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.

January 22, 2018

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CAMEROON (Country Risk Rating: High) - Activist Threatens Foreign Companies in Cameroon's Western Regions

An anglophone activist spokesperson reiterated threats to target foreign companies working with the government in Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions Jan. 19. The self-declared Interim Government of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia accused foreign enterprises of financially sustaining Cameroonian President Paul Biya's national government Jan. 16. Activists could target foreign businesses - especially those perceived to be francophone - with vandalism and arson. Militant attacks - including crude bombings - are less likely, but cannot be ruled out.

Attacks by secessionist militants continue to occur weekly in the country's English-speaking western regions, prompting stringent security measures. Militant activity and counterinsurgency operations occur with greater frequency near Mamfe, Southwest Region, and Bamenda, Northwest Region, but are possible throughout the western regions. The potential for collateral damage during clashes between insurgents and government troops poses a severe threat to personal safety, and prompted foreign governments to issue advisories against travel to affected regions in December.

Anglophone residents accuse security personnel of torture, sexual assault, and looting. Human rights organisations reported similar abuses during a crackdown on protests in October. Additional large-scale demonstrations are unlikely; security forces will likely use tear gas and gunfire to disperse activist attempts to mobilise. Residents are using intermittent "ville morte" ("dead city") general strikes as an indirect form of protest.

Bamenda is about 225 km (140 miles) north-northeast of Douala and 280 km (174 miles) northwest of Yaoundé. Mamfe is around 195 km (121 miles) north of Douala.

Analysis: Military personnel have reportedly been deployed to bolster local police. Authorities may establish roadblocks, conduct vehicle searches, and periodically close land-border crossings with Nigeria. Officers are systematically reviewing personal identification and freight delivery documentation for the drivers of all public and private vehicles in some urban areas. Security measures and restrictions could cause delays to ground transport and freight deliveries. The government has imposed nighttime curfews and periodic bans on motorcycle use; restrictions could be extended or intensified without warning. Authorities are restricting telecommunications networks in the western regions, which will likely impede the transmission of information related to security measures and force the use of virtual private networks (VPN) to bypass restrictions.

The threat to attack foreign businesses was almost certainly a retaliation to the Nigerian government's alleged arrest of anglophone leaders in Abuja during early January. Anglophone militant attacks - including ambushes, bombings, and raids targeting security forces - that began in September became more frequent and sophisticated in the final quarter of 2017. Gunmen killed a sailor in Ekondo-Titi, Southwest Region Jan. 14, and a paramilitary officer in Wum, Northwest Region Jan. 15. In addition to such targeted shootings, militants have conducted convoy ambushes and raids on fixed positions in urban centres, killing at least 17 security personnel since September. The Nigerian government reported 9,620 Cameroonian had claimed asylum as of Jan. 12, and the UN has established refugee camps to accommodate 40,000 refugees in anticipation of further violence.

Widespread allegations of atrocities by police and soldiers are likely increasing moderate anglophone activists' support for armed resistance. Activists' demonstrations began as requests for government resources and expanded to include demands for the devolution of political power. Significant violence during marches in the western regions Oct. 1 - when radical activists called for an independent state of Ambazonia - likely polarised opposition to the French-speaking central government. Biya has repeatedly rejected requests by moderates for federal autonomy in the English-speaking regions and denounced militant calls for independence.
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Kidnappers Release Local Aid Workers Kidnapped near Kalemie, Tanganyika Province

Kidnappers released two local employees of an international aid organisation near the Lwana River bridge in the Kakinga area of Tanganyika Province, Jan. 15. Gunmen abducted the humanitarian workers in Mazonde, near Kalemie, Jan. 13 as they returned from operations in South Kivu. There are unconfirmed reports that a local militia leader assisted in securing the victim’s release, but it is unclear who conducted the abduction or if a ransom was paid.

**Analysis:** The threat of kidnapping is typically moderate in the DRC, but heightened in the country’s eastern provinces, including North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika. Various armed groups, including rebels, local militia, and pseudo-militants, operate in these areas and are suspected of conducting many of the abductions. Kidnappers typically target local nationals, but foreign nationals have also been targeted.

GUINEA (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Officials Confirm Recent Shooting of Saudi National and Retaliatory Attack near Kankan

On Jan. 19, local officials confirmed the Jan. 16 killing of a Saudi Islamic preacher in Kantebalandougou, a village located between Kankan city and Kerouane in Guinea. Assailants ambushed the victim and shot him as he attempted to flee on a motorcycle. The bike's driver reportedly received medical attention at Kankan hospital, suggesting the attack occurred near the city. Consequently, a man subsequently stabbed the leader of a traditional hunters' group to death while shouting an Islamists' slogan Jan. 17.

**Analysis:** The Saudi national was likely killed as a result of a sectarian dispute with customary leaders in the village; the stabbing was probably a retaliatory attack. Religious organisations originating in the Gulf region of the Middle East sponsor mosque building and proselytising in West Africa. The murdered Saudi was reportedly part of a group that included a second Saudi - preaching and building mosques in the region. The hardline, conservative dogma of some preachers has come into conflict with local beliefs including Sufi interpretations of Islam and animism. The spreading of extremist interpretations of Islam is linked to the emergence of Islamist militancy in West Africa.

LIBERIA (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Officials Detail Schedule for Inauguration Events in Monrovia

George Weah has been sworn in as Liberia's president at Monrovia's Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex, Jan. 22, among stringent security measures. The following events are scheduled to take place Jan. 22, and are likely to attract large crowds:

- **1330-1430:** Celebratory event at Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex
- **1900:** Celebratory event at the Executive Pavilion

Other celebratory events are expected across the city, notably in Weah's Clara Town birthplace and at his Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) headquarters in Congo Town. The CDC will also likely organise rallies in other urban centres nationwide.

**Analysis:** Expect tight security in Monrovia, particularly the Capitol Hill government district, near Roberts International Airport (ROB), Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex, and at other sensitive locations. Security personnel could set up checkpoints and conduct vehicle searches. CDC opponents who lost the recent presidential election are not expected to protest, but individual confrontations between rival activists cannot be discounted.

Only government vehicles and those with official permission will be able to conduct ground movements in Monrovia Jan. 22; heavy traffic congestion is likely in the city. Police could temporarily close roads to facilitate motorcade movements; Ashmum Street will be closed 0700-1900 Jan. 22. The government has prohibited heavy-duty vehicles on the highway between the capital and ROB Jan. 20-22; the road could also be closed to expedite the passage of official motorcades. Crowds could block some major roads, including Tubman Boulevard. The arrival and departure of foreign dignitaries could cause flight disruptions at ROB.
Although the widespread acceptance of Weah’s victory has improved perceptions of Liberia's political stability, the new president will face significant challenges in bolstering the country's security. Former vice president Joseph Boakai’s swift concession following the release of preliminary results for the Dec. 26 run-off election mitigated concerns over possible post-election violence. Weah obtained more than 60 percent of the second-round vote, which has also been accepted by opponents who lodged several legal complaints seeking to annul the outcome of an October first-round poll and the run-off's delay.

However, Weah could face a political backlash, including demonstrations, if he fails to alleviate persistent poverty and curtail corruption. During the election, Weah raised high expectations of significant and widespread economic growth, but the government faces a foreign currency shortage. Weah could be forced to choose between meeting campaign promises of government spending on social services and addressing security concerns. Approximately 85 percent of the youth population is unemployed, contributing to a high crime rate. Additionally, the country’s insufficient and under-trained security personnel are threatening to strike if Weah does not increase their pay.

NIGER (Country Risk Rating: High) - Militant Attack near Bosso, Diffa Region, Kills at least Seven People

Militants killed at least six soldiers and a civilian during an attack on a military camp in Tournour, 20 km (12 miles) from Bosso, in Diffa Region at around 1700 Jan. 17. Casualty figures are expected to rise; there are unconfirmed reports that 18 soldiers were killed in the raid with dozens more injured. The assailants launched their attack from neighbouring Nigeria, destroyed five military vehicles, and stole weapons and ammunition. While no group claimed responsibility for the attack, militants affiliated with the Boko Haram Islamist group were almost certainly responsible.

