

July 22, 2024

Headlining This Week's Brief

Top Stories

Climate and Natural Hazards
Worldwide
Cyber and Regulatory
Infrastructure and Supply Chain
Health
Demonstrations and Industrial Action
Upcoming Events

Top Stories

Upheal in D.C. as Biden Withdraws from Presidential Race and Demonstrators Prepare to Welcome Netanyahu

On Sunday, following weeks of pressure from other Democrats and donors, United States President Joe Biden withdrew his bid for the presidency. The move has led to uncertainty for the Democratic Party as they look to appoint a new challenger to take on former President Donald Trump. While several major media outlets have **called** for an open process to seek a replacement, the lone candidate at this time is Vice President Kamala Harris, whom Biden strongly endorsed in his **withdrawal statement**. Other **prominent Democrats** have also come out in support of Harris. Harris' team has reportedly been **reaching** out to delegates pledged to Biden to encourage them to back her candidacy at the Democratic National Convention, which begins August 19 in Chicago.

Biden's withdrawal comes just days before a planned visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which is expected to draw significant demonstration activity. Netanyahu is **scheduled** to meet with Biden at the White House on Tuesday before addressing Congress on Wednesday. A primary protest is planned at the U.S. Capitol building on Wednesday at 11 am, where several pro-Palestine groups have called for thousands of people to attempt to "surround the Capitol." Further **demonstration activity** is expected during Netanyahu's stay. Heightened **security** and traffic disruptions are also anticipated across the D.C. metro. D.C. police **released** a list of street closures and traffic restrictions that will be in effect through Saturday.

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.

Uneasy Calm in Bangladesh Amid Pause in Student Protests

Bangladesh's Supreme Court **ruled** yesterday that 93% of public sector job recruitment should be merit-based, significantly scaling back a contentious quota system that has recently sparked violent nationwide protests. Student groups initially **pledged** to hold demonstrations despite the partial victory but then decided to **suspend activity for 48 hours** beginning Monday. Protest leaders are **calling** on the government to release detained demonstrators, end the curfew, reopen schools, and publish the Supreme Court's ruling before lifting the threat of further action. At least 175 people have been **killed**, and thousands have been injured during the unrest, prompting the U.S. government to **issue** a "Do Not Travel" advisory for the country. Bangladesh's government deployed the military in response to the protests, and over 500 people have been **arrested**. Communications and movement restrictions are expected to remain in effect over the coming days. However, the government loosened the curfew to allow people to be outside for three hours, up from two, in the afternoons.

Houthi Drone Hits Tel Aviv, Israel Launches Retaliatory Strike on Hodeidah, ICJ Declares Israeli Settlements Illegal

Early Friday morning, a long-range Iranian-made drone **struck** a building near the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, killing one person and injuring at least 10 others. The Houthi rebel group in Yemen claimed responsibility for the attack, making it the first lethal strike the organization has managed to launch in Israel. The drone did not trigger air raid alarms; however, Israeli military officials said that it had been **detected** but not shot down due to "human error." In response, Israel **conducted** airstrikes on oil storage facilities at a Hodeidah port. Also on Friday, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered a **landmark** opinion, declaring Israel's settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to be violations of international law and ordered that all Israeli settlers be evacuated

from the Palestinian territories. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed the ruling, which is non-binding, as “false,” while Palestinian officials praised it as a “watershed moment.”

Western U.S., Canada Continue to Battle Excessive Heat and Dangerous Wildfires

This week, another **long-duration heat wave** will intensify across the western U.S. and portions of western Canada. Peak heating is likely across eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, and Alberta on Monday, with temperatures further intensifying across parts of Saskatchewan, Montana, Idaho, California's San Joaquin Valley, and surrounding areas through Thursday. Widespread **excessive heat warnings and heat advisories** are in effect. In Canada, well-above-average temperatures for **Alberta** and **Saskatchewan** through the week have also prompted **heat warnings**. On Monday, the high temperature in Spokane, Washington, will likely top out at around 100F, while temperatures in Billings, Montana, and Sacramento, California, are expected to reach 105F during the week.

