

August 12, 2024

Headlining This Week's Brief

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Top Stories

Potential Tropical Cyclone Five Threatening Leeward Island, Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico

[Tropical storm warnings](#) are in effect across the Leeward Islands as a potential tropical cyclone approaches, expected to strengthen into Ernesto by Tuesday. The Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico should also prepare for tropical storm conditions from Tuesday night into Wednesday. Several emergency response centers in Puerto Rico have been [activated](#) ahead of the storm. Impacts on [ferry services](#) and other transportation networks are likely. Afterward, while uncertainty remains, the system may turn toward Bermuda, potentially as a hurricane, with impacts possibly between August 16-18. Those in the Dominican Republic and Turks and Caicos should monitor the system's progress. The system is still in its formative stages; thus, large adjustments to the track and intensity forecast are possible.

Tokyo Threatened by Late Week Typhoon

On the heels of Tropical Storm Maria, Japan is bracing for a second, potentially higher-impact threat. As of this writing, the [U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center \(JTWC\)](#) was initiating advisories for Tropical Depression 08W, located roughly 1,300km south-southwest of Tokyo. The [Japan Meteorological Agency \(JMA\)](#) is also issuing guidance on this feature. Forecasts via JTWC, JMA, and various reliable model guidance suggest that Tokyo and surrounding prefectures could be threatened by a tropical storm and localized typhoon (hurricane) conditions sometime between Thursday night and early Saturday morning (local time). Business and travel disruptions are possible. Meanwhile, earlier Monday, [Maria](#) made landfall near northern Iwate prefecture with

maximum sustained winds near 50mph, according to the JTWC. Flights and rail services have been disrupted. There are no immediate reports of casualties. Localized wind and rain [warnings](#) were still in effect, though the system was rapidly dissipating.

Democratic National Convention Preparations Underway, Threats Ahead of Election Loom

With just one week until the Democratic National Convention (DNC), authorities are preparing robust security measures in Chicago. The "National Special Security Event" (NSSE) event is scheduled for August 19-22 and will take place primarily at the United Center and McCormick Place. Officials are warning of heightened domestic and international terrorist threats during the event. [Extensive road closures](#) and [security perimeters](#) will surround the convention starting as early as this Friday.

Additionally, security officials are preparing for potential unrest and violence stemming from protest activity. Event organizers [expect](#) up to 30,000 people to demonstrate at the DNC, and more than 50 organizations [plan](#) to protest during the convention. Two primary actions are being planned by the group "March on the DNC," both to take place at Union Park next Monday and Thursday. Designated routes for the marches have yet to be finalized amid a [legal fight](#), with organizers pushing for a longer route that takes them closer to the United Center. The City of Chicago favors a shorter route but [assures](#) that "demonstrators will be able to march within sight and sound of the United Center." A federal ruling to determine what route will be established is [expected](#) tomorrow.

As further campaign events are scheduled, including rallies and a newly [confirmed](#) second presidential debate, the possibility of further political violence still looms over the race. A Pakistani man with ties to Iran was recently [charged](#) with attempting to hire hitmen to kill a politician or U.S. government official. Iran is also reportedly [attempting](#) to influence the U.S. elections online by targeting a presidential campaign with an email phishing attack, setting up fake websites to sway voters, and impersonating activists.

For further in-depth information surrounding the DNC and other matters related to the U.S. presidential election, please refer to our [Situation Report](#).

U.S. Deploys Additional Forces to Middle East as Region Awaits Possible Iranian Attack

The U.S. publicly [announced](#) that it was deploying a guided missile submarine to the Middle East and [accelerating](#) deployments of a strike group of fighter jets and Navy warships. The moves come as the region braces for possible military action from Iran in retaliation for the assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. Israeli intelligence [believes](#) that Iran [intends](#) to

attack Israel directly within days. However, they assess that Hezbollah in Lebanon is likely to strike first, with Iran launching its attack after. While the region braces for further conflict, U.S. forces stationed in [Syria](#) and [Iraq](#) have faced rocket and drone strikes. Although no one has claimed Iran-backed groups have carried out responsibility, similar attacks in the past. Within Gaza, Israel [struck](#) a school in Gaza City over the weekend where thousands were sheltering, killing at least 100 people. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) [said](#) that they were targeting a Hamas command center and that of the dead, 31 were members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad. The attack, one of the deadliest of the conflict so far, along with the looming threat of military action from Iran, is casting a pall over a planned [resumption](#) of ceasefire talks set for Thursday.