Analysis: A very high threat of militant attack and kidnapping persists in Diffa Region, but official reporting on such incidents is infrequent and unreliable. A Boko Haram faction more closely affiliated with the Islamic State principally operates in the Lake Chad area, where the borders of Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, and Niger - including the southeastern corner of Diffa Region - converge. Although the total number of local nationals killed by militants declined in 2017, the number of reported attacks increased to 100 compared with 80 in 2016. Raids occurred more frequently in the latter half of 2017, and monthly casualty figures peaked in November, when militants killed at least 140 people. Repeated military operations launched by the countries bordering Lake Chad have failed to end the insurgency definitively. Heavy-handed security force tactics are likely exacerbating anti-government sentiments and driving militant recruitment.

NIGERIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Authorities Free Kidnapped US, Canadian Nationals

Kidnappers freed two US and two Canadian nationals near the Jere area of the Kagarko Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna State, around 0600 Jan. 20. The release occurred as security personnel launched a rescue mission in the area. Authorities have captured one suspect in the abductions, and security forces are reportedly pursuing additional suspects.

Analysis: Unidentified criminals kidnapped the four foreigners at around 1900 Jan. 16, prompting a manhunt in the Kagarko LGA. The victims were reportedly travelling from Kafanchan to Abuja when assailants attacked them on the Jere-Kagarko road. The assailants killed two police officers escorting the vehicle in a gunfire exchange. The abductors demanded a ransom for the foreigners' release. Persistent high levels of insecurity in parts of Nigeria enable both militant and criminal groups to carry out kidnappings for ransom. The abduction of foreigners, high-profile individuals, business people, and those with political connections frequently occurs in the country. Kidnappers especially target foreign visitors and expatriates, as their abductions tend to result in more lucrative ransom payments. While most victims are released unharmed after being held for a relatively short period, some rescue efforts by Nigerian security forces have resulted in casualties in the past.
AFGHANISTAN (Country Risk Rating: Extreme) - Taliban Claims Responsibility for Overnight Siege at Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul

As of the morning Jan. 22, Afghan authorities have confirmed the deaths of 18 civilians, including 14 foreigners, in the 14-hour siege at the Intercontinental Hotel in the Police District 4 (PD4) neighbourhood of Kabul that ended the morning Jan. 21. However, unconfirmed reports indicate nearly 43 fatalities occurred, suggesting the casualty toll could still rise. Eleven of the foreign nationals - including seven Ukrainians - who died in the attack were employees of private Afghan airline KamAir (RQ). Following the incident, KamAir - which operates 20 flights daily from Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport (KBL) - has suspended all domestic flights until further notice; some international flight disruptions are also possible.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the hotel attack; the militant group said five of its suicide bombers carried out the assault, which targeted a meeting of Afghan and US security officials. The siege began at around 2100 Jan. 20 when gunmen, wearing army uniforms and suicide vests, stormed the hotel kitchen; they later moved into conference halls and other floors of the building, while shooting at guests. More than 150 guests - including 41 foreign nationals - were rescued by Afghan security forces or managed to escape. An Afghan Interior Ministry statement said militants from the Taliban-allied Haqqani network carried out the attack.

The heavily-guarded Intercontinental Hotel - a state-owned hotel that is not part of the global InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) - is frequented by both government officials and foreigners. The attack comes just days after the US Embassy in Kabul issued a warning of potential terror attacks against hotels in the city. The Intercontinental Hotel was the site of a Taliban suicide attack in 2011 that resulted in the deaths of 21 people.

Analysis: Security conditions have steadily deteriorated in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan since the exit of the majority of NATO combat troops from the country in December 2014. The raid on the Intercontinental Hotel was the latest in a series of deadly attacks by the Taliban and the local affiliates of Islamic State (IS) in Kabul. Authorities have significantly augmented security in central Kabul since the May 2017 truck bombing near the German Embassy, but the latest raid demonstrates the enduring ability of militants to mount high-profile operations in the capital.

CAMBODIA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Authorities to Investigate New Opposition Movement Launched Abroad

Cambodian authorities announced their intent to launch an investigation into the formation of the new opposition Cambodia National Rescue Movement (CNRM) and take legal action if the movement is deemed unlawful. Sam Rainsy, the self-exiled, former president of the now-defunct Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), announced the formation of the new movement Jan. 13. The political movement was established by several exiled opposition leaders, and would support free elections in Cambodia as well as the release of detained opposition leader, Kem Sokha. Rainsy has also called for future protests against the government.

Analysis: Rainsy claimed that the CNRM was launched as a way around the ban on the CNRP. The Supreme Court ruled to dissolve the main opposition party Nov. 16 and banned 118 CNRP leaders, including Sokha and Rainsy, from politics for the next five years. The verdict was made after the Interior Ministry filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court at the request of the Cambodian Youth Party (CYP) and royalist party Funcinpec, to dissolve the CNRP over claims that it conspired with its leader, Sokha, and the US to oust the government. However, the case is widely believed to be part of a concerted effort by the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) to eliminate competition ahead of the 2018 general elections. The new opposition movement is not expected to significantly change the political scene in Cambodia if most of its leaders and supporters are based outside the country. Moreover, the reaction among former CNRP officials towards CNRM has been mixed, with Sokha's lawyer and close advisor saying that the detained leader does not support the new movement.

CHINA (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Authorities Detain Human Rights Lawyer in Ongoing Crackdown

Police detained prominent human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng Jan. 19 outside his home in Beijing. The detention came a
day after he published a letter calling for constitutional changes in the country. Officials have not filed any charges against Yu; however, nearly a dozen policemen carried out his arrest, suggesting the government may pursue criminal charges against the lawyer.

**Analysis:** The arrest is the latest in an ongoing crackdown against human rights and democracy advocates in the country. Yu reportedly released his letter to the press, which undoubtedly unnerved officials in Beijing; Yu allegedly called for presidential elections from multiple political parties. Officials previously questioned the lawyer over similar letters he submitted to the government. Authorities also recently revoked Yu's law licence after he argued several high-profile cases including for people arrested for supporting pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. The government has drastically crackdown on civil society, freedom of speech, and dissent since President Xi Jinping took office. Chinese officials detained more than 200 human rights lawyers and protesters. The country has also enacted a variety of laws governing the use of social media and news organisations, which are seen as stamping out criticism of the government at all levels. While activist detentions rarely lead to demonstrations, some protests could take place over Yu's detention, particularly if charges against him are heard in court.

**CHINA (Country Risk Rating: Low) and TAIWAN (Country Risk Rating: Low)** - Taiwanese Authorities Refuse Additional Flights from Chinese Airlines during Spring Festival due to Aviation Dispute

On Jan. 18, the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) of Taiwan confirmed that it has refused two Chinese airlines permission to fly 176 additional flights across the Taiwan Strait for the Lunar New Year. The decision was made as a protest after Chinese authorities unilaterally opened additional flight paths in the Taiwan Strait for domestic airlines. Taiwanese authorities claim the Chinese decision is a violation of a 2015 agreement between the two sides to mutually consult before using new flight paths in the area. Taipei’s refusal of additional flights during the Lunar New Year Period, running from Feb. 15-20, may impact up to 50,000 potential passengers of Xiamen Air (MF) and China Eastern (MU).

**Analysis:** The dispute over airways in the Taiwan Strait is the latest sign of deteriorating ties between Taiwan and mainland China. Relations have worsened since the 2016 election of Tsai Ing-wen in Taiwan. Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is generally in favour of Taiwanese Independence; Beijing continues to view Taiwan as a breakaway province that should eventually reunify with the Mainland, by force if necessary. Because of its limited international recognition, Taiwan does not have membership in the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). Lack of ICAO membership significantly weakens Taiwan's ability to challenge Chinese use of the air routes in the Taiwan Strait.

**INDIA (Country Risk Rating: High)** - Aam Aadmi Party and Traders' Group Call for Shutdown Strike in Delhi Jan. 23, Protest March Jan. 29

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), in association with the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), is organising a day-long bandh (shutdown strike) in Delhi Jan. 23. The groups allege that officials of three Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-controlled Delhi municipal corporations have been harassing traders by sealing shops and establishments without prior notice. Participation in the strike will probably be high, with many markets and small businesses likely to shut down. The action is unlikely to affect operations at large businesses or factories significantly. Participants will probably stage protest marches and rallies during the strike.