The above-average temperatures will coincide with an elevated risk for wildfires. The **U.S. National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC)** has raised the national preparedness level to PL 5, the highest level, which is uncommon for mid-July. Over 60 large active wildfires are already burning across the country, affecting over one million acres. Neighboring Canada faces similar conditions. Fire managers are employing full suppression strategies on active fires, involving 21,100 wildland firefighters and support personnel. On Sunday, two wildfires, the **Hawarden Fire** and the **Eagle Fire**, were reported in Riverside, California. Both fires prompted evacuations, and the Hawarden Fire **burned** three homes and damaged several others. The fires have had forward lines stopped as of Monday morning, though they remain at 0% and 25% containment, respectively.

Climate and Natural Hazards

- **Central and Southeast Texas to Receive Heavy Rain Through Mid-Week: Daily rounds of heavy rain** and thunderstorms will slowly shift southeast alongside a sinking weather boundary through late Wednesday or Thursday. Widespread multi-day rainfall totals are expected to range between two to five inches, with higher totals likely concentrated near the coast, including **Houston**. Travel disruption during the afternoon commutes and possible delays and cancellations at airports are expected.
- **Typhoon Gaemi to Approach Taiwan, Southern Japan, East China:** Gaemi has quickly strengthened (**satellite**) over the last 36-48 hours and is now a typhoon, according to the **Japan Meteorological Agency**. Typhoon Gaemi will continue to slowly **track** northwest in a favorable environment for further intensification towards Taiwan and the southern Okinawa Islands. Impacts from a strong typhoon are likely in Taiwan and the southern

Okinawa Islands between Wednesday and Thursday. Interests in East China (Fujian and Zhejiang) should monitor the projected northwest track, with dangerous impacts likely between Thursday and Friday.

- **Flooding Sparks Mudslides, Bridge Collapse in Central China:** A flash flood disaster led to a bridge collapse in Shangluo City, southern Shaanxi Province, over the weekend, **killling at least 15**. In Sichuan Province, the death toll following a **mudslide in Ya'an** has risen to eight, while 30 people are still missing. Search and rescue operations are ongoing in both locations. The slow-moving rainy season front may lead to worsening conditions across central China through the week.
- **India Monsoon Conditions to Intensify, Disruption in Mumbai:** Enhanced monsoonal conditions have prompted **maximum Level 3 Heavy Rain Alerts** across the subdivisions of Saurashtra and Kutch, West Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Marathwada, and Konkan and Goa. In recent days, Mumbai has suffered from **water-logging**, leading to **subway closures** and flight cancellations. Landslides in **Shirur**, Karnataka, and along the **Kedarnath Yatra route** in Uttarakhand have led to at least 10 fatalities. Additional periods of heavy rain will lead to a continued risk of landslides, water rescues, travel disruption, and school closures throughout the week.

Worldwide

- **Parisian Officials Prepare for Friday's Olympic Games Opening Ceremony:** Heightened security and disruptions can be expected in Paris this week as the **Olympic Games Opening Ceremony** approaches. Measures impacting vehicular and pedestrian access along the Seine River are already in place and will **intensify** on Friday, the day of the event. The AlertMedia team is not aware of credible threats or planned protests targeting the Opening Ceremony; however, climate activist group Extinction Rebellion is reportedly organizing a "mass civil disobedience" action the following day, and recent violent incidents highlight the continued heightened threat environment ahead of the Games. A French soldier was **stabbed** while on patrol at a train station last Monday, and a police officer was **attacked** last Thursday.
- **Six Killed in Islamic State Attack in Oman:** Last Monday, armed individuals killed six people and injured 30 others at a Shiite mosque in Muscat during Ashoura, a day of commemoration in Islam that is particularly important for Shiites. The Islamic State (IS), a Sunni extremist group, claimed responsibility for the shooting, a first for the group in Oman, which is not known to operate in the country. The incident follows IS-claimed attacks this year in Moscow and Iran, suggesting continued desire and capability to target locales outside the group's primary operational areas in Iraq and Syria, where it has also been particularly active. In an update last week, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)

reported that the Islamic State was on pace to more than double the attacks they claimed in Iraq and Syria in 2023, indicating an attempt to reconstitute.

