neckar, and Danube river valleys prompted officials to curtail shipping on those rivers. Water levels are expected to crest by Jan. 8 or 9, after which conditions should normalise for river transport. The heavy rains have loosened soil; mudslides and avalanches are possible in elevated areas.

LATVIA (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Health Officials Report Measles Activity

On Jan. 2, health officials announced the recent confirmation of four measles cases in Latvia. Additional details regarding time frame or the location of disease activity were not readily available. Officials began public outreach campaigns encouraging vaccination.

Analysis: These are the first measles cases reported in Latvia since 2014. Measles is a very contagious viral disease that is spread through airborne droplets created when an infected person coughs or sneezes. According
to international officials, a vaccination rate of 92-95 percent is needed to prevent wider community transmission. The national vaccination rate in Latvia was 89 percent in 2016. Symptoms of measles typically appear seven to 21 days after exposure, but patients become contagious up to five days before symptoms appear. Such symptoms generally include fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and a red rash that begins on the face and spreads downward. Serious complications, including pneumonia, can occur, especially in children younger than five years old, adults older than 20 years old, and people whose immune systems are weakened by other acute or chronic health conditions. All travellers should ensure they are protected by up-to-date measles vaccinations.

NETHERLANDS (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Unionised KLM Airlines Cabin Crew Cancel Planned 24-hour Strike

KLM Airlines (KL) cabin crew affiliated with the FNV Cabine union have cancelled their plans for a 24-hour strike in the Netherlands, Jan. 8. Union leaders reached a tentative agreement with the carrier over labour concerns, including staffing on long-haul flights. KLM officials confirmed that the airline would run a normal schedule Jan. 8, and they do not anticipate any associated flight disruptions.

SWEDEN (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Explosion at Metro Station in Stockholm Kills One Person; Police Believe Incident Not Terrorism-related

Two people were injured when one of them picked up an improvised explosive device outside the Varby Gard Metro Station in the Stockholm suburb of Huddinge at around 1107 Jan. 7. The man who picked up the device later died from his injuries.

Analysis: Police are still investigating the incident to determine the motive. The immediate area around the station was closed off, and trains were not stopping at the station. So far, authorities are not treating the incident as terrorism-related.

Replacement buses are operating between Masmo and Varberg stations on the red line of the Stockholm Metro.

TURKEY (Country Risk Rating: High) - Special Security Zones Extended in Hakkari Province through Jan. 23 amid Anti-terror Operations

 Authorities extended a declaration imposing 31 special security zones in various parts of Hakkari Province through Jan. 23; the original measure, which went into effect Dec. 10, 2017, as part of a series of anti-terror operations to be conducted by security forces, had initially been extended through Jan. 9 upon expiring Dec. 24. The specific locations to which access will be restricted under this new extension will remain largely the same, although some minor changes in the precise boundaries may have been made. The affected areas are distributed across all four of the province's districts - Hakkari-Centre, Cukurca, Semdinli, and Yuksekova. The 3rd Army Corps’ Mountain Commando Brigade, the 34th Border Brigade, and provincial gendarme units have been participating in the operations targeting the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and other unspecified terror groups.

Analysis: 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 portions of the D400 and D975 motorways that transit Hakkari Province.

The Turkish administration has routinely used its power to impose curfews and provisional special security zones in various locations in 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.

**TURKEY (Country Risk Rating: High)** - Special Security Zones in Elazig Province Extended through Jan. 20 amid Anti-terror Operations

Authorities extended a declaration imposing 15 special security zones in various parts of Elazig Province through Jan. 20; the original measure, which went into effect Dec. 7, 2017, as part of a series of anti-terror operations to be conducted by security forces, was initially extended through Jan. 5 upon its expiration Dec. 21. The specific locations to which access will be restricted under this new extension will remain largely the same, although some minor changes in the precise boundaries may have been made. The affected areas include the following: two zones in the Alacakaya district, two zones in the Aricak district, eight zones in the Karakocan district, and three zones in the Palu district.

