

August 26, 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

Northern Plains, Great Lakes at Risk for Significant Late-Season Severe Thunderstorms Monday

The **Storm Prediction Center** issued a significant Level 3 (five-tier scale) severe thunderstorm risk centered over Minneapolis, Rochester, St. Cloud (MN), Sioux Falls, and Pierre (SD) for today. While peak severe thunderstorm season typically coincides with spring, atmospheric conditions are ripe for scattered damaging wind gusts over 65-75mph and accompanying power outages, large damaging hail, and brief tornadoes. Scattered thunderstorms will develop between 3 pm and 5 pm (local time), though the risk of damaging severe weather will likely last through Monday night. A lesser Level 2 potential for widely scattered damaging gusts near 60mph and hail extends from Nebraska and eastern Wyoming through Wisconsin and into Michigan. In the East, a small Level 2 severe thunderstorm risk for scattered damaging winds, isolated hail, and flash flooding has been highlighted across Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and southern New Hampshire. Peak thunderstorm activity this afternoon and evening will likely produce areas of travel disruption and scattered power outages.

German and French Officials Investigate Separate Violent Acts of Terrorism

Recent attacks in Germany and France underscore the growing threat of terrorism in Europe. German officials are **investigating** a stabbing attack at a festival in Solingen as an act of suspected terrorism. The incident occurred on Saturday during the city's 650th anniversary celebration, leaving three people dead and eight others injured. The Islamic State **claimed responsibility** for the attack, with German prosecutors later announcing that the primary suspect is "strongly

suspected of membership in a terrorist organization abroad.” In response, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz **promised** to strengthen deportation enforcement, and German lawmakers are **considering** stricter weapons laws. The attack comes days ahead of regional elections in eastern Germany, where Alternative for Germany (AfD) party rhetoric has been **quick to connect** the suspect’s identity as an asylum seeker from Syria to perceived security failings by the German government.

Meanwhile, in France, authorities are **investigating** an arson attack on the Beth Yaacov synagogue outside of Montpellier as a terrorist act. A police officer was **injured** when a gas canister exploded outside the synagogue, where the perpetrator set fire to two cars and the synagogue building. The five people inside were unharmed. In response to the attack, France’s Minister of the Interior **deployed** additional police personnel to protect Jewish places of worship.

Latin American Countries Form Regional Alliance to Address Threat From Organized Crime

Authorities and political leaders of several Latin American countries have **formed** a regional alliance to combat organized crime. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) estimates that activities from organized crime cost the region around 3.5% of GDP. The new initiative comes as armed groups **expand** further into everyday politics and legitimate businesses and have begun impacting areas that were previously considered safe.

After years of being considered one of the more secure locations in South America, Chile has seen a rise in activities linked to **organized crime**. The country recorded nine homicides last weekend, with nearly half **occurring** in Santiago’s La Pintana municipality. The latest spike comes after one 48-hour period in July that saw 16 homicides. One researcher, who formerly worked with Chile’s Carabineros police unit, attributes the increase in violent crime to a loss of trust in the police since the 2019 protest movement and the introduction of new criminal actors, particularly Tren de Aragua from Venezuela.

Climate and Natural Hazards

- **State of Emergency Following Alaska Landslide:** A **state of emergency** was declared late Sunday after what some residents are describing as the worst landslide in Ketchikan in at least 65 years. According to **local authorities**, there is one known fatality; three individuals were transported to Ketchikan Medical Center, and all people have been accounted for. There is still the potential for a secondary landslide south of the original incident, and localized evacuation orders remain in effect.
- **Hurricane Hone Delivers Rain, Wind to Hawaii; Eyes Turn to Hurricane Gilma:** The Big Island of Hawaii was impacted by a rare western tracking hurricane Saturday night into Sunday. **Hurricane Hone** produced nearly 30,000 power outages, isolated flash flooding, and

rough seas, with Hawaii County facing the brunt of the damage. Now that Hone is departing the region and conditions are normalizing, the focus will turn to **Hurricane Gilma**, which is expected to weaken as it approaches Hawaii from the East on Friday or over the weekend.