Additionally, the AAP is organising a protest march to the Parliament building in central Delhi Jan. 29 to protest the federal government's move to allow 100 percent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the retail sector. The AAP has not announced the starting point for the march, but likely locations include AAP headquarters at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg. Participation in the event could range from several hundred to a few thousand people.

**Analysis:** Expect increased security, possible road closures, and localised transport disruptions during both actions. Major security disturbances are not expected, though clashes between protesters and police, as well as between AAP and BJP supporters, cannot be ruled out.

**INDIA (Country Risk Rating: High)** - Minor Bomb Explodes at Bodh Gaya Temple in Bihar
Authorities have boosted security at the Mahabodhi Temple compound in Bodh Gaya in the eastern Bihar State following an explosion of a crude bomb the evening Jan. 19; the incident did not cause any injuries or damage. Security personnel also recovered two crude explosives devices near the temple complex. The incident occurred during Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama's month-long stay in Bodh Gaya in January. Religious tourists from several Buddhist and European countries have also reportedly arrived in the town - an important Buddhist pilgrimage venue - to meet the Dalai Lama. The compound is located some 110 km (68 miles) south of Patna, the state capital.

**Analysis:** Initial investigations by state and federal agencies into the incident have suggested that the Dalai Lama was not the intended target, and the perpetrators' intention was to create panic among the tourists. Officials are investigating the role of the banned Indian Mujahideen and the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) groups, which have been blamed for staging a series of coordinated minor bombings at the Mahabodhi Temple compound in July 2013; that incident left two Buddhist monks injured. Government intelligence agencies had reportedly warned state authorities of the complex being a possible target for Islamist militants, especially in light of recent violence between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar.

INDIA (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Private Bus Drivers to Launch Strike in Kerala State, Associated Protest to Begin in Thiruvananthapuram Jan. 22

Private bus operators plan to launch an indefinite strike in Kerala State Jan. 30 to call for an increase in bus fares, among other demands. The action could take nearly 14,500 private buses off the road. Public bus service will remain available during the strike, but is unlikely to be able to meet demand; long queues and crowded conditions are likely on public vehicles. The strike will probably increase traffic congestion, especially in major cities, as passengers are forced to arrange alternative transport. Demand for taxis and rental cars will probably be high.

**Analysis:** Striking bus drivers could also stage protests, further disrupting transportation. Drivers plan to launch a hunger strike outside the Kerala Government Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram beginning Jan. 22, which could prompt increased security and localised disruptions in the vicinity. Clashes between protesters and police cannot be ruled out, especially if police try to clear any demonstrations by force.

INDIA (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Students to Protest in Kohima, Nagaland State

The Naga Students' Federation plans to hold a rally in Kohima Jan. 23 ahead of planned elections in February. The event will take place at Naga Solidarity Park on New Secretariat Road.

**Analysis:** Expect heightened security near the venue, as well as localised traffic disruptions. While major violence is unlikely, spontaneous, low-scale clashes could occur if protesters provoke security forces.

INDIA (Country Risk Rating: **High**) - Tourist Taxi Drivers End Strike in Goa, but Threaten to Resume Action

Tourist taxi operators in Goa State suspended their three-day strike after reaching a tentative agreement with the local government the evening of Jan. 21. Members of the All Goa Tourist Taxi Owners Association began the strike Jan. 19 to protest the Goa government's decision to withhold fitness certificates - which allow taxis to operate legally - unless drivers installed speed governors in their vehicles. The government has reportedly agreed to withdraw this decision; however, drivers have threatened to resume the strike from Jan. 24 if authorities fail to honour the agreement.

**Analysis:** If resumed, the strike will likely see most tourist taxis remain off the road across the state. An estimated 18,000 taxis stayed off the road during the Jan. 19-21 strike. In the event of another work stoppage, government officials will almost certainly deploy more buses at Goa International Airport (GOI), train stations, and other high-volume sites. However, the action could still cause crowded conditions and delays on other modes of mass transit, as passengers who would normally ride taxis resort to alternative transport. Striking taxi drivers could stage protests and block roads, further disrupting ground travel. Violent clashes between striking drivers and police are
not anticipated but cannot be ruled out, particularly if law enforcement attempt to use force to disperse any protesters.


Unionised motor transport operators plan to stage a 12-hour strike in southern Kerala State from 0600-1800 Jan. 24. Nearly all major trade unions are participating in the action, which has been called to protest frequent hikes in fuel prices. The strike will affect truck, bus, minibus, autorickshaws and some taxi services, and has the potential to prompt significant transport disruptions in the state. In areas where participation is widespread, demand for transport that remains available, such as app-based ride-hailing services, will almost certainly be high. Already-high traffic congestion will probably be exacerbated, especially during peak travel hours, as commuters are forced to use private vehicles; multihour traffic jams are possible.

**Analysis:** Striking transport workers may stage protests, exacerbating ground travel disruptions. Clashes between protesters and police cannot be ruled out, especially if police try to clear any demonstrations by force.

**JAPAN (Country Risk Rating: Low)** - Winter Weather Impacting Eastern Honshu, Including Tokyo

A low-pressure area in the Pacific Ocean is forecast to bring rainfall and heavy snow to eastern Japan as it moves northeastward toward Honshu. Meteorologists predict the system initially will bring rainfall to much of the Kanto Plain early Jan. 22; snow began falling early Jan. 22, and up to 10 cm (4 inches) is predicted by early Jan. 23. Heavy snowfall is likely in mountain areas of the Kanto Region, before spreading to other areas of eastern Honshu as the storm moves across the island Jan. 23.

**Analysis:** The system triggered transport disruptions in eastern Honshu Jan. 22. Some express train services were cancelled. The combination of heavy snowfall and strong winds could produce blizzard conditions and reduce visibility in mountain areas; avalanches are possible. Snow mixed with rain may cause icy road conditions, especially during overnight and early morning hours; traffic delays are possible on major roadways, and highway closures cannot be ruled out. Authorities may suspend rail service in some areas, including local services in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Further Shinkansen disruptions cannot be ruled out; trains may operate at slower speeds, prolonging travel times. Flight disruptions are also possible, including at Tokyo’s Haneda (HND) and Narita (NRT) airports, though the highest risk of disruptions is at regional airports serving Sendai (SDJ) and Niigata (KIJ). Lingering transport disruptions are likely after snowfall ends as passenger backlogs are cleared. Power outages may also occur outside urban areas.

**MYANMAR (Country Risk Rating: Medium)** - Additional Protests Possible in Rakhine State Amid Heightened Tensions

Additional protests are possible in Rakhine State amid heightened tensions between the government and residents. Police opened fire on a demonstration commemorating the 223rd anniversary of the end of Arakan Dynasty in Mrauk-U Jan. 16, killing at least nine people and wounding 12 others. Officials say that police warned the demonstrators before opening fire, but witnesses continue to claim that they received no warning. Additionally, authorities arrested U Aye Maung, a former Arakan National Party leader, Jan. 18 on treason charges. The politician is accused of making derogatory remarks against the state, as well as participating in the Jan. 16 protest. Demonstrators gathered at Wingaba Stadium in Sittwe Jan. 19 over Aye Maung’s arrest but were dispersed by security personnel.

**Analysis:** Future protests are most likely to occur in Sittwe or other population centres. Officials have increased security in more than ten places in the capital in preparation for more protests, and officials have vowed to disperse gatherings that take place without government permission. Violence is likely if illegal demonstrations take place. Localised traffic disruptions are possible due to increased security measures or if large-scale protests take place.

**PAKISTAN (Country Risk Rating: High)** - Interior Ministry Closes US-funded Radio Station
On Jan. 19, Pakistani authorities shut down Radio Mashaal, a Pashtun-language radio station run by Radio Free Europe, a US government-funded organisation. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the main Pakistani intelligence agency, ordered the closure. Authorities accuse Radio Mashaal of biased reporting, undermining state legitimacy, and inciting unrest.