- **Costa Rican Authorities Target Crime in Puntarenas Province:** Costa Rican authorities announced the deployment of 130 police officers and 40 federal agents for an anti-crime operation in Puntarenas province, a popular tourist destination on the country's Pacific coastline that has been witnessing a rise in violent crime. Puntarenas is Costa Rica's third most violent province after San José and Limón, accounting for almost 20% of homicides nationwide. In Limón, a similar operation was reportedly successful in reducing homicides, though **reports** suggest groups from the area migrated to Puntarenas, contributing to the recent increase in crime.
- **Tensions Simmer on Cyprus as Divided Island Commemorates Invasion:** Last week marked 50 years since Türkiye's invasion of Cyprus. This island remains divided along ethnic lines with **little prospect** for a unified solution. The outgoing head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force that monitors the buffer zone between north and south recently **told the Associated Press** that it was just a "matter of time" before "miscalculation" occurs between opposing forces, which have reportedly been bolstering deployments of military personnel and equipment along the border. Amid the simmering tensions, Cyprus' defense minister **announced** plans to build a major naval base on the island's southern coast with the help of Greece. In response, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan **said** his country could construct a base in the north "if necessary."
- **Venezuelans to Vote in President on Sunday in Potentially Swayed Election:** On Sunday, July 28, Venezuelans will **elect** a president in what already appears to be a skewed election. Of the 10 candidates, the frontrunners are incumbent President Nicolás Maduro, who's been in power since 2013, and Edmundo González Urrutia of the Democratic Unitary Platform, a former ambassador and academic. Current polling suggests that González may secure the presidency; however, many worry that the election will be neither free nor fair. Maduro, seeking his third consecutive term, has had multiple opposition candidates **arrested** and/or **disqualified**, including primary winner Maria Corina Machado. Electoral authorities are also facing allegations that they are implementing an intentionally confusing **system** to sway the vote.

Cyber and Regulatory

- **Widespread Microsoft Outage Due to CrowdStrike Update:** The CrowdStrike **update** felt around the world continues to impact businesses. While the incident was unrelated to malicious cyber activity, America's Cyber Defense Agency **advised** that threat actors have attempted to exploit the situation through phishing and other activity, including the **distribution** of a malicious ZIP archive file targeting Latin America-based CrowdStrike customers. Organizations have been advised to bolster their cybersecurity measures. and Supply Chain section below.

- **Chinese Hacking Group APT41 Infiltrates Global Shipping and Tech Sectors:** Researchers at Mandiant have **identified** a significant resurgence in malware attacks by APT41, a prolific Chinese government-backed hacking team. The attacks are targeting organizations in the shipping, logistics, technology, and automotive sectors across Europe and Asia. Known for dual-role operations involving state-sponsored espionage and financially motivated intrusions, APT41 has used sophisticated tactics such as web shells on Tomcat Apache Manager servers and a multi-stage plugin framework called DUSTTRAP.
- **Los Angeles County Superior Court and Bassett Furniture Impacted by Cyberattacks:** The Los Angeles County Superior Court system **experienced** a ransomware attack on Friday, leading officials to disable network systems through the weekend. Law enforcement is investigating, and there is no evidence of compromised court user data as of this writing. Separately, Bassett Furniture's ability to fulfill orders has been **impacted** by a recent cyberattack. The company initiated an investigation and shut down systems, including manufacturing facilities, as part of an incident response plan. There is no indication that customers' personal information was affected.
- **Meta to Withhold Multimodal AI Models in EU Over Regulatory Environment:** In a **statement to Axios**, Meta said, "We will release a multimodal Llama model over the coming months, but not in the EU due to the unpredictable nature of the European regulatory environment." The company claims that the new multimodal models are able to reason across video, audio, images, and text in a range of products, including mobile devices and smart glasses. European companies will not be able to use the multimodal models, and companies outside the EU may not be able to offer products and services in Europe that make use of the new models. The apparent issue stems not from the **EU Artificial Intelligence Act** but Meta's lack of compliance with the EU's existing data protection law, the **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR). Meta had planned to train its models on publicly available Facebook and Instagram posts, but regulators ordered it to stop in June. Apple said **it won't release certain features** in Europe because of regulatory concerns.
- **U.S. Considers Further Trade Restrictions Around Chinese Semiconductor Tech:** Bloomberg News **reported Tuesday** that the U.S. told its allies it would consider using severe trade restrictions if companies continue giving China access to advanced semiconductor technology. The measure, known as the **Foreign Direct Product Rule** (FDPR), was introduced in the 1950s to control the trade of U.S. technologies and effectively gives the U.S. government the power to stop products from being sold if they were made using any amount of American technology—including those produced in a foreign country. The report added that officials in Tokyo and the Hague had been presented with the idea that the FDPR was on the table until those countries tightened their own China measures.

Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **CrowdStrike Outage Snarls Global Supply Chains:** A glitch in a software update from cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike caused Windows computers to crash beginning the evening of July 18. Banks, healthcare providers, and media broadcasters were among those impacted, but **most affected were airlines**, with thousands of flights delayed or canceled. While most major airlines have **managed** to restore service to normal or near-normal levels, on Monday, over 1,000 Delta Air Lines flights were still impacted. Air freight carriers could see their recovery period **stretch** for days or weeks. Major ports around the globe were also in various states of disarray, with some still assessing impacts on port operations while others claiming to be functioning normally. According to Union Pacific, the crash had varying levels of impact across the U.S. rail system, though most major rails were operating normally by the afternoon of July 19.
- **Houthi Rebel Threats Persist on the Red Sea:** The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt is approaching the Middle East to replace the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, who spent months in the Red Sea to counter the threat posed by Houthi rebels in Yemen. In June, the number of Houthi attacks on merchant vessels increased to levels not seen since December, according to the **Joint Maritime Information Center**. In a statement, the U.S. Central Command said, "This continued reckless behavior by the Iranian-backed Houthis threatens regional stability and endangers the lives of mariners across the Red Sea." The Houthis maintain that their attacks target ships linked to Israel as part of the rebels' support for Hamas in its war against Israel; however, many of the ships attacked have little or no apparent connection to the war.
- **Threat of Atlantic and Gulf Coast Port Strike Growing, Says Union Leader:** The leader of the International Longshoremen's Association, Harold Daggett, **said** recently that the threat of a strike at all Atlantic and Gulf Coast Ports is becoming more likely as the date of their contract expiration, set for September 30, approaches. Negotiations with the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) **faltered** in June and did not appear to have significantly recovered in the past month. However, USMX leadership **indicated** last week that there has been "forward movement" in talks. Daggett remains adamant that the union would not entertain extending the current agreement, stating that members were ready to "hit the streets" on October 1 if its demands were not met.
- **Brazil Suspends Some Chicken Exports Over Virus Detection:** Last week, Brazil **suspended** chicken exports to the European Union (EU) and Argentina after discovering the Newcastle virus on a farm in Rio Grande do Sul state. The detection of the virus, a contagious and fatal infection that impacts birds and poultry, was **reportedly** the first in the country in almost two decades. Brazil's decision to halt shipments is notable, given that it is the largest chicken exporter in the world. In addition to the restrictions for the EU and

Argentina, Brasília also stopped exports of poultry and poultry-based products from Rio Grande do Sul to China, India, South Africa, and Mexico.

