

July 15, 2024

Headlining This Week's Brief

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Top Stories

Republican National Convention Kicks Off in Milwaukee Following Trump Assassination Attempt

Former President Donald Trump was injured in an assassination attempt while speaking at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13, an incident that is certain to have significant ramifications for the current presidential race. Demonstrations in support of Trump, while relatively muted since the attack, are likely in the coming days as supporters rally around him; however, widespread, violent protest activity is not currently expected. Nevertheless, tensions in the country are likely to be exacerbated by the shooting, and there is a heightened risk of additional incidents of political violence in the coming months.

The Republican National Convention (RNC) began today in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Trump is expected to participate. Following the shooting, authorities enhanced security efforts in the city by expanding access controls and creating "buffer zones" near event venues. Demonstrations against the event are anticipated and may be met with counter-protests, setting up potential confrontations between opposing groups.

Enhanced Threat of Damaging Winds in Chicago, Surrounding Areas Late Monday

The **Storm Prediction Center** has issued an enhanced Level 3 (five-tier scale) severe thunderstorm risk across eastern Iowa, northern Illinois, and Northwest Indiana. Large population centers threatened include Chicago, Aurora, Rockford, Naperville, and Joliet. The

latest guidance indicates that a line of intensifying storms will race across Northwest Illinois between 5 pm and 8 pm. Afterward, further acceleration into Chicago and the surrounding areas is anticipated between 8 pm and 11 pm. Damaging wind gusts between 60-80mph will be a common hazard. Scattered power outages and airport ground stops are probable. The last 24 hours have been quite busy, with dozens of reports of 50-70mph wind gusts across northern Illinois. Chicago Midway Airport clocked a 60mph wind gust as severe storms rolled through shortly after 10:30 pm Sunday. A radar-indicated **tornado warning** was briefly issued for over one million residents, though there was never any confirmation.

Heat Focused Across Eastern U.S. Through Wednesday, Returns to the West by Late Week

Excessive heat alerts are focused from the Plains through the Eastern Seaboard. Tuesday into Wednesday, Level 4 (four-tier scale) **NWS HeatRisk** is forecast across Nashville, Charlotte, Raleigh, Richmond, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston. D.C. highs could reach 101F, whereas New York City may top out in the mid-90s. Impacts are likely in most health systems, heat-sensitive industries, and infrastructure. Meanwhile, across the West, temperatures lowered to more typical levels over the weekend after weeks of excessive heat; however, the change in the weather pattern has resulted in scattered dry thunderstorms and more lightning-caused fires. The respite in severe heat is also going to be short-lived, with well-above-normal temperatures likely to return July 18-22, likely resulting in a further uptick in western fire activity. Meanwhile, across interior western Canada, worsening heat and **fire conditions** are expected throughout the week.

Over 140 Reportedly Killed in Israeli Airstrike Targeting Hamas Commander

On Saturday, July 13, Israel **conducted** airstrikes on Al-Mawasi, a designated safe zone in southern Gaza, in an operation targeting Mohammed Deif, the commander of Hamas's military wing and one of the most senior commanders in the organization. While Deif's fate is currently unknown, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, over 140 Palestinians were **killed**, and another 400 were injured in the attack. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas **condemned** both Israel and Hamas for the ongoing violence, attributing the recent deadly attack in Gaza to both entities and highlighting the internal tensions between his Fatah faction and Hamas. On the northern front, Hezbollah intensified its operations, **claiming** to have launched multiple attacks on Israeli positions over the weekend, including on the IDF's 91st Division command headquarters. This Friday, the International Court of Justice is expected to **deliver** its opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territories. The ruling, which is in response to a 2022 request from the United Nations General Assembly and is separate from the **genocide** case filed by South Africa, could nonetheless increase pressure on Israeli leaders to agree to a ceasefire. However, Israel has ignored similar rulings in the past, and ceasefire talks have again **stalled**.