**Analysis:** The closure of Radio Mashaal comes during a period of deteriorating US-Pakistani ties. US President Donald J. Trump has suspended most security aid to Pakistan, accusing Islamabad of harbouring terrorists and undermining US military efforts in Afghanistan. Radio Mashaal began broadcasting in 2010.

**PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium)** - Abu Sayyaf Group Frees Two Indonesian Hostages in Sulu Province

Philippine police officers announced Jan. 20 that Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) militants reportedly freed two Indonesian nationals in Jolo, Sulu Province, the evening of Jan. 19. The two men, both captains of fishing vessels, were reportedly delivered to a former Sulu leader before being handed over to police. Authorities have yet to confirm if a ransom was paid for the men's release.

**Analysis:** The two Indonesians were kidnapped from a Malaysia-registered fishing boat on Nov. 19, 2016, off the coast of Kunak, Sabah, and taken to the southern Philippines. ASG engages in kidnapping-for-ransom across much of the southern Philippines and coastal areas of eastern Sabah. Since early 2016, the group has attacked numerous foreign vessels and seized crewmembers in the Sulu and Celebes seas, which separate the Philippines' Mindanao region from Sabah. Foreigners are attractive targets due to the perception that they can garner larger ransom payments. ASG has killed several hostages after failing to receive ransoms. Ongoing security crackdowns on ASG strongholds have been unable to significantly reduce the kidnapping threat the group poses in the southernmost part of the country, and many foreign governments advise against travel to the region, coastal areas of eastern Sabah, and nearby areas of the Sulu and Celebes seas.


Authorities are increasing security in Iloilo City ahead of the 50th annual Dinagyang Festival - a religious and cultural event - Jan. 26-28. The festival will be marked by parades and religious processions. On Jan. 26, a fluvial procession from Fort San Pedro to the San Jose Parish Church will take place from approximately 1500. On Jan. 27, a procession will start from Infante Street at around 1900 and end at Iloilo Business Park, where the floats will be parked along the main road until 2359.

Additional security personnel will deploy in Iloilo City, particularly at entry points to the city, as well as the Iloilo International Airport (ILO). Police are on high alert due to a latent threat posed by the New People's Army (NPA) and other extremist groups. Authorities may also intermittently suspend mobile phone services in the affected areas. A gun ban will be enforced in the city Jan. 23-28.

**Analysis:** Expect street closures and significant traffic disruptions in Iloilo City Jan. 26-28. Large crowds will likely gather to view the parades and processions. Increased pickpocketing and petty theft are possible in crowded areas; the festival usually attracts thousands of tourists.

**PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium)** - Authorities Raise Alert Status for Mayon Volcano in Albay Province to Level 4

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) raised the alert level for the Mayon Volcano in Albay Province to level 4 at 1300 Jan. 22 following magma eruptions and increased seismic activity. The eruptions produced an ash column as high as 10 km (6.2 miles). Level 4, the second highest on a five-point scale, indicates imminent, explosive eruptions. Authorities have suspended classes at both public and private schools in the province and advised the public to put on a mask and stay indoors.
Officials have extended the danger zone to an 8-km (5-mile) radius of the volcano. Ground transport disruptions, especially leading to the exclusion zone, are likely. Authorities could also block routes within the zone.

**Analysis:** The volcano is in southeastern Luzon, less than 15 km (9 miles) northwest of Legazpi City, the provincial capital of Albay, and additional eruptions may lead to disruptions in the metropolitan area. Based on seasonal wind patterns, PHIVOLCS previously predicted that ashfall is most likely to move southwestward, but any shift eastward could direct ash towards the city. Disruptions are possible at Legazpi Airport (LGP), which may be forced to cancel flights until the cloud moves away. Civil aviation authorities are urging pilots to avoid the volcano's summit due to the ash.

**PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Six Soldiers Injured in Clashes with Maute Group**

Joint Task Force Ranao soldiers clashed with approximately ten Maute Group members in the Kalilangan area of Masiu, Lanao del Sur Province, around 0200 Jan. 20. The militants fled the firefight, but the military said they were able to sink two of their boats. Six troops sustained injuries in the conflict. Officials say they found a variety of ammunition and an Islamic State flag at the site.

**Analysis:** The encounter was the first involving Maute Group fighters since the military took back Marawi City in October. The area was a known satellite camp for Maute Group militants in the past. The military has vowed to eradicate the Maute Group and other IS-aligned groups that operate primarily on Mindanao and other islands in the southern Philippines. While the battle indicates the military is making progress in its efforts to diminish the extremist threat in the region, IS-affiliated groups are known to be recruiting and the state of lawlessness in the southern Philippines will continue to be an attractive destination for foreign militants seeking to train and fight in the region. The threat of additional militant attacks will remain high in Mindanao in the coming months.

**PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Transport Group to Stage Protests Nationwide**

The PISTON transport group plans to stage rallies across the Philippines Jan. 24 to protest the government's plan to modernise jeepneys and phase out older jeepney vehicles. PISTON supporters intend to gather outside the provincial offices of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB). Participation may reach the thousands in larger cities, including Metro Manila and Cebu City.

**Analysis:** Though the transport groups have not formally pledged to strike, jeepney transport will likely be limited if large numbers of drivers participate in the protests. Other mass transport will remain available, but conditions will almost certainly be more crowded. Long queues and delays are likely if the protests coincide with peak travel hours. During previous rallies, jeepney drivers have staged caravans to the protest sites; if repeated, caravans could intensify traffic disruptions on streets around the rally sites. The action is intended to protest plans by the DOTC to phase out jeepney vehicles more than 15 years old. Jeepney drivers would be required to replace old engines or purchase hybrid or electric jeeps, as well as instal GPS and WiFi service in their vehicles under new regulations. The transport coalition maintains that the requirements would threaten the livelihood of drivers, most of whom cannot afford the modifications.

**PHILIPPINES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - US National Shot Dead in Baclayon Town in Bohol Province**

Unidentified assailants shot dead a US national in Barangay Laya in Baclayon town, Bohol Province, at about 0500 Jan. 21 while he was jogging. The victim, who sustained two gunshot wounds, was a retired US soldier who had lived in the area for four years. Authorities are investigating the motive behind the incident.

**Analysis:** Although the Philippines struggles with a high rate of violent crime, criminals do not commonly target foreign nationals for premeditated murder. Instances in which foreign nationals have been killed have typically been linked to robberies gone wrong, personal disputes, and suspicious business dealings. Due to the widespread availability of guns and the willingness of many criminals to use force, individuals should not resist if assailants demand their possessions.
THAILAND (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Bombing at Market in Yala Province Kills Three People

A bombing killed at least three people and injured 18 others at the Pimolchai market in Mueang District, Yala Province, at about 0600 Jan. 22. Perpetrators allegedly placed an explosive in a motorcycle, next to a market cart. Authorities cordoned off the area and are continuing their investigation. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

**Analysis:** Bombings, shootings, and other attacks by militants are near-daily occurrences in the restive Deep South region; however, the militants typically do not claim responsibility for the violence. Separatists frequently target military and police personnel and facilities in the area but attacks on civilian targets such as night markets, restaurants, and entertainment venues are not uncommon. More than 7,000 people have been killed since insurgents renewed their campaign in 2004.

Caribbean

HAITI (Country Risk Rating: High) - Protest March Planned to US Embassy in Port-au-Prince

Activists are planning a protest march in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Jan. 22. The so-called 'March of National Dignity' is being held to reject disparaging remarks allegedly made about the country by US President Donald J. Trump. Organisers are calling for participants to rally at Bel Air, Place Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Saint-Jean Bosco Chapel before marching to the US Embassy.

**Analysis:** Although the group is calling for the march to be conducted peacefully, small skirmishes cannot be ruled out. Clashes between police and protesters are possible if multiple arrests are made, or if authorities try to disperse protesters by force. Authorities will likely increase security around the US Embassy on Jan. 22. The protest has the potential to attract significant participation; localised transport disruptions and temporary road closures are likely.