- **Typhoon Shanshan Intensifying, Approaching Japan:** Shanshan is **forecast** to undergo rapid intensification into a strong typhoon (Category 3 hurricane equivalent) by Wednesday as it slowly approaches Kagoshima Prefecture. The storm is then expected to take an abrupt northeast turn, making landfall over Kyushu Thursday before tracking over Honshu through late week. The slow movement of the system will prolong the effects of severe winds and, more notably, the threat of catastrophic heavy rain, flooding, and landslides. Widespread Level 4 emergency warnings and localized Level 5 (highest level) warnings for impending flooding and landslides may ultimately be issued for millions of residents.
- **Over Five Million Impacted by Flooding in Bangladesh:** Severe flooding has devastated Feni, Cumilla, Chattogram, Khagrachari, Noakhali, Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Brahmanbaria, and surrounding areas of Bangladesh, impacting more than **5.7 million people** and killing at least 23. The floods have caused widespread infrastructure damage, including causing cracks in a flood control dam in Cumilla, submerging around 100 villages, damaging telecommunication networks, and cutting off access to essential services. The floods are considered the **worst in Bangladesh in the past three decades**.
- **Deep Depression to Drive Historic Rain Over Western India, Southern Pakistan:** Red (highest level) rainfall warnings are in effect across **northwestern India**, including parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and western Madhya Pradesh through August 29, as a potent, low-pressure system tracks across the region. **Pakistani weather authorities** are also warning of torrential rainfall—especially over southern areas—over the next three days. Forecast models are signaling that localized rain totals over 500mm (20in) may be observed. Life-threatening flash flooding and landslides are expected in the hardest-hit areas.
- **Dense Wildfire Smoke in Brazil's Federal District:** In Brazil's **Federal District**, over 200 vegetation fires were observed over the weekend and dense smoke is still being reported as of today. Elsewhere, fire crews in the **state of São Paulo** have successfully extinguished all active fires. Recent fires have burned over 34,000 hectares across 14 regions. The fires resulted in 68 casualties, including two deaths and 66 injuries, with 24 simultaneous fire sites reported on August 24. A total of 48 municipalities remain on **high alert**.

Worldwide

- **Tensions Recede on Israel-Lebanon Border After Weekend Skirmish:** Following **heavy cross-border fire** between Israel and Hezbollah Sunday, fears of an immediate escalation have receded after both sides **signaled** a desire to avoid broader confrontation for now. Nevertheless, tensions remain high, and Hezbollah indicated that the weekend activity was just the first phase in its response to the assassination of **Fuad Shukr** last month. Amid the skirmish, Israel **implemented** restrictions on gatherings and other activities from Tel Aviv northward; however, most measures had been **lifted** as of Monday. Much of the focus now

returns to a potential ceasefire deal, which remains elusive and appears **unlikely** to come to fruition in the near future as Israel continues widespread operations, ordering evacuations across Gaza at a clip not seen in months.

- **Rising Death Toll After Militant Attacks in Balochistan, Pakistan:** More than 60 people are dead after **separatist militant attacks** targeted transportation infrastructure and police stations in Pakistan's Balochistan province. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), a separatist militant group, took responsibility for the operation. The BLA says the government unfairly exploits natural resources in the province, demands the expulsion of China from the region, and wants independence for Balochistan. Also, August 26 is the anniversary of the death of Baloch nationalist leader Akbar Bugti, who was **killed by Pakistan's security forces in 2006**. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowed that security forces would retaliate and bring those responsible to justice.
- **Indonesia's Election Laws Halted, Protesters Attempt to Storm Parliament:** Amid protests outside parliament, legislators met in an emergency session on Thursday and **canceled the ratification of changes to Indonesia's election laws** after failing to achieve a quorum. Protesters chanted with banners and burned tires; police deployed tear gas and water cannons to disperse thousands of demonstrators when some attempted to storm the parliament building after tearing down a section of fence. Simultaneous protests in major cities throughout Indonesia highlight the movement's popularity and organization. Their demands included voting down the regional election bill, respecting the Constitutional Court's ruling, and rejecting political dynasties. The heart of the matter is allowing more candidates to compete in regional elections and opposing nepotism at the hands of outgoing President Jokowi. Further demonstration activity is expected ahead of regional elections in November.
- **Venezuela's Supreme Court Upholds Maduro Victory as Opposition Plans More Protests:** Venezuela's Supreme Court has **endorsed** President Nicolás Maduro's claim of victory in the recent presidential election, dismissing voting tallies published online that suggested he lost by a significant margin. The High Court's ruling contradicts findings by international observers like the United Nations and the Carter Center, which questioned the credibility of the results of the July 28 election. The opposition Democratic Unity Platform has called for **additional demonstrations** in Caracas on Wednesday.
- **Russia Launches Attack on Ukrainian Infrastructure:** Russia **launched** around 200 missiles and drones at Ukraine earlier today, striking infrastructure targets and killing at least five people as Moscow looks to damage Ukraine's power grid ahead of another wartime winter. The salvo came as Ukraine continues to **advance** in Russia's Kursk region. The fighting in Russia has **worried** the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is monitoring the safety of the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant. The assault on Kursk has not stopped Russia from **closing in** on the logistics hub of Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine. To the north, Ukraine has said that **Belarus** is massing troops on the border "under the guise of exercises."
- **Clashes During Demonstration in Davao City, Philippines:** Over the weekend, police began a **search** for Apollo Quiboloy, leader of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (KOJC), at the group's