Climate and Natural Hazards

- **Flooding in Rajasthan, India:** At least [15 people have died](#) amid widespread flooding since Sunday. Severe waterlogging is occurring in low-lying areas of [Jaipur](#), and above-average monsoon-related rainfall may persist across Northwest India and Pakistan through August 17.
- **Greece Wildfire:** A large, [out-of-control wildfire](#) is prompting evacuations in the suburbs of Athens. Multiple hospitals have been evacuated, and nearly 700 firefighters have been assigned to the blaze. Unfavorable firefighting weather conditions are forecast throughout the week.
- **Queensland, Australia Facing Unseasonable Severe Weather:** Coastal Queensland, including areas between Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Brisbane, and Gold Coast, will experience consecutive days of unseasonably heavy rainfall. Heavy rain and localized flooding are expected through Wednesday, easing on Thursday. Scattered showers are ongoing, with additional localized rain amounts upwards of 100- 150mm (four to six inches) possible.
- **Landslide in Kampala, Uganda Kills at Least 21:** A landslide occurred at the Kiteezi landfill Saturday in Kampala—a [“disaster \[that\] was bound to happen.”](#) according to Kampala Mayor Erias Lukwago. Search and rescue operations remain ongoing. Around 1,000 people have been forced to leave their homes.

Worldwide

- **Ukraine Launches Attack Into Russian Territory:** Ukraine’s [incursion](#) in the Kursk region of Russia last week has prompted large-scale evacuations and the Russian State of Emergency amid ongoing battles. At least a thousand Ukrainian-aligned troops have crossed [30 kilometers inside the region](#) and captured [28 settlements](#). Russia has moved to [evacuate citizens](#) from their border regions with Ukraine. As of today, an initial 76,000 people were evacuated from the Kursk region, along with 11,000 from Belgorod. Subsequent increases in Russian attacks in the Sumy region of Ukraine have resulted in [evacuation orders for at least 20,000 civilians](#). Recent developments in the conflict also saw a [large fire](#) occur at the currently occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine on Sunday, with each side blaming the other for the incident.

- **Thai Court Dissolves Progressive Move Forward Party:** The Constitutional Court voted unanimously [to dissolve the Move Forward Party](#), ruling that its proposal to amend a law against defaming the country's royal family amounted to an attempt to overthrow Thailand's constitutional monarchy. The court also banned the party's executives and its charismatic leader, Pita Limjaroenrat, from political activity for 10 years. In a statement to media and followers, Pita said that he looks forward to continuing his work as an active citizen and that voters should vent their frustrations at the ballot box. Leaders of Move Forward have also quickly [regrouped](#) and formed a new party called the People's Party.
- **Australia Raises Terrorism Threat Level:** Australia increased its security posture and [National Terrorism Threat Level](#) from "possible" to "probable" due to a degrading security environment. The increase in [threat level](#) suggests a greater than 50% chance of an attack or planned attack within 12 months. While there is no specific identifiable threat, [Australian authorities](#) are stating that radicalization and growing politically motivated violence stemming from the Israeli conflict in Gaza are major domestic concerns.
- **Wembley Stadium Heightens Security After Taylor Swift Cancels Vienna Shows:** Security officials in Vienna [arrested](#) a third suspect on Friday over a planned attack at the Ernst Happel Stadium, where Taylor Swift was set to perform three shows last week. Austrian officials say the primary suspect, who was allegedly inspired by the Islamic State group, planned to target people who gathered outside the stadium during the show. Swift is scheduled to perform five shows at London's Wembley Stadium between August 15-20, and according to Wembley's [website](#), "anyone hanging around outside the stadium will be moved on by security." London's mayor [confirmed](#) that Taylor Swift's five planned shows will go ahead, and the Metropolitan Police [stated](#) that the ongoing investigation in Austria will not "have an impact on upcoming events here in London." Large-scale concerts have been targets for politically motivated attacks in the past; in 2017, a suicide bomber detonated an explosive device at the end of an Ariana Grande concert at Manchester Arena, resulting in 22 deaths and hundreds of injuries.
- **Political Uncertainty Remains in Bangladesh, Interim Government Established:** The situation in Bangladesh has started to stabilize with Dr. Muhammad Yunus [officially sworn in as head of an interim government](#) and progress made toward restoring security services and other state functions. Five top judges resigned Saturday amid protests on court premises. Dr. Yunus called for peace and promised reforms, but it is unclear how long the interim government will stay in power and when new elections will be held. The military is assisting police officers as they return to work. Bangladesh's new interim government says [it is working to resolve attacks](#) on Hindus and other religious minorities; it also said it would reopen the metro system in Dhaka by the end of the week and appoint a new central bank governor. For more information, read [our Situation Report](#) on the situation in Bangladesh.