A large security operation continues in St. James Parish, Jamaica, following the implementation of a limited state of emergency on Jan. 18. Under the state of emergency, personnel involved in the joint police and military operation is able to search high crime areas without a warrant. The decision came after the country's prime minister announced that the government was planning to roll out new anti-crime measures, and suggested that a particular focus would be placed on the Montego Bay area in St. James. Authorities recorded 332 homicides - an unprecedented number - in St. James in 2017. The number represented a 25-percent increase over 2016 figures, and was the highest nationwide.

In addition to the state of emergency, officials have declared the following business and recreational curfews in the parish:

- **Community recreational areas:** Required to close by 1800
- **Street vendors and retail shops:** Required to close by 1900
- **Car service stations:** Required to close by 2200
- **Clubs and fast food restaurants:** Required to close by 0000

Individuals who fail to comply with the curfew times are subject to prosecution. Officers have been deployed to areas including Montego Bay's Flankers, Norwood, and Rose Heights neighbourhoods, the town of Cambridge, and the border between the parishes of St. James and Trelawny. Authorities are conducting searches for criminal suspects and fugitives, as well as firearms and ammunition.

**Analysis:** In addition to the heightened security presence in St. James, traffic delays are likely as authorities search vehicles and individuals alike at checkpoints. Although the majority of the focus appears to be on high-crime residential neighbourhoods, police could also carry out searches in tourist zones. Officials have kept most details of the security operation private, and have not indicated how long the limited state of emergency will remain
in effect; however, increased security and anti-crime operations could continue in the region through the end of January.

Central/South America

BRAZIL (Country Risk Rating: High) - Officials Expand Yellow Fever Vaccine Recommendations in Eastern Region

International health officials issued revised yellow fever (YF) vaccination recommendations for eastern Brazilian states Jan. 16. Suspected and confirmed cases of YF have been reported in areas where YF vaccination had not been previously recommended, including areas of the state of Bahia, all Espirito Santo, the city and state of Rio de Janeiro, and the city and state of Sao Paulo. This is not a requirement, but a recommendation.

Analysis: On Jan. 19, the US CDC issued an "Alert-Level 2" travel health notice due to expanded yellow fever (YF) vaccination recommendations in the states of Bahia, Espirito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, and Sao Paulo. This level encourages travellers to take specific actions and emphasises the need to enhance usual health precautions - in this case, preventing mosquito bites and obtaining a YF vaccination. Global stockpiles of yellow fever vaccine have significantly decreased due to the 2017 Brazil YF outbreak, and the 2016 outbreaks in Angola and the DRC. These events, coupled with a pause in production, have caused a shortage of the vaccine. In times of vaccine shortage, proof of upcoming travel to a yellow fever (YF) risk area may be required to obtain a vaccine. YF vaccination is recommended for all those over the age of nine months in most Brazilian states. YF transmission in Brazil is typically the highest during the December-May rainy season when environmental conditions are ideal for mosquito breeding.

CHILE (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Magnitude-6.3 Earthquake Occurs in Tarapaca Region

A magnitude-6.3 earthquake struck in Chile's Tarapaca Region, about 77 km (47.5 miles) south of Putre at 2206 Jan. 20.

Analysis: The quake occurred at a depth of 110 km (68 miles), likely limiting the overall impact of the shaking. However, the quake's proximity to the city indicates that some damage is possible, though there were not immediate reports of major destruction or injuries. Light-to-moderate shaking may have been felt as far away as Peru's Arequipa Region and La Paz, Bolivia, though the tremor will probably not substantially affect these areas. There have been no reports of significant damage, but some transport and utility disruptions are possible. Traffic disruptions may develop on highways 1, 5, 15, and 16 in the Tarapaca Region. Some interruptions to operations at the Port of Iquique and Diego Aracena International Airport (IQQ) are possible. Offices and other commercial buildings could be evacuated, as authorities conduct building safety inspections. Localised power and telecommunications outages could also occur. Moderate aftershocks are possible and could make buildings unsafe for occupants.

PARAGUAY (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Local Authorities Discover Remains of Kidnapped Dual Mexican-Paraguayan National in San Pedro

Local authorities discovered the remains of a kidnapped dual Mexican-Paraguayan national in San Pedro Department, Paraguay, Jan. 11. The body of the Mennonite farmer was discovered on a ranch in Tacuati, approximately 320 km (200 miles) north of Asuncion. The victim, along with his two children and two labourers, was abducted by the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP) while working on an agricultural settlement in Colonia Manitoba in August 2015. The kidnappers reportedly demanded a ransom of USD 500,000 for his release, though it is unknown whether any money was paid. Some of the other captives are believed to have been released. The victim apparently died shortly after his abduction.

Analysis: The EPP, an armed rebel group with Marxist roots, has been operating in Paraguay's San Pedro Department, and to a lesser degree, the Amambay, Canindeyu, and Concepcion departments, for the last decade. The group has engaged in armed attacks, including shootings and bombings, and has carried out a number of kidnappings in its primary areas of operation. The attacks have targeted police, military, and local
landowners/farmers. The group has sporadically abducted foreign nationals, generally long-term expatriates. Mennonite farmers are a specific target of the EPP, with several high-profile abductions from the community in recent years. The EPP can hold victims hostage for extended periods of time in order to negotiate significant financial settlements and other political concessions. EPP hostages are generally released; however, as this incident illustrates, fatalities are occasionally reported.

Europe

FRANCE (Country Risk Rating: Medium) and GERMANY (Country Risk Rating: Low) - Flight Delays Possible at Airports in Munich and Paris

Flight delays are possible at airports in Munich (MUC) and Paris (ORY) the morning Jan. 22.

- Munich (MUC/EDDM) - Low-to-moderate delays*
- Paris Orly (ORY/LFPO) - Moderate delays*

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

Delay Index

Very High (greater than 45 min)

High (30-45 min)

Moderate (15-30 min)

Low (less than 15 min)

SERBIA (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Elevated Measles Activity Continues in Central Area, Especially Belgrade, during January

Officials report ongoing, elevated measles activity in central Serbia, where an additional 485 cases were identified Dec. 27-Jan. 18, bringing the total to 1,153 cases, including 566 confirmed, since the outbreak began in October 2017. Areas reporting the most cases include Belgrade (408 cases), the city of Nis (201), and the city of Kraljevo in Raska District (120). Cases have also been reported in Jablanica, Macva, North Backa, Pcinja, Podunavlje, and South Backa districts.

Analysis: Measles vaccination coverage in Serbia is approximately 82 percent; according to international officials, an average vaccination rate of 92-95 percent is needed to prevent wider community transmission of measles. Serbia reported just 11 cases nationwide during 2016, and 383 cases during 2015.

Measles spreads through airborne droplets created when an infected individual coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Infected individuals can also expose people around them by contaminating surfaces with secretions from the nose, mouth, and throat. 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. Visit a doctor to ensure vaccination against measles or immunity 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 measles infection, call ahead before visiting a doctor to prevent the spread of the disease at clinics or hospital.
TURKEY (Country Risk Rating: High) - Turkish Tanks Cross into Syria's Afrin Canton from Kilis Province

An unspecified number of Turkish army tanks, reportedly accompanied by T-155 Firtina (Storm) self-propelled howitzers, crossed the border from Kilis Province into Syria's Azaz District during the pre-dawn hours of Jan. 21. The movement is part of Operation Olive Branch - Ankara's newly launched offensive aimed at driving militias linked to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) away from Turkey's southern border. The crossing took place at the Oncupinar Border Gate and came several hours after the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces announced that the long-awaited operation to force YPG-linked militias out of Afrin Canton had begun. The assault was launched at 1700 Jan. 20, with elements of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) moving into Syria from their staging areas in Hatay Province as F-16 ground-attack aircraft conducted air strikes on YPG positions.