Climate and Natural Hazards

- **200,000 Texans Still Without Power One Week After Beryl:** Hurricane Beryl made landfall southwest of Houston last Monday, resulting in power outages for approximately 2.7 million customers. As of Monday morning, over 200,000 customers are still without power. **CenterPoint Energy** has restored power to over 90% of affected customers, and over **14,000 personnel** are still working in the area. Afternoon heat indices will continue to peak between 100-105F, prompting officials to maintain **cooling centers** for those in need.
- **Southwest Monsoon Enhancing Rainfall Across India:** In recent days, **landslides** and **water-logging** have caused transportation disruption across southwestern India, including Mumbai. The **India Meteorological Department** placed parts of the subdivisions of Gujarat, Madhya Maharashtra, coastal and southern interior Karnataka, Kerala, and Konkan and Goa under a maximum Red Level 3 Heavy Rainfall Alert through at least Tuesday. The Red Alert may be extended as multi-day rainfall totals between 300-400mm (12-16in) are expected through at least Thursday. Above-normal rainfall is likely along much of the West Coast and interior central and southern India through Saturday.
- **West Pacific Tropical Storm Activity on the Rise:** Tropical Depression Three briefly strengthened before moving into Vietnam earlier Monday, suspending ferry services and **stranding tourists**. On its heels, multiple areas of disturbed weather and weak rotation are evident (**satellite**) across the South China Sea, the Philippines, and the Philippine Sea. Over the next week, above-normal rainfall, flood, and landslide risk will continue across the southern and central Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Additionally, there is a moderate threat of at least one additional tropical storm formation, though the exact timing and placement are largely uncertain, given varying model disagreements.

Worldwide

- **Kenya's Anti-Tax Protest Movement Calls for Action This Tuesday:** Kenya is expected to see another week of widespread demonstrations despite efforts by Kenya's President William Ruto to appease activist groups. The youth-led protest movement is calling on supporters to demonstrate in urban areas nationwide on Tuesday, July 16, to demand Ruto's resignation. Ruto **dismissed** all members of his Cabinet last week, save the foreign minister and deputy president, and vowed to form a "broad-based government." The protests, sparked by a controversial finance bill, have led to the deaths of 39 people and hundreds of injuries since June. Last week's protest prompted the U.S. to **issue** a demonstration alert, advising constituents that even peaceful gatherings "can turn violent at any moment."
- **NATO Summit Focused on Bolstering Ukraine's Defenses, Countering Russia:** The 2024 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit wrapped up last week with a

joint statement that Ukraine is on an “**irreversible path**” to future membership, though not until the war with Russia is over. NATO allies pledged over \$43 billion in military aid to Ukraine and U.S.-built **F-16 fighter jets**, which will be in use this summer. The U.S. also **pledged** to send long-range missiles to Germany in 2026, signaling that the security alliance sees Russia as a growing threat beyond its war in Ukraine. While NATO demonstrated unified support for Ukraine, Spain and Türkiye **criticized** their allies for largely ignoring the war in Gaza in discussions at the summit. Also missing from the NATO joint communique was any reference to Georgia, whose hopes of membership were damaged after lawmakers in Tbilisi passed its controversial “**foreign agents**” law earlier this year.

- **Taiwan to Improve Civil Defenses Amid Heightened Threats From China:** Taiwan’s government has **proposed** strengthening communication infrastructure and stockpiling food, among other measures, in response to concerns that tensions with China may escalate to open conflict. Taiwan’s Defense Ministry **detected** a record number of Chinese warplanes around the island last week, and dozens reportedly crossed the Taiwan Strait’s median line. Taiwan also reported “multiple waves” of missile tests in northern China over the weekend. Further displays of military readiness are likely leading up to Taiwan’s annual **Han Kuang military exercise**, which tests the nation’s combat readiness and kicks off next Monday. Taiwan and China have been at a diplomatic standstill since the election of President Lai Ching-te. Additionally, NATO’s joint communique mentioned above targeted China with harsh rhetoric, calling the country a “**decisive enabler**” of Russia.
- **Michoacán Hit With Wave of Cartel Violence:** A group of activists in Michoacán is calling on authorities to protect civilians after an **escalation of cartel violence** in the state. Clashes between the military and suspected members of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) in Tangancícuaro on July 6 left seven assailants dead and two civilians injured. Days later, an armed group **attacked** the municipal police headquarters in the city of Purépero. Elsewhere in Mexico, gunmen **killed** a fisheries industry leader in Baja California who had spoken out against cartel operations in the fishing sector. Early last week, federal forces **detained** “R8,” head of security for Aureliano Guzmán, the brother of El Chapo Guzmán and a leader in the Sinaloa Cartel. The operation took place in the mountainous area between Sinaloa and Durango.
- **Mogadishu Rocked by Multiple Violent Incidents:** Two major attacks occurred in Mogadishu this weekend, highlighting the city’s persistent insecurity. Yesterday, a car bomb **detonated** at the Top Coffee restaurant in central Mogadishu, killing several people who had gathered to watch the Euro 2024 soccer final. Al-Shabab has taken credit for the attack, which has reportedly resulted in at least nine deaths so far. The previous day, at least eight people were killed in a **clash** between security forces and inmates at the capital’s main prison when armed inmates linked to al-Shabab attempted to escape. The incident was **reportedly** thwarted by security forces