Cyber and Regulatory

- **U.S. Federal Judge Rules Google Violated Antitrust Laws:** Federal judge Amit Mehta [found](#) that Google maintained a monopoly over online search services. Mehta's ruling specifically focused on Google's practice of paying billions to Apple, Samsung, and other providers to make its search engine the default on their products; however, the ruling does not outline the penalties that the company will face for the violations, but they [could include](#) forcing Google to split into smaller units or share data on its users with other search engines. Google faces another antitrust lawsuit brought by the Justice Department over its online advertising business, arguing that they've monopolized key technology.
- **Background Check Company Subjected to One of Largest Data Breaches Ever:** A data breach impacting background check company National Public Data [exposed](#) 2.9 billion records, according to a recent class action lawsuit filed against the organization. Many of those exposed to the attack may not be aware of it since National Public Data obtains its information by scraping non-public sources without individuals' knowledge or consent. The stolen data includes full names, former and current addresses, and Social Security numbers. It is unclear when the breach occurred.
- **AI Facing Challenges From Regulation, "Model Collapse":** California is [considering](#) legislation that would impose safety constraints on the use of artificial intelligence. The bill, [SB1047](#), calls for developers to develop and conduct safety tests to reduce the possibility of their models causing "catastrophic harm" (defined as a cyberattack that causes mass casualties or at least \$500 million in damages) and that ensures it can be shut down by a human if necessary. The AI industry has said that the language is too vague. If passed, the law would apply to companies based in California (as many of the most significant ones are) and those doing business there. Beyond legislation, researchers published an article in [Nature](#) on some potentially self-limiting features of AI. They found that AI systems trained on large language models could face "model collapse" or quality degradation if trained on other AI-generated content. This scenario seems likely as such content dominates more of the web.
- **Chinese Regulators Propose Internet ID:** China's internet regulator, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Cyberspace Administration have [proposed](#) implementing a verification system that would give people an ID to use across the internet. According to the regulators, the system would reduce the number of apps and platforms with access to a user's data, centralizing it under one system to protect privacy and prevent fraud. [Critics](#) have [said](#) that such a system would give the Chinese government immense power to monitor users' online activities and further restrict online speech. They are also concerned that the system, pitched as a voluntary system, will eventually become compulsory. The proposal is open for public comment until the end of August.
- **Other Stories the Global Intelligence Team Is Monitoring:** Researchers say they have found a security flaw in [AMD processor chips](#) that would allow hackers to run their code within the processor's System Management Mode. The flaw, Sinkclose, could affect hundreds

of millions of chips dating back to 2006. A separate security researcher found two zero-day flaws that could be used to “[unpatch](#)” fully updated Windows 10, Windows 11, and Windows Server systems. Outside of these security flaws, non-profit organization OneBlood is still dealing with the fallout of a cyberattack that disrupted [blood supplies](#) in the southeastern United States, with flooding from Tropical Storm Debby causing additional complications. And finally, as students head back to class, data shows that [ransomware attacks against schools](#) are increasing, despite efforts from the White House to improve cybersecurity among education institutions.

Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **U.S. Curbs Russian Uranium Imports and Military Exports to Russia via Türkiye:** The U.S. Senate approved legislation last week to bar imports of Russian uranium. The ban [goes into effect today](#) and will block imports for 90 days. To prevent disruptions to domestic nuclear reactors, the Department of Energy [is allowing waivers](#) when applicants can show “no alternative viable source” for uranium. U.S. nuclear power plants [reportedly](#) imported around 12% of their uranium from Russia in 2022. In a separate development, Washington [is warning](#) Türkiye to reduce exports of U.S. military hardware to Russia. President Biden signed an [executive order](#) last year allowing the administration to treat any foreign financial company transacting with a sanctioned Russian entity as though it is working directly with Russia’s military-industrial base. This move has effectively curbed exports of military-linked goods from Türkiye.
- **Samsung Recalls Over 1.2 Million Stoves Over Fire Risk:** Last Thursday, Samsung announced it is [recalling](#) 1.2 million electric ranges due to fire risks. The risks stem from the front-mounted knobs, which can be accidentally turned on and could start fires, particularly if items are left on the stove. Samsung [stated](#) that it has received over 300 reports of accidental ignition since 2013, 18 of which caused “extensive property damage” and resulted in about 40 injuries and numerous pet deaths. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) warns consumers to avoid placing items on top of the range and advises customers affected by the recall to contact Samsung to receive replacement knob covers. The CPSC provided a [full list](#) of recalled model numbers.
- **China to Tighten Regulations on Materials Used to Make Fentanyl:** China announced last week that it will tighten regulations on three key materials used to make fentanyl—4-AP, 1-boc-4-AP, and norfentanyl—and will add the three chemicals to its “controlled chemicals” list on September 1. The move comes amid [pleas](#) from the U.S. for China to bolster regulations governing the materials used to produce fentanyl, which is the leading cause of death for Americans aged 18 to 45. The move signals progress in combatting the drug crisis in the U.S. and demonstrates increased [cooperation](#) between the U.S. and China. The Biden administration is now urging Congress to pass legislation that would categorize fentanyl-related substances as “Schedule I” drugs, which would have “higher penalties for distribution and possession.”