Prior to the Jan. 21 incursion by Turkish armour, authorities declared over 20 special security zones in Kilis Province effective 0001 Jan. 21-1700 Feb. 3. According to the provincial governor, the closure areas have been imposed specifically due to concerns over retaliatory strikes by Kurdish fighters or militants during Operation Olive Branch. The provisional special security zones encompass the area between the D410 motorway in the north and the Syrian border in the south, from the Oncupinar Border Gate westward to the Kilis-Gaziantep provincial line. The city of Kilis came under artillery attack, allegedly by Kurdish forces deployed in Syria's Afrin Canton, at about 0130 Jan. 21 when at least three rockets struck two neighbourhoods in the city centre; one death was reported and one building was destroyed in the attack. Kilis city is particularly vulnerable to artillery strikes from northern Syria due to its proximity to the border; further similar attacks are likely.

Analysis: Expect extremely high security in provinces along Turkey's border areas with Syria for the duration of Operation Olive Branch, particularly in Hatay and Kilis. Turkish authorities could impose additional special security zones or military closure areas with little to no advance notice anywhere within the country's troubled southeast, especially if intelligence services detect an upswing in activity by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants.

The YPG is the armed wing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a Kurdish nationalist movement in northern Syria suspected of having close ties to the outlawed PKK in southeastern Turkey. The Turkish government has made no secret of its stance that the YPG/PYD presence in northern Syria poses a threat to national security or of its intent to drive the Kurds away from the two countries' shared border. A joint force composed of Turkish ground units and fighters from the FSA - a Syrian rebel force supported by Turkey - had been staging on the border in Turkey's Hatay Province, just west of Afrin, for at least 36 hours before the start of Operation Olive Branch. On Jan. 19, Turkish forces launched several preparatory artillery strikes into the Kurdish enclave.

The ground incursion into Afrin Canton will likely have second and third-order effects that will reverberate throughout not only northern Syria but likely southern Turkey as well. The Turkish-backed advance into YPG-held areas of Afrin Canton could prompt the PKK to retaliate by escalating its own campaign in southern Turkey, which could see an uptick in hostilities and terror attacks in many major cities, including Adana, Gaziantep, Diyarbakir, and others. The assault on Afrin will also likely strain already-tense relations between Turkey and the US. Although both countries are NATO allies, they have competing objectives in Syria. The US has long been allied with elements of the YPG in the fight against the Islamic State, and recently, US defence officials stated that the creation of a "Syrian Border Security Force" (SBSF) was underway. There appear to be mixed messages from the US administration regarding the exact role of the SBSF, but the force is rumoured to be drawing most of its manpower from Kurdish militias linked to the YPG.

TURKEY (Country Risk Rating: High) - Indefinite Curfew Declared in Areas of Bitlis Province amid Anti-terror Operations

The Office of the Governor of Bitlis Province announced that a 1600-0700 curfew was being imposed in parts of Hizan and Tatvan districts. The measure, which entered into force as of 0001 Jan. 21, has been implemented due to concerns over the potential for attacks by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants. The curfew impacts 16 villages and subdistricts in Hizan, and 11 in the Tatvan district; it will remain in effect until further notice. In an unrelated event, five members of the Batman Gendarmerie Commando Brigade died and 12 others were injured in an avalanche that struck the unit in Bitlis.
Province at about 1230 Jan. 21. The soldiers were conducting a search and detection operation in Hizan district at the time of the incident.

Analysis: Turkish authorities announced Jan. 17 that numerous special security zones would be in force in southern and central districts of Bitlis Province through Jan. 31 as part of a series of anti-terror operations to be conducted by security forces. That order restricts access to over 60 different zones across the Bitlis-Central, Tatvan, Hizan, Mutki, and Guroymak districts. Expect a heavy military and police presence in and around the declared special security zones, particularly in areas that have been placed under curfew. While anti-terror operations will likely consist primarily of locating and destroying weapons/supply caches and remote hide-outs used by PKK militants, sporadic armed clashes between security forces units and insurgent bands remain highly likely. Plan for supply chain disruptions along the D300 and E99 motorways. It remains unclear as yet whether the newly imposed curfews in Bitlis Province stem from concerns over potential increased PKK activity following the start of Operation Olive Branch - Turkey's recent offensive into northern Syria aimed at driving militias linked to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) away from the nation's southern border. Operation Olive Branch was launched at 1700 Jan. 20.

Neither the military nor the gendarmerie have reported any significant armed clashes with PKK militants in Bitlis Province since at least Jan. 1. However, security forces have discovered an unusually high number of hide-outs used by the PKK, as well as caches of weapons, bomb-making supplies, and provisions across the province. Out of the 111 such stashes and shelters found and destroyed across southeastern Turkey since Jan. 1, 61 were uncovered in Bitlis Province. The Turkish administration has routinely used its power to impose curfews and provisional special security zones in various locations within the country's southeastern provinces since hostilities between PKK militants and the Turkish government resumed in 2015 after a two-year ceasefire. While the measures are ostensibly used to limit civilian casualties and the destruction of private property during security operations, they also provide the military and local officials with additional authority. Turkish authorities 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 gendarmerie posts.

TURKEY (Country Risk Rating: High) - Rocket Attack on Reyhanli Kills at least One Person

A rocket attack on the town of Reyhanli in Hatay Province left one person dead and at least 32 others injured Jan. 21. The strike, which was reportedly launched from Syria's Afrin Canton by Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), consisted of three rockets, one of which impacted in the town's Gultepe neighbourhood, with the other two hitting the Cumhuriyet neighbourhood. Reyhanli is located along the Turkish-Syrian border about 38 km (24 miles) east of the Hatay provincial capital Antakya.

Analysis: The attack on Reyhanli is clearly in response to Turkey's Jan. 20 launch of Operation Olive Branch - Ankara's military offensive into northern Syria aimed at driving militias linked to the YPG away from the nation's southern border. Hatay Province was the staging area from which the Turkish military action was initially launched. The attack on Reyhanli is the second retaliatory strike against Turkish soil since Operation Olive Branch began. At about 0130 Jan. 21, the city of Kilis, located about 5 km (3 miles) from the Syrian border in Kilis Province, came under a similar attack, which left at least one person dead. Sporadic small-scale rocket and artillery strikes will likely continue to target areas in Turkey close to the border with Syria during at least the initial phases of Operation Olive Branch. While it is unlikely that Kurdish militias in Afrin Canton possess weaponry with sufficient range to reach cities somewhat deeper inside Turkish territory, such as Antakya (Hatay) or Iskenderun, retaliation in the form of increased attacks by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants operating within Turkey cannot be ruled out.

TURKEY (Country Risk Rating: High) - Special Security Zones in Elazig Province Extended amid Anti-terror Operation
Turkish authorities have extended a declaration imposing 15 special security zones in various parts of Elazig Province through Feb. 4. The measure originally went into effect Dec. 7 as part of a series of anti-terror operations to be conducted by security forces; since that time, officials have been extending it at each expiration date. 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 10 days, neither defence nor law enforcement officials have as yet reported any noteworthy armed clashes with militants or discoveries of weapons caches in Elazig Province per se that may have prompted the extension. Nevertheless, such incidents are routinely reported in neighbouring Tunceli, Diyarbakir, and Bingol provinces. On Jan. 15, 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. 30. 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

ISRAEL (Country Risk Rating: High) and JORDAN (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Authorities Confirm Reopening of Embassy in Amman

Reports emerged Jan. 19 that Israel and Jordan reached a deal to reopen the Israeli Embassy in Amman. Jordan closed the embassy after an Israeli security guard killed two Jordanian citizens in July 2017 and Israel refused to apologise for the incident. A Jordanian government spokesperson stated Jan. 19 that Israel's Foreign Ministry sent a memorandum offering an apology and compensation to the families of the victims.

Analysis: Officials stated that full diplomatic relations would resume immediately, but it is unclear when the embassy will formally reopen. Tel Aviv and Amman have enjoyed strong diplomatic relations. The two countries regularly cooperate on security issues and benefit from mutual, close economic ties. A protracted suspension of ties between the two countries would seriously jeopardise regional security. Jordan is one of only two Arab countries that signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

LEBANON (Country Risk Rating: High) - Authorities Disrupt Islamic State Cell and Foil Attack via Informant

Authorities announced that they disrupted an Islamic State (IS) cell and arrested its members through an informant Jan. 19. Reportedly, in June 2017, officials arrested an Iraqi individual whom IS had trained and sent to Lebanon to carry out
attacks during the country's holidays. Upon the would-be attacker's arrival in Lebanon, security forces detained and turned him into an informant.