**Analysis:** Over the past 28 days, neither defence nor law enforcement officials have yet reported any noteworthy armed clashes with militants or discoveries of weapons caches in Elazig Province that may have prompted the extension. Nevertheless, such incidents are routinely reported in neighbouring Tunceli, Diyarbakir, and Bingol provinces. On Dec. 31, officials in Tunceli Province, which borders Elazig Province to the north, announced that the 30 special security zones currently in force within their jurisdiction would be extended at least through Jan. 15.

Expect a heavy military and police presence in and around the declared special security zones. Sporadic armed clashes between security forces units and insurgent bands are highly likely. Plan for supply chain disruptions along the D300 and D885 motorways. Authorities may declare further extensions to the security zone order in late January, if warranted by the operational situation in Elazig or neighbouring provinces.

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 Kurdistan Workers' Party (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 can not only restrict entry to the affected areas but may also 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.

**Middle East/North Africa**

**IRAN (Country Risk Rating: Medium)** - Anti-government Protests Subsiding; Additional Demonstrations Possible

Anti-government protests in Iran largely subsided as of Jan. 5, but tensions remained after massive pro-government counterdemonstrations occurred nationwide, including in Tehran. Authorities have maintained heightened security at sensitive sites in the capital and other localities as a precautionary measure.

**Analysis:** Expect increased security and localised transport disruptions near any potential demonstration sites, as future anti-government protests cannot be ruled out. The government has restored internet, mobile phone networks, and access to social media. However, the government may cut or severely restrict telecommunications if additional anti-government demonstrations occur.

The anti-government protests began Dec. 28 and were largely driven by widespread socioeconomic grievances such as high unemployment, increased cost of living, rising inflation, government corruption, and income
inequality. These have been compounded by disappointment with promised economic benefits associated with
the sanctions relief regime under the 2015 nuclear deal. Critics say regime insiders have disproportionately
benefited. Protesters criticised Iran's involvement in regional conflicts, which has cost the country billions of
dollars that they maintain should have been spent domestically. At least 22 people were killed, and more than 450
others arrested nationwide. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and other government hardliners blamed the unrest on
"foreign agents," a likely reference to the US, UK, and Saudi Arabia.

The decline in the protests was likely due to a mix of appeasement and repression, as the government announced
it had decided to suspend plans to raise fuel prices and cut cash transfer programmes for the poor, but also
deployed the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to suppress the protests.

IRAN (Country Risk Rating: Medium) and IRAQ (Country Risk Rating: High) - Magnitude-5.0 Earthquake Strikes in Border Region

A magnitude-5.0 earthquake struck in the Iran-Iraq border area, approximately 61 km (38 miles) southwest of Halabja, Iraq,
at 1822 Jan. 6. The quake struck at a shallow depth of 10 km (6 miles). While the epicentre was located in a remote area,
strong shaking was likely felt throughout Iraq's Kurdistan Region, as well as Iran's Western Azerbaijan and Kermanshah
provinces.

Analysis: There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries; however, damage is possible in areas close to
the epicentre, especially as damage from a stronger earthquake in the area in November has still not been fully
repaired.

LIBYA (Country Risk Rating: Extreme) and TUNISIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Armed Clashes Prompt Closure of Ras Jedir Border Crossing

On Jan. 5, an unidentified armed group stormed the Libyan side of the Ras Jedir border crossing, prompting the Tunisian
military to close the crossing. The clashes reportedly erupted after at least 10 vehicles driven by members of an armed
group arrived at the entrance to Tunisia. The armed-group exchanged fire with forces loyal to Libya's Tripoli-based
government before Libyan pro-government forces ousted the armed group and regained control of the crossing.

Analysis: The incident reiterates the impact that instability in Libya has on the security environments of its
neighbouring countries. Tunisia's border region with Libya remains volatile. The security situation at the Ras Jedir
border crossing is particularly tenuous and the crossing is frequently closed due to security concerns. Because
Libya does not have an official or cohesive security force, security at border crossings is provided by various
groups of militias. The militias often operate with competing political objectives and allegiances, which results in
politically motivated kidnappings, shootings, and other attacks.