- **U.K. Approves Lab-Grown Meat in First for Europe, but Widespread Adoption Remains Far-Off:** The United Kingdom (U.K.) became the first European country to **allow** for the sale of “lab-grown” meat after approving an application from pet food company Meatly for the use of chicken cultivated from animal cells. Similar products have not yet been approved for human consumption in Europe. However, they have in Israel, Singapore, and the U.S. Despite this latest regulatory win, widespread production and adoption of lab-grown meat and similar “alternative proteins” **remains far-off**. Producers of lab-grown meat are still determining how to scale up their offerings cost-effectively. They are also facing political headwinds as farming groups push back on what they see as a threat to their livelihood. “These practices represent a threat to primary farm-based approaches and genuine food production methods that are at the very heart of the European farming model,” argued a **note submitted to the Council of the European Union** from several European governments.

Health

- **Healthcare Services See Ongoing Disruptions Following Tech Outage:** As noted above, the Microsoft outage disrupted sectors across the globe, with healthcare services seeing varied impacts. In the U.S., some healthcare centers saw little impact when Microsoft programs crashed last Friday. In contrast, others, like Mass General Brigham on the East Coast and Harris Health System in the Houston area, **canceled** elective procedures and appointments. In the U.K., NHS England **warned** that disruptions will continue this week, though online systems have been mostly restored. Pharmacy services are also **affected** as workers are now facing a backlog in processing prescriptions.
- **India’s Kerala State Reports First Death From Nipah Virus in 2024:** Health officials in Kerala state are **recommending** that people take precautions to prevent the spread of Nipah virus after a 14-year-old boy died from the disease on Sunday. Authorities have set up isolation wards at healthcare centers. They are working to trace any affected people, though one health official **noted** that “there is a minimum chance of an outbreak of Nipah virus at this stage.” Dozens of people in Kerala have died due to Nipah since 2018, with two deaths **recorded** last year in the early fall. Nipah virus is a zoonotic illness with a high mortality rate and limited treatment options.
- **CDC Sends Bird Flu Outbreak Team to Colorado, Study Finds No Asymptomatic Infections:** The CDC is **sending** a field team to Colorado to help the state’s response to human and poultry infections of bird flu. Health officials in Colorado **confirmed** that six poultry farm workers have infections of H5N1 bird flu, bringing the U.S.’s total number of human bird flu cases this year to 10. Oklahoma **became** the thirteenth state to have a confirmed positive H5N1 case in a dairy herd; however, the test sample was from April, and

the cows have fully recovered. In good news, a study **suggested** that asymptomatic infections of H5N1 in humans are not occurring.

- **Penicillin Shortage Prompts Drug Imports Amid Record High Shortages:** Drug shortages are at their highest level in the U.S. since tracking began in 2001. Of the more than 320 active drug shortages, **penicillin** is of particular concern to healthcare professionals treating syphilis. Due to a shortage of Pfizer's Bicillin L-A penicillin, the online pharmaceutical company Cost Plus Drugs is working with the FDA to import 1.2 million units of Lentocilin brand penicillin powder. The FDA is also allowing temporary importation of Extencilline (benzathine benzylpenicillin) to address the shortage. Bicillin L-A and Extencilline are the FDA's recommended treatments for all pregnant people with syphilis and for cases where infants are exposed to syphilis in pregnancy. Pfizer's Bicillin L-A 1 mL syringes are expected to be available by February 2025, according to the **FDA**.
- **Six Imported Cases of Oropouche Virus Recorded in Europe:** The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) **reported** six cases of Oropouche virus in Italy and Spain from travelers who returned from Cuba. Cuba is experiencing an outbreak of Oropouche and—as noted in the July 8 edition of the Weekly Threat Brief—the Cuban Public Health Ministry (MINSAP) confirmed the **presence** of Oropouche virus in nine provinces. The ECDC says that the risk of secondary transmission of the Oropouche virus within Europe is “very low” and recommends that Europeans traveling to Cuba or the Americas follow “personal protective measures against midge and mosquito bites.

Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **Activists to Target Major Events in Days Ahead:** While D.C. will be the epicenter of pro-Palestine demonstrations in the days ahead, several other notable actions are planned worldwide targeting major gatherings. Just down the road from the Capitol, in National Harbor, Maryland, activists intend to hold “direct action” protests at the Annual Summit of Christians United for Israel (CUFI), which runs Sunday to next Tuesday. Meanwhile, in Australia, government leaders from across the globe are **heading to Perth** on Wednesday for the Indian Ocean Defense & Security Conference, where they will be met with protests on both Wednesday and Thursday. Finally, in Farnborough, England, activists are expected to target the **Farnborough International Airshow**, which runs through Friday.
- **Other Notable Demonstrations Over Middle East Conflict:** In the U.S., multiple cities will see demonstrations in response to Netanyahu's visit. In Atlanta, activists will hold an action similar to the one planned in D.C., with organizers calling on supporters to “surround” the Georgia State Capitol on Saturday. Well-attended demonstrations are also expected in Chicago (Federal Plaza at 4:30 pm) and Denver (Cesar Chavez Building at 6 pm) on Wednesday, among other cities. Also, on Wednesday, a protest at the U.S. Consulate in Montreal at 6:30 pm is likely to draw a large crowd.
- **Opposing Demonstrations in Central London Saturday to Draw Large Crowds:** On Saturday, far-right activist Tommy Robinson is planning to lead a march from London's

Royal Courts of Justice to Trafalgar Square. In response, several unions and civil society groups, including the **Public and Commercial Services Union**, are organizing an opposing march from Russell Square to Trafalgar Square. Robinson held a **similar rally** in June that attracted thousands of supporters, counter-demonstrators, and a significant police presence. Both actions begin at noon, and their convergence in Trafalgar increases the potential for confrontations in the area.

- **Peru to See Demonstrations Against Government This Weekend:** Peru is bracing for **nationwide protests** set to take place Friday and Saturday while the country celebrates its National Holidays (Fiestas Patrias). Numerous social and civic organizations, along with politicians, are calling for demonstrations against President Dina Boluarte and Congress over allegations of corruption and the president's reported role in the deaths of protesters in 2023, among other issues. The main actions will take place in Lima, including a demonstration at Plaza San Martin at 3 pm on Friday. The Minister of the Interior has said that police will be **deployed** and ordered to "immediately arrest" anyone who participates in roadblocks and other "criminal acts."
- **Other Activity the Global Intelligence Team Is Watching:** Climate demonstrators will return to **Manhattan's** streets this week, with significant actions planned at Bryant Park at 10 am on Friday and outside Citibank HQ at 11 am on Saturday. In **Colombia**, taxi drivers will **strike** and hold demonstrations across the country on Tuesday. Significant disruptions are likely in major urban centers like Bogota and Cartagena, with officials in the latter city advising people to work remotely when possible due to the planned protest activity. Elsewhere, in **Poland**, a large **demonstration** is expected outside parliament in Warsaw on Tuesday as multiple women's and abortion rights groups intend to gather to denounce a recent **parliamentary vote** against legislation that would have eased abortion restrictions.

Upcoming Events

- July 22-26: Han Kuang Military Exercise (Taiwan)
- July 22-26: Farnborough International Airshow (England)
- July 26-September 8: Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games (France)
- July 28: Presidential Elections (Venezuela)
- August 4: Anniversary of 2020 Port of Beirut Explosion (Lebanon)
- August 9: National Day (Singapore)
- August 10: Independence Day (Ecuador)
- August 12-18: Tour de France Femmes (France)
- August 15: Independence Day (India)
- August 17: Independence Day/Inauguration of New Capital (Indonesia)
- August 19-22: Democratic Party National Convention (Chicago, IL)
- August 26-September 8: U.S. Open Tennis Tournament (New York City, NY)
- August 31: Independence Day (Malaysia)

Weekly Intelligence Briefing

July 22, 2024



- September 1: Parliamentary Elections (Azerbaijan)
- September 1: Legislative Elections (Czechia)
- September 2: Independence Day (Vietnam)
- September 2: Labor Day (United States)
- September 7: Presidential Election (Algeria)
- September 10: Legislative Elections (Jordan)
- September 10: Opening of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (New York City, NY)