**Analysis:** IS' military defeats and territorial losses in Iraq and Syria have motivated the group to reaffirm its relevance by attempting to conduct spectacular attacks. IS' success in drawing new recruits is directly linked to its carrying out high-profile attacks. Lebanon has an extensive border with Syria; one of the spillover effects of the conflict in Syria has been the arrival of more than 1 million refugees. IS has been trying to infiltrate refugee camps and find sympathisers who are willing to stage attacks on its behalf. IS claimed responsibility for a 2015 bombing in Beirut, killing at least 43 people. Since that attack, authorities say they have disrupted and foiled several attacks.

**SAUDI ARABIA (Country Risk Rating: High) - Seven Soldiers Killed in Cross-border Attacks from Yemen**

On Jan. 19, Shi'a Al-Houthi fighters killed seven Saudi soldiers in southern Saudi Arabia during cross-border attacks. In the first incident, rebels shot and killed five Saudi soldiers outside the village of Hamezah, Jazan Province. Afterwards, near Raqabat Al-Zour military base in Najran, rebel fighters killed two Saudi soldiers.

**Analysis:** The incidents cannot be independently confirmed, and Saudi officials have not reported on the deaths. Violence along the border region has been an ongoing issue since the Saudi-led campaign against the Al-Houthi rebels in Yemen began in March 2015. Cross-border gunfire, shelling, rocket fire, and raids often strike southern areas of Saudi Arabia; more than 150 Saudis - including civilians - have been killed. The Al-Houthis also possess an unknown number of ballistic missiles and launchers that belonged to the Yemeni military and have launched several missiles into southern Saudi Arabia. The Royal Saudi Air Defence Forces (RSADF) have been effective at minimising the ballistic missile threat inside Saudi Arabia. However, those countermeasures are largely ineffective against many of the shorter-range mortars and rockets more commonly used by the rebels along the border.

**SYRIA (Country Risk Rating: Extreme) - Turkish Tanks Cross into Syria's Afrin Canton from Kilis Province**

An unspecified number of Turkish army tanks, reportedly accompanied by T-155 *Firtina* (Storm) self-propelled howitzers, crossed the border from Kilis Province into Syria's Azaz District during the pre-dawn hours of Jan. 21. The movement is part of Operation Olive Branch - Ankara's newly launched offensive aimed at driving militias linked to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) away from Turkey's southern border. The crossing took place at the Oncupinar Border Gate and came several hours after the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces announced that the long-awaited operation to force YPG-linked militias out of Afrin Canton had begun. The assault was launched at 1700 Jan. 20, with elements of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) moving into Syria from their staging areas in Hatay Province as F-16 ground-attack aircraft conducted air strikes on YPG positions.

Prior to the Jan. 21 incursion by Turkish armour, authorities declared over 20 special security zones in Kilis Province effective 0001 Jan. 21-1700 Feb. 3. According to the provincial governor, the closure areas have been imposed specifically due to concerns over retaliatory strikes by Kurdish fighters or militants during Operation Olive Branch. The provisional special security zones encompass the area between the D410 motorway in the north and the Syrian border in the south, from the Oncupinar Border Gate westward to the Kilis-Gaziantep provincial line. The city of Kilis came under artillery attack, allegedly by Kurdish forces deployed in Syria's Afrin Canton, at about 0130 Jan. 21 when at least three rockets struck two neighbourhoods in the city centre; one death was reported and one building was destroyed in the attack. Kilis city is particularly vulnerable to artillery strikes from northern Syria due to its proximity to the border; further similar attacks are likely.

**Analysis:** Expect extremely high security in provinces along Turkey's border areas with Syria for the duration of Operation Olive Branch, particularly in Hatay and Kilis. Turkish authorities could impose additional special security zones or military closure areas with little to no advance notice anywhere within the country's troubled southeast, especially if intelligence services detect an upswing in activity by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants.

The YPG is the armed wing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a Kurdish nationalist movement in northern Syria suspected of having close ties to the outlawed PKK in southeastern Turkey. The Turkish government has made
no secret of its stance that the YPG/PYD presence in northern Syria poses a threat to national security or of its intent to drive the Kurds away from the two countries' shared border. A joint force composed of Turkish ground units and fighters from the FSA - a Syrian rebel force supported by Turkey - had been staging on the border in Turkey's Hatay Province, just west of Afrin, for at least 36 hours before the start of Operation Olive Branch. On Jan. 19, Turkish forces launched several preparatory artillery strikes into the Kurdish enclave.

The ground incursion into Afrin Canton will likely have second and third-order effects that will reverberate throughout not only northern Syria but likely southern Turkey as well. The Turkish-backed advance into YPG-held areas of Afrin Canton could prompt the PKK to retaliate by escalating its own campaign in southern Turkey, which could see an uptick in hostilities and terror attacks in many major cities, including Adana, Gaziantep, Diyarbakir, and others. The assault on Afrin will also likely strain already-tense relations between Turkey and the US. Although both countries are NATO allies, they have competing objectives in Syria. The US has long been allied with elements of the YPG in the fight against the Islamic State, and recently, US defence officials stated that the creation of a "Syrian Border Security Force" (SBSF) was underway. There appear to be mixed messages from the US administration regarding the exact role of the SBSF, but the force is rumoured to be drawing most of its manpower from Kurdish militias linked to the YPG.

North America

CANADA (Country Risk Rating: Low) and UNITED STATES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Winter Storm Causing Snow, Transport Disruptions in Parts of Central US, Ontario and Quebec

A winter storm is bringing heavy snow and gusty winds to parts of the US Intermountain West, Great Plains, and Upper Midwest, and Canada's Ontario Province Jan. 22. The US National Weather Service (NWS) maintains winter storm warnings, winter weather advisories, and blizzards warnings for parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Environment Canada issued special weather statements and various winter warnings for forecast areas in Ontario and Quebec provinces.

Analysis: The highest snowfall totals of 30-45 cm (12-18 inches) are likely in the higher elevations of Colorado and parts of central and southern Wyoming; 15-30 cm (6-12 inches) of snow is possible from the Denver metropolitan area northeastward into parts of central Nebraska, southeastern South Dakota, northwestern Iowa, southern Minnesota, northern Wisconsin, northern Michigan, and parts of Ontario and Quebec. Lesser accumulations of 5-10 cm (2-4 inches) are expected along the northern and southern extent of the affected area. Gusty winds could develop, which might create periods of whiteout conditions. Heavy snow and gusty winds could bring down branches and utility lines; sporadic power outages are possible.

Transport
Blowing and drifting snow could greatly reduce visibility throughout the affected area. Heavy snowfall will likely cause transport disruptions along area highways, including portions of the I-25, I-29, I-35, I-43, I-70, I-76, I-80, I-90, and I-94 corridors in the US. Similar disruptions are possible along the Trans-Canada Highway and provincial routes in Ontario and Quebec. Authorities could close roads temporarily due to snow removal operations and accidents. Strong winds could pose a hazard to high-profile vehicles. Chain laws will likely be enforced for commercial vehicles in the higher elevations of the US Intermountain West.

Low ceilings, reduced visibility, and deicing operations could also cause flight delays and cancellations throughout the affected area, including at airports serving Casper (CPR), Denver (DEN), Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP), Omaha (OMA), Rapid City (RAP), Sudbury (YSB), Toronto (YYZ), and Ottawa (YOW).

MEXICO (Country Risk Rating: High) - Investigation Continues into the Abduction of Four Colombians and Murder of One in Cancun

According to reports, the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mexican authorities are investigating the alleged abduction of four Colombian nationals, and the subsequent murder of at least one, in Cancun, Quintana Roo State, Jan.
19. The four victims, at least one of whom was reportedly involved in illegal loansharking activity, were abducted in Cancun Dec. 18, 2017. Several days later, the decapitated body of one of the kidnap victims was discovered on Nichupte Avenue in Cancun, supposedly threatening those affiliated with the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG). However, it has been reported that the illegal loan organisation affiliated to the deceased, falls under the protection of the Tlahuac Cartel, a branch of the Beltran-Leyva Organisation (BLO).