SAUDI ARABIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Military Intercepts Missile in Najran Province

Royal Saudi Air Defence Forces (RSADF) in Najran Province reportedly intercepted a ballistic missile that was fired by Al-
Houthi rebels in neighbouring Yemen at 0756 Jan. 5. No casualties or structural damage have been reported. Although the
precise target of the missile remains unclear, Al-Houthi sources claim that the missile targeted a military site.

Analysis: Al-Houthi rebels operating along the Saudi-Yemen border rely on an arsenal of firing platforms -
primarily mortar, artillery, and rocket systems that rarely range more than 20 km (12 miles) into Saudi territory.
However, Yemeni rebels also possess several versions of modified surface-to-surface, tactical, and theatre
ballistic missile platforms that have ranges between 30 km (18 miles) and up to possibly 800 km (500 miles).
However, the threat posed by many ballistic missile platforms is greatly reduced, as the RSADF has the capability
to track and intercept most longer-range rockets before they reach populated areas.
TUNISIA (Country Risk Rating: High) and UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Officials Announce Resumption of Commercial Flights

The Tunisian Ministry of Transport announced late Jan. 4 that Emirates Airlines (EK) flights between Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) would resume, ending the suspension that began Dec. 24. Ministry officials said the decision to recommence flights was made after they reached an agreement with the UAE, in which Emirates Airlines said they would respect international laws and treaties on air transport between the two nations.

Analysis: The Tunisian Ministry of Transport announced its decision to suspend flights on Emirates Airlines Dec. 24. The ministry made the announcement after UAE officials made a controversial decision Dec. 22 to temporarily ban Tunisian women from entering the UAE; the action caused considerable confusion and consternation among Tunisian officials and citizens. The UAE Foreign Ministry stated that the Dec. 22 decision was temporary and motivated by security reasons.

North America

UNITED STATES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Flight Disruptions at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York Exacerbated by Water Main Break

A water main break in New York's John F. Kennedy Airport's (JFK) Terminal 4 Jan. 7 caused flooding in the facility's baggage claim area, further exacerbating the airport's significant ongoing flight disruptions. The flooding prompted airport officials to evacuate travellers from Terminal 4. Authorities temporarily shut down the terminal to arriving international flights, with crews sending incoming aircraft to other terminals; international departures were not been affected. Port Authority officials have not provided an estimate on when Terminal 4 operations will normalise.

Analysis: Expect flight delays and cancellations to continue at JFK through late Jan. 8, as airlines work to reposition aircraft and flights, and clear passenger backlogs.

UNITED STATES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Widespread, Elevated Influenza Activity Continues Nationwide after December 2017 Surge

Health officials report widespread, elevated seasonal influenza activity across much of the US. Since the season began in October, more than 310,000 cases were reported through Dec. 30, representing the most complete national data available on Jan. 5.

The US CDC issued an influenza warning Dec. 27 as influenza transmission increased rapidly. Furthermore, the dominant strain of influenza this season, H3N2, is a subtype known for its significant negative impact on children and the elderly. The current seasonal influenza vaccination leaves some gaps in protection against H3N2, highlighting the importance of diligent handwashing and respiratory hygiene.

Analysis: Seasonal influenza is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. Typical symptoms are nondescript, including fever (though not in all cases), cough, congestion, aches, and fatigue. The disease occurs in all age groups but is particularly severe in the elderly or persons with high-risk medical conditions. Influenza vaccinations are recommended yearly since the influenza virus undergoes frequent changes.

Visit a doctor to discuss obtaining this year's vaccine against seasonal influenza. Practise typical health precautions: wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser, avoid close contact with people who appear sick, and routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
The Water Authority of Fiji cut water to parts of Sigatoka, Laselase, and Yadua Jan. 8 due to increased turbidity at a treatment plant. The utility is providing water carts to affected residents, but it is unclear if these supplies are sufficient. Officials plan to restore water services to affected areas gradually, but outages could continue through Jan. 12. Sigatoka is about 45 km (28 miles) south of Nadi.