- **New U.K. Government to Scrap “Anti-Strike” Law:** Britain’s newly elected Labour government is [planning](#) to repeal the Strikes Act 2023 within 100 days. The Strikes Act introduced minimum service levels in key sectors like transport, health, and education, aiming to limit the impact of strikes on public services; however, the new government states that the measures “unduly restrict workers’ rights and undermine good industrial relations.” British officials have been asked to “seek alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution” until the minimum service regulations have been formally repealed. Britain faced a major strike wave in 2023 across multiple sectors, including travel and healthcare.
- **Western Brands in Muslim-Majority Countries Face Revenue Losses Due to Boycotts:** Several Muslim-majority countries, including Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, are [engaging](#) in a boycott campaign of Western multinational corporations over their alleged support for Israel in the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. The campaign has impacted numerous companies, including Coca-Cola, KFC, Krispy Kreme, Starbucks, Mondelez, and Pizza Hut. Executives have reported quarterly revenue losses as high as 48% due to the boycotts. Some businesses have also reported attacks on their establishments. Last month, the Pakistani government [formed](#) a committee to “identify companies financially supporting Israel’s war in Gaza” with the intent to support a ban on the companies’ products.

Health

- **EPA Bans Use of Dacthal Pesticide Over Concerns for Pregnant Farmworkers:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](#) the emergency suspension of the pesticide dimethyl tetrachloroterephthalate (known as DCPA or Dacthal) last Tuesday. Risk assessments show that exposure to DCPA during pregnancy could alter fetal thyroid hormone levels, leading to potentially irreversible effects such as impaired brain development and low birth weight in unborn babies. This is the first time the EPA has used its emergency suspension authority in almost 40 years. DCPA is primarily used to prevent the growth of weeds in broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, and onions, among other crops.
- **WHO to Hold Emergency Meeting on Mpox Spread in Africa:** A committee with the World Health Organization (WHO) will [convene](#) this Wednesday to decide whether to declare the mpox outbreak in Africa a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). The WHO is [inviting](#) vaccine manufacturers to apply for an emergency license to speed up mpox vaccine access across the continent while allowing international groups to distribute the shots. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [issued](#) a Level 2 Travel Health Notice for mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and neighboring countries, urging travelers to practice enhanced caution and to get vaccinated before leaving for the affected countries. The CDC also [issued an updated health alert](#) last Wednesday detailing the widespread nature of the clade I mpox outbreak. Mpox cases in Africa have already [surpassed](#) last year’s total case number.
- **COVID Surges Reported in Multiple Locations Worldwide:** An analysis of COVID-related infections in an 84-country-wide detection system is prompting the WHO to [raise concerns](#)

over a summer surge of COVID-19 infections. According to the WHO, spikes in cases are being detected in Europe, the Americas, and the western Pacific. Wastewater testing indicates that transmission levels are two to 20 times higher than reported, with greater concerns over the development of [new, potentially more severe variants](#). [Recent estimates](#) from the CDC suggest that COVID-19 infection rates are increasing in 32 states, with declining, stable, or uncertain numbers in 11 other states.

- **Third Death Linked to Boar's Head Listeria Outbreak:** The CDC [reported](#) that nine additional people have been hospitalized due to a Listeria outbreak tied to Boar's Head brand food products, bringing the number of reported illnesses to 43 people across 13 states. Three people have died from Listeria infections since the outbreak began, with the latest death reported in Virginia last Thursday. Health officials in Maryland and New York have [tested](#) unopened Boar's Head liverwurst products, with both states' authorities identifying the same strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* as the strain affecting people in the outbreak.
- **FDA Approves Nasal Spray for Severe Allergic Reactions:** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced it [approved](#) Neffy, an epinephrine nasal spray made by [ARS Pharmaceuticals](#), for the treatment of anaphylaxis and severe allergic reactions. Neffy is the first FDA-approved treatment that does not use needles. Some people may hesitate to use needle-based epinephrine treatments, like the EpiPen, due to several factors, including fear of needles, cost and accessibility issues, and a lack of confidence in their ability to use the device correctly, especially in high-stress situations. In some cases, anxiety around needle-injected epinephrine can lead to patients delaying or not administering the treatment. The announcement comes almost one year after the FDA [declined](#) the spray's approval and called for further testing.

Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **Pro-Palestine Activists Organizing Another Week of Widespread Protests:** While much of the activism in the U.S. this week will focus on the DNC in Chicago, notable activity is expected across the country. On Wednesday in Saint Paul, Minnesota, demonstrators intend to confront VP candidate Tim Walz at a meeting of the State Board of Investment (Minnesota Senate Building at 10 am). Later in the week, on Sunday, activists are organizing a day of action under the slogan "Not Another Bomb," with demonstrations planned in major cities like Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle, and elsewhere. Gatherings are also being planned in other urban centers across the globe, spurred in part by Israel's [recent deadly strike](#) on a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City.
- **U.K. Protests Lull After Busy Weekend, More Activity on Horizon:** Opposing [demonstrations](#) following the fatal stabbing in Southport have lessened in intensity since their peak; however, unrest remains, and further gatherings are expected this week. Birmingham will be a location to watch in the coming days, as unverified [chatter](#) suggests a protest is planned there on Saturday and may be attended by [Tommy Robinson](#) and/or his supporters. Counterdemonstrators would likely meet such a gathering, increasing the risk of

confrontations. This past weekend saw [widespread actions](#) against racism in cities across the U.K., and while there were disruptions and [arrests](#), the demonstrations were peaceful.

- **Serbia Faces Mass Protests, Blockades Against Lithium Mine Project:** Growing unrest over the potential development of a lithium mine in Serbia [erupted](#) this weekend, and protests are likely to continue in the days ahead. Tens of thousands took to the streets Saturday to call on the government to stop any development of the site, an activity that President Aleksandar Vučić [claimed](#) was part of a western plot to unseat him. Demonstrations in Belgrade involved road and rail blockades, and after authorities arrested participating activists, demonstrators returned to the streets Sunday and [blocked](#) an intersection near the seat of the government. Additional protesters were detained Sunday and [sentenced](#) to prison, prompting organizers to [say](#) they would take further disruptive action if their colleagues were not released by Wednesday. Before then, a demonstration is planned on Tuesday on Novi Sad's Žeželj Bridge. In 2022, a similar protest campaign led the government to [scrap](#) development plans for the site.
- **Venezuela's Opposition Calls for Demonstrations Saturday Amid Election Unrest:** Disruptions are likely across Venezuela on Saturday due to nationwide [demonstrations](#) called by opposition leader Maria Corina Machado. The protests come as political unrest continues to simmer in the country after July's election, which ended with incumbent Nicolas Maduro declaring victory despite [internal](#) and [external](#) assertions that his opponent received more votes. Machado is said to be in hiding as Maduro, who has thus far maintained the support of the military, [embarks](#) on a detention campaign against those who question his alleged election win. Cities outside the country with large Venezuelan populations may see demonstrations this weekend, too, as Machado's call to action was worldwide.
- **Other Notable Activity the Global Intelligence Team Is Watching:** On the industrial action front, a number of planned or potential actions are on our radar, the most significant of which is a [possible rail strike in Canada](#). A walkout by employees at Canadian National Railway Co. and Canadian Pacific Kansas City Ltd. is looming and could begin August 22. Outside this, notable events in the days ahead include a [Jeepney strike](#) in the **Philippines**, an easyjet [walkout](#) in **Portugal**, widespread, [indefinite action](#) by doctors in **India**, and a [strike](#) by the **Kenya** Aviation Workers Union. Among the demonstrations we'll be watching this week, highlighted gatherings include further protests outside Citibank's headquarters in **Manhattan** on Tuesday and Friday, farmer [demonstrations](#) in **India** on Thursday, and a protest at Tirana City Hall in **Albania** on Thursday, where previous related actions have resulted in clashes.

Weekly Intelligence Briefing

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Upcoming Events

- August 12-18: Tour de France Femmes (France)
- August 13: Defence Forces Day (Zimbabwe)
- August 14: Independence Day (Pakistan)
- August 15: Independence Day (India)
- August 15: Assumption of Mary (Global)
- 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 26: Janmashtami (India)
- August 28-September 8: Paris Paralympic Games (France)
- August 31: Independence Day (Malaysia)
- September 1: Parliamentary Elections (Azerbaijan)
- 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)
- September 15: Presidential Election (Romania)
- September 15-16: Mawlid (Eid-e-Milad an-Nabi) (Global)