Analysis: Illicit activities, such as loan sharking, are a common modus operandi of criminal groups affiliated with drug-trafficking organisations (DTOs) in Mexico; cartels use these informal criminal networks to generate revenue and launder money. The murder of one of the kidnap victims, in this case, is also indicative of methods employed by DTOs. The threat that DTOs post to foreigners in Cancun is largely incidental. Those who fall victim to DTO activities are for the most part locals or those who with links to crime groups in Mexico. In addition, the majority of DTO-related violence occurs on the periphery of Cancun, outside of tourist areas.

MEXICO (Country Risk Rating: High) - Magnitude-6.3 Earthquake Strikes off the Coast of Baja California

A magnitude-6.3 earthquake struck off the coast of Baja California, approximately 77 km (47 miles) north-northeast of Loreto at 0917 Jan. 19. The temblor struck at a depth of 10 km (6.2 miles). Weak to light shaking was likely felt throughout the Baja Peninsula and in the western portions of Sinaloa and Sonora states. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. Authorities did not issue a tsunami warning for the quake.

Analysis: Moderate aftershocks are possible in the region over the coming days. Ground and air transport delays in areas near the epicentre are possible as crews inspect infrastructure for potential damage.

MEXICO (Country Risk Rating: High) - One Person Injured in Shooting Incident near Hotel in Puerto Vallarta

One person was injured in an attack near the Canto del Sol Hotel in Puerto Vallarta at about 1100 Jan. 19. Reports indicate that the victim was in a car when the assailants - who were riding a motorcycle - shot him before fleeing the area. Some local sources have said that the victim is a South African national; police have not confirmed the victim’s nationality. No other people were harmed in the incident.

Analysis: While violent crimes do occur in Puerto Vallarta, they typically occur in low-income, residential neighbourhoods; shootings and homicides of foreigners are rare. Reports suggested that the shooting was linked to a robbery attempt. The circumstances of the crime suggest that the victim was targeted specifically, rather than being wounded as a result of collateral damage during a larger confrontation. Although criminals rarely target foreigners for violent crimes, they will use force if the victims fight back or resist during a robbery or pickpocketing attempt.

UNITED STATES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Authorities Closely Monitoring Slow-moving Landslide near Union Gap, Wash.

As of mid-January, over 100 instruments are monitoring a slow-moving landslide on Rattlesnake Ridge near Union Gap, Washington. Authorities noticed cracks on the ridge located south of Yakima in October 2017; the 8-hectare (20-acre) area of rock and soil has accelerated to the south at a rate of approximately 0.5 metres (1.6 feet) per week. Dozens of houses below the ridge have been evacuated as a precaution, and mining operations at an adjacent quarry have been suspended indefinitely.

Analysis: According to the rate of slippage, the ridge could fail by early March, or possibly sooner. The most likely landslide scenario would result in the collection of most of the rock and soil in the mining quarry to the south of the ridge; however, debris along the western edge of the landslide could threaten to block a local road. Another outcome resulting from a sudden and catastrophic failure of the ridge could lead to the blockage of Interstate 82 and a potential dam failure/widespread flooding along the Yakima River. Although these incidents are less likely, authorities have established contingency plans to mitigate potential disruptions; emergency detour routes have been created for traffic along I-82 should the vital corridor need to be closed for an extended period of time. The
monitoring devices placed on and around Rattlesnake Ridge should give officials some forewarning of an impending failure.

**UNITED STATES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Health Officials Report Measles Exposures in Cook County, Ill.**

On Jan. 17, health officials reported that a person infected with measles visited the following locations while contagious:

- **Chicago**: Terminal 5 at O'Hare International Airport (ORD) 0830-1200 Jan. 9
- **Evanston**: Evanston Hospital Emergency Department 2300 Jan. 10 - 0120 Jan. 11
- **Park Ridge**: Advocate Lutheran General Hospital Emergency Department 1515 Jan. 11 - 0215 Jan. 13
- **Skokie**: Concourse Office Plaza 1100-1400 Jan. 10 and Skokie Hospital Emergency Department 2350 Jan. 10 - 0330 Jan. 11

Officials state that this measles case is not related to the case reported at O'Hare International Airport (ORD) Jan. 14 and that both individuals did not become infected while at the airport.

**Analysis:** Measles is a very contagious viral disease. The virus spreads through airborne droplets created when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can survive up to two hours in an airspace or on a surface where an infected person has coughed or sneezed. Symptoms of measles can develop up to 21 days after exposure and typically begin with a fever, runny nose, sore throat, red eyes, and/or cough, followed by a rash that spreads all over the body. Infected individuals are most contagious five days before and four days after the measles rash erupts. Recovery generally occurs within 10-14 days, but serious complications, including pneumonia, may occur. Complications are most likely in children younger than five years old, adults older than 20 years, and people whose immune systems are weakened by other acute or chronic health conditions. Symptoms of measles can develop up to 21 days after exposure. Therefore, individuals who visited these locations during or within two hours after the listed times, and who have not been vaccinated against measles or do not know their vaccination status, should monitor themselves for symptoms until approximately Feb. 3.

**UNITED STATES (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Mudslide-related Evacuation Orders Remain in Effect in Montecito, Calif.**

Search and recovery operations continue in the Montecito area of Santa Barbara County, California. As of Jan. 21, police have confirmed that 21 people have died and 28 others were injured as a result of the major mudslides that occurred Jan. 9. Teams are still searching for two missing individuals. The mudslides damaged or destroyed over 450 residential and commercial structures; damage inspections are still ongoing. The following areas remain under a mandatory evacuation order:

- **Unincorporated parts of Santa Barbara County, Montecito, Summerland, and Carpinteria:** includes areas north of SR-192 to the US Forest Service Boundary, east of Cold Springs Road to Toro Canyon Road, south of SR-192 to the Pacific Ocean, and east of Sycamore Canyon Road/Hot Springs Road/Oak Road/Olive Mill Road to Ortega Ridge Road.

The Santa Barbara County Health Officer has closed public access to ocean waters until further notice. Beaches that are closed include East Beach at Mission Creek, East Beach at Sycamore Creek, El Capitan State Beach, Goleta Beach, Butterfly Beach, Hammond Beach, Carpinteria State Beach, and Rincon Beach.

Most of Montecito remains without natural gas and potable water. County officials have stated that natural gas will likely remain shut off for several days while crews repair damage to the distribution system. As of Jan. 21, approximately 1,300 customers are without power in the Montecito area. A boil water notice has been issued for the Montecito Water District.
until further notice; bottled water is being distributed for affected customers at the Montecito Fire Station and the Summerland post office between 0800-2000.

Transport
The flooding and mudslides have resulted in ground transport disruptions throughout Santa Barbara County. The following roads remain closed:

- **SR-192**: Closed from the SR-144 junction to the SR-150 junction
- Numerous local roads in the Montecito area

The US 101 road has reopened the morning Jan. 22, after crews worked to clear drainage systems along the road and repair guardrails. Some off-ramps will remain closed in both directions for several days. It will likely take several weeks to reopen local roads in the Montecito area that are blocked by mud and debris.

South Pacific/Oceania
FIJI (Country Risk Rating: Medium) - Ground Staff at Nadi International Airport Return to Work

Air Terminal Services (ATS) workers at Nadi International Airport (NAN) returned to work Jan. 22. The move came after the Employee Relations Tribunal ordered ATS management to facilitate the return of its staff to work by 1300 Jan. 22. The management said that it welcomed the tribunal's decision but was still considering legal actions and other measures to prevent disruptions to ATS services in the future.

Analysis: The labour dispute between management and ATS workers started Dec. 16, when the workers launched a three-hour strike that management deemed illegal. Following the labour action, ATS refused to allow the workers to return to the job until they signed a declaration acknowledging the work stoppage as illegal and agreeing to disciplinary action, which they refused to do. Contingency plans largely mitigated the lockout; management brought in replacement workers, easing disruptions to check-in procedures, baggage handling, and in-flight catering services.