Cyber and Regulatory

- **AT&T Reveals Massive Data Breach:** AT&T **revealed** a data breach that exposed call and text message records of “nearly all” of its cellular customers' records from May 1 to October 31, 2022, a tally that ultimately **encompasses** roughly 110 million people, including non-AT&T customers. Some data was from as recent as January 2023. The breach involved telephone numbers, call interactions, durations, and, in some cases, estimated location data, but not the content or timestamps of communications. The company has blamed the breach on unauthorized access to **Snowflake**, making it the latest and most significant breach of the third-party cloud platform, which is struggling with the fallout of a cyberattack that resulted in stolen data from several of its customers. The U.S. Justice Department delayed public disclosure of the breach due to national security concerns. AT&T has said that it will notify users whose data was compromised.
- **Indian Government Warns of New Cyberattack Targeting Apple Users:** The Indian government’s cyber agency, Cyberdost, is **alerting** Apple users about a transnational scam using iMessage to send fraudulent messages. Scammers **claim** an issue with delivering a package due to a wrong address, urging users to click a link to update their information within 24 hours. The link leads to fake websites or malicious downloads, compromising user security. Cyberdost advises against clicking suspicious links or sharing personal information and encourages reporting such messages.
- **Joint Advisory Reveals Disrupted AI-Enhanced Russian Disinformation Campaign:** The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in collaboration with partner agencies in Canada and the Netherlands, disrupted a Russian **disinformation campaign** that utilized software to create social media personas that appear authentic. Since 2022, individuals affiliated with RT, a Russian state-sponsored media organization, have used an AI-enhanced software package named **Meliorator** to generate and manage nearly 1,000 accounts on X (formerly known as Twitter) to spread disinformation. The bots posed as Americans and spread propaganda in support of the Kremlin and its operations until their recent suspension. The joint advisory **warns** that Meliorator’s code indicates an intent to expand the software’s capabilities to other social media platforms.
- **Microsoft Ordering Employees in China to Drop Android Over Security Concerns:** Microsoft is **instructing** its employees in China only to use iPhones and move away from Android devices for work as the company seeks to shore up its defenses against cyberattacks. The move is part of an effort to ensure all users use the Microsoft Authenticator password manager and Identity Pass app. Since Google Mobile Services, including the Play Store, aren’t available in China, Apple’s App Store is the only location where Microsoft employees can download the required apps to access corporate resources. Androids are still permitted for personal use.

- **Germany to Restrict Huawei, ZTE Parts in 5G Networks:** Germany is **planning** a two-step process to bar the use of critical components manufactured by Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE in its 5G telecommunications networks. Beginning in 2026, critical components from Huawei and ZTE will not be allowed in 5G core networks, according to Interior Minister Nancy Faeser. By the end of 2029, “critical management systems” in 5G access and transport networks from Huawei and ZTE will be replaced by the end of 2029.

Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **Protests Likely After Serbian Court Opens Way for Disputed Lithium Mining Project:** Serbia’s top court opened the way for a **disputed Rio Tinto lithium mining project** to move forward, ruling against the government’s efforts to stop it. The Serbian government decided to revoke permits awarded to Rio Tinto following **massive demonstrations in Belgrade** in 2022; activists said the mine represents a permanent danger to the environment. Several hundred people **rallied in front of the constitutional court** on Thursday before the decision was released. This latest move is all but certain to spark new protests. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić suggested the mine could begin operations as soon as 2028 based on new assurances from Rio Tinto. Its Jadar project could yield enough lithium to produce around a million electric vehicles.
- **Court Ruling Could Permit New Reservoir for Panama Canal:** As conditions **continue to improve** along the Panama Canal, officials are **developing** contingency plans to prevent a repeat of the forced reductions in traffic that **plagued** the waterway over the past several months during a drought. Panama’s Supreme Court recently issued a ruling to reinterpret a 2006 regulation prohibiting the canal from drawing water from outside its traditional watershed. The newly defined watershed “gives the Panama Canal a territorial assurance we did not have before,” said canal administrator Ricaurte Vásquez. Authorities would still need to consult with and get permission from inhabitants of the new site around the Indio River basin, where approximately 12,000 people live. Managers of the waterway said the project could take six years.
- **Increased Risks to South Korean Airspace From North Korean Tampering:** Rising tensions sprouting from **a trash balloon campaign, various missile launches, and the emergence of GPS spoofing** are complicating airline operations in Korea, according to aviation experts. International organization OPSGROUP shared flight risk information and stated **in a June bulletin** that “the risk situation seems to be getting worse” while “airspace safety is gradually deteriorating.” Korean Air Lines has adapted procedures to deal with balloon flights over Incheon, where the balloons have shut down operations several times since May. If northerly winds are expected, the airline adds fuel to flight plans so aircraft can stay airborne longer or divert. Pilots must also contend with increased signs of interference to the GPS network they use for navigation. A Center for Strategic and International Studies director said, “This could

lead pilots to drift off course, with the risk of straying into North Korean airspace.” Between May 29 and June 2, the South Korean government said 500 planes and hundreds of ships experienced GPS problems.

- **Cargo Vessels Face Severe Storm Conditions off South African Coast:** Supply chain delays caused by diversions around the Red Sea **to avoid Houthi rebel attacks** find themselves further delayed by extreme weather along the southern tip of Africa, including high winds and monster waves, according to **logistics companies and commodity analysts**. One vessel ran aground, and another lost more than 40 containers overboard recently. Since late November, vessel diversions around the Red Sea have added 10 days or more to voyages between Europe and Asia. Several ports **are experiencing congestion** as shipping volumes increase, forcing ships to anchor at sea for days. Flexport CEO Ryan Petersen said, “About 600 container ships routing around Africa [...] could be impacted by the extreme weather.”
- **Global Food Markets at the Mercy of Extreme Weather:** Bloomberg **issued a roundup** showcasing the latest impacts on agriculture markets in the face of weather events around the world. Poor growing conditions in South America and Asia hurt output, lifting the price of coffee. Beneficial rains from Hurricane Beryl made U.S. corn and soybeans cheaper, while climate change-related extreme events in China will place crops at risk. West African cocoa harvests were decimated by unfavorable weather, and in India, the government **is considering** whether to ease rice export limits and aid world buyers. In France, heavy downpours and the resultant four-year low soft-wheat harvest could threaten to restrict exports to Africa and the Middle East.

Health

- **Avian Influenza Outbreaks, Human Cases Reported Globally:** In the U.S., officials **continue** to discover H5N1 in dairy cows and poultry, with the total of infected herds now exceeding 150 since March. On Sunday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **confirmed** four new human cases of bird flu, bringing the total associated with this current outbreak to nine. All the new cases were in poultry workers who had direct contact with infected birds. Elsewhere, Cambodia has also **reported** two new human cases, both in children exposed to dead poultry. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) **recommended** increased vigilance in response to the continued outbreak.
- **Dengue Virus Cases Continue to Rise in the U.S.:** Dengue virus cases are **increasing** in the U.S., with over 200 infections reported in New York and New Jersey this year, according to the **CDC**, which issued a **health alert** for the virus at the end of June. The total number of cases in the U.S. has topped 2,500, with the vast majority (1,724) coming from Puerto Rico. In the continental U.S., Florida (218) has reported the highest number. The CDC is working closely with state health departments to mitigate further spread.

- **Mpox Cases Nearly Triple in U.S.:** Recorded cases of mpox (formerly known as monkeypox) in the U.S. in 2024 are already nearly triple what was seen in 2023, according to data from the **CDC**. So far, 1,374 cases have been observed, compared to 584 last year. Health officials are urging people who may be at risk to get **vaccinated**. Last week, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the global epicenter of the current epidemic, at least 25 **cases** of a new, more dangerous strain of mpox were identified in Goma, mainly within displacement camps.
- **Rising Whooping Cough Cases and Vaccination Efforts in the U.K.:** The U.K. is seeing a rise in whooping cough cases, with 2,591 confirmed in May, according to the U.K. Health Security Agency (**UKHSA**). The May numbers are part of a trend of increased whooping cough cases across England dating back to December 2023. The disease is most dangerous for young babies, with nine infant deaths reported since November of 2023. Pregnant women are urged to get vaccinated between 20 and 32 weeks to protect their newborns. The National Health Service (NHS) is boosting local vaccination initiatives to address the decrease in vaccine uptake among pregnant women.
- **Notable Measles Incidents and Warnings:** The New York City Health Department **reported** 11 measles cases this year after reporting none from 2020-2022 and only one last year, raising concerns about further spread. On the opposite coast, **officials** in Oregon reported two new measles cases. In Macomb County, Michigan, **authorities** identified two locations with possible measles exposure after a child was confirmed to have the disease, the state's sixth case this year. Additionally, Arlington, Virginia, **warned** residents of potential measles exposure at a local grocery store.

Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **France Facing Busy Protest Week:** On Tuesday, activists in France opposed to **water storage projects** known as "mega-basins" will begin a protest camp in the western town of Melle. Thousands are expected to convoy from across the country before **launching** a demonstration in the Saint-Sauvant Forest in Vienne Friday and a port blockade action in La Rochelle Saturday. Previous demonstrations against the water storage projects have resulted in **violent clashes**. France will also see **demonstrations** by railway workers outside prefecture offices nationwide on Thursday, and Paris airports are expected to be beset by **strike action** on Wednesday.
- **Notable Climate Demonstrations Ahead:** This week, demonstrators running a campaign against CitiBank will return to the company's headquarters in **Manhattan** on Thursday for a rally at 9 am. Several activists were **arrested** last week at a related protest. Germany's Letzte Generation, known for its road-blocking actions, will hold its next major "disobedient gathering" in **Bremen** on Saturday starting from Bahnhofplatz at noon. Looking further out, Extinction Rebellion France continues to gear up for a "mass civil disobedience" action the day after the Olympic opening ceremony in **Paris**. And while specific details remain unknown, groups from the A22 Network have

indicated they intend to hold protests at airports in eight countries, including the U.S., this summer.

- **Notable Demonstrations Related to Middle East Conflict This Week:** London, again, is expected to be a primary site of interest for pro-Palestine demonstrations this week as the U.K. Parliament marks the **formal start of its year** on Wednesday. Youth Demand, which led a protest Saturday in the capital that blocked traffic at Marble Arch, is calling for supporters to gather at Victoria Embankment at 9:30 am that morning. The next “National March for Palestine” is set for Saturday in neighboring Ireland, starting from **Dublin’s** Garden of Remembrance at 1 pm. In the U.S., demonstrators will be out early in the week in Texas, with activists in **Austin** gathering at the Texas Capitol at 6 pm today and those in the **Dallas** area set to target a General Dynamics office in Garland Tuesday at 6 pm.
- **Multiple Countries to See Strikes in Healthcare Sector:** The Federation of Greek Hospital Doctors' Associations is calling for its members to **strike** nationwide on Tuesday and protest at the health ministry in **Athens** over a proposed psychiatric reform bill. Meanwhile, unrest in **Morocco’s** health sector was exacerbated last week after a **demonstration** led by health professionals in Rabat ended with police deploying water cannons on participants. An alliance of unions has called for two five-day strikes from July 15-19 and July 22-26. Protests are expected to accompany the actions. Finally, the main association representing physicians and other medical professionals in Peru has called for a national strike on Wednesday and Thursday.
- **Students Seize Roads in Bangladesh Over Government Job Quotas:** Earlier today, the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka issued a Demonstration Alert over continuing protests in Bangladesh connected to government job quotas, warning that the situation was becoming “increasingly volatile.” Demonstrations **touched off** last week after a court reinstated the quotas, previously dropped in 2018, with activists blocking key roads in Dhaka and elsewhere across the country. Following the activity, the Supreme Court **decided** to suspend the system for one month temporarily; however, widespread protests continued throughout the week and into Monday, when significant clashes were **reported** in the capital between supporters of the current government and those opposed to the quotas. Further demonstrations and clashes are likely as the unrest persists.

Upcoming Events

- July 15: General Elections (Rwanda)
- July 15-18: Republic Party National Convention (Milwaukee, WI)
- July 17: Ashura (Global) - *Date of observance may vary based on location*
- July 22-26: Han Kuang Military Exercise (Taiwan)
- July 26-September 8: Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games (France)
- July 28: Presidential Elections (Venezuela)