compound in Davao City. On Sunday night, supporters of Quiboloy, who is **wanted** on charges of child abuse and human trafficking, staged a protest that **involved** clashes with police and closed a section of the Carlos P Garcia Highway. The demonstrations disrupted operations at Francisco Bangoy International Airport and forced trucks to **reroute** around the impacted area. At least 18 people were **arrested** after police moved to disperse the demonstrators. Police have said they will continue operations at the compound until they find Quiboloy.

Cyber and Regulatory

- **Judge Strikes Down Federal Trade Commission Rule Banning Noncompetes:** Last week, a Texas judge blocked a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) **rule** that would have banned noncompete agreements in the United States. District Judge Ada Brown **said** the FTC “lacked substantive rulemaking authority with respect to unfair methods of competition” and **criticized** the sweeping nature of the agency’s rule, which was set to go into effect September 4. A FTC spokesperson said they were considering an appeal and claimed the decision does not prevent the agency from addressing noncompete agreements through “case-by-case enforcement actions.”
- **Government, Activists Trade Claims Over Reason for Pakistan’s Internet Slowdown:** For weeks, Pakistanis have had to deal with **slow-moving** Internet, a **costly** issue that officials previously blamed on the widespread use of VPNs across the country. However, last week, amid growing assertions that the government’s alleged construction of a “**China-style internet firewall**” was actually at fault for the slowdown, authorities identified a different culprit, stating that a **defective undersea cable** was to blame. Officials said the Internet issues would be resolved by tomorrow. Still, their new explanation is unlikely to diminish concerns over the national firewall, which analysts **warn** could be used for greater surveillance and censorship of the web.
- **U.S. Tech Companies, Business Groups Share Concern Over Hong Kong Cyber Law:** Bloomberg **reports** that U.S. tech companies have been sharing concerns over a proposed cyber law that they feel gives the Hong Kong government “overly broad powers” that could “threaten the integrity of service providers” operating in the metropolis. A particular issue within the **legislation**, aimed at “enhancing protection of computer systems” of entities that maintain key infrastructure for Hong Kong society, is a provision that would **allow** authorities to connect equipment or install programs in private business systems in the event of a security incident. The law has added to unease over what U.S. officials have **warned** is growing censorship in Hong Kong.
- **U.S. Officials Issue Warning Over Iranian Attempts to Influence 2024 Election:** U.S. intelligence officials issued a **joint statement** last week warning of increased Iranian efforts to influence the 2024 U.S. election. The advisory followed similar recent observations posted by **Microsoft** and **Google**, and just days after it was released, Meta **announced** that it had acted against a cluster of WhatsApp users linked to Iran that had posed as support agents for

tech companies to target staffers from both the Trump and Biden administrations. In addition to cyber operations, officials **say** Tehran is also engaged in influence operations targeting the American public, employing “vast webs” of “online personas and propaganda mills” to spread disinformation.

- **Other Stories the Global Intelligence Team Is Watching:** Officials in Pakistan **arrested** an individual on cyber terrorism charges for posting disinformation in connection with the **Southport stabbing**. The arrest follows several others in the U.K. that have **ignited** a debate in the country over the boundaries of free speech in the face of violence fueled by mis- and disinformation. In other news, on the hacking front, we’re tracking an **attack** that took some of Haliburton’s systems offline last week, an intrusion that has **disrupted** operations at Microchip Technology Inc., a **provider** of chips for the U.S. defense sector, and an apparent **targeting** of Seattle’s port and airport on Sunday. Meanwhile, two major data leakages made headlines last week, **one** at Chile’s largest pension and social security fund and **another** at FlightAware.

Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **Canada Orders End-to-Work Stoppage on Railways:** The Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) sided with Labour Minister Steven Mackinnon, **requiring** operations to resume at Canadian National Railway and Canadian Pacific Kansas City by 12:01 am this morning. The CIRB also imposed binding arbitration between the railroads and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference. The Teamsters said they would comply with the order but plan to appeal the CIRB’s ruling. While disruptions to freight traffic were relatively short-lived, the dispute still managed to cause **economic damage**, especially to agriculture, forestry, and manufacturing.
- **Oil Tanker Drifting in Red Sea After Houthi Attack:** The Sounion, a Greek-flagged oil tanker that was attacked last week by Houthi militants in Yemen, appears to be **drifting and on fire** in the Red Sea. With a cargo of 150,000 tons of crude oil, the European Union’s Aspides naval mission **said** that the vessel now poses a “navigational and environmental hazard” and urged those in the area to act with caution. Since the conflict in Gaza began, the Houthis have targeted more than 80 vessels. Statistics from the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation **indicate** that the Sounion’s sinking could lead to the fifth-worst oil spill of all time, approximately four times larger than the Exxon Valdez.
- **China Begins Anti-Dumping Investigation Into European Dairy:** China is **launching** an anti-dumping investigation into European dairy products in retaliation for tariffs the European Union has imposed on battery-electric vehicles from China. The latest move targeting dairy comes after similar investigations were initiated into French cognac and European pork. While China **imports** some dairy products from Europe, its largest international supplier is New Zealand. Observers are concerned that the current dispute could continue escalating, impacting other economic sectors.
- **India to Improve Water Infrastructure in Major Cities:** India has **set aside** around \$300 million over the next two years to mitigate flooding and improve water conservation in seven

major cities, including Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, and Bengaluru. Under the plan, officials will expand bodies of water like lakes and build drains. In addition to flooding, some Indian cities, such as Bengaluru and Delhi (which isn't set to receive funding), have been grappling with water shortages in recent years.

- **Australia Implements Right to Disconnect Law:** A **new rule** went into effect today in Australia, making it illegal in most cases to punish employees for not reading or responding to messages from their employers after work hours. Employees can only refuse to respond when it is "reasonable" to do so for emergencies and jobs with irregular hours, a determination that the Fair Work Commission will make.

Health

- **Thailand Records Second Case of New Mpox Variant Outside of Africa Amid Delays in Vaccine Shipments:** In Thailand, a European man who works in Africa developed mild symptoms of mpox and was hospitalized; tests confirmed **the man had contracted the clade 1b variant** of mpox. In the U.S., the Wayne County Health Department in Michigan **reported the first case in the United States** since 2022, although they are awaiting test results on the specific strain. The new cases come as public health bodies struggle to ramp up vaccination efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the epicenter of the current outbreak. Congo's health minister said that an expected arrival of mpox vaccines had been **delayed** and will no longer arrive this week, as was originally anticipated. Meanwhile, other countries are determining how best to prevent further spread. According to government officials, Argentine authorities **quarantined a cargo ship sailing from Brazil** in the Parana River over a suspected case of mpox aboard. Europe's Health Security Committee has **recommended vaccination for certain groups** but ruled out border controls. For further reading, please see our **Situation Report**.
- **FDA Approves New COVID-19 Vaccines:** Updated COVID-19 vaccines will start appearing in pharmacies in the coming days after U.S. regulators **approve** the latest offerings from Pfizer and Moderna. The vaccines are designed to provide broader protection against current and emerging variants, including KP.2. Despite high virus levels detected in wastewater across many states, serious outcomes like hospital visits and deaths from COVID remain low. Nevertheless, ahead of the upcoming respiratory virus season, the Biden administration intends to **resume** its free at-home test program in September. Americans will be able to order up to four tests at no charge through [COVID.gov/tests](https://www.covid.gov/tests).
- **Previously Issued Candy Recall Upgraded to Most Severe Recall Classification:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) upgraded a previous **recall** of about two dozen snack and candy products from Palmer Candy Co. to the highest level after **determining** that consumption of the affected ingredients "can cause serious adverse health consequences or even death." The original recall, which impacted several major retailers, including Target and Walmart, was announced over potential salmonella contamination in May. A full list of affected products can be found on the FDA's recall **notice**.

- **Nurses to Hold Strike in South Korea:** Amid the monthslong **strike** by junior doctors in South Korea, nurses and other health workers **announced** that they will halt work on Thursday. Workers at 61 hospitals intend to walk out to demand salary increases and to denounce what they say are unmanageable working conditions caused in part by the junior doctors' strike. Emergency and ICU services are not expected to be affected; however, there are concerns that the action could exacerbate staff shortages that many health facilities already face. The government is **drawing** up plans to mitigate the effects of the planned work stoppage.
- **Authorities Advise Curfews for Massachusetts Towns Over Mosquito-Borne Disease:** Officials in four Massachusetts towns are **urging** people to stay indoors at night after confirming the first human case of **Eastern Equine Encephalitis** (EEE) in the state since 2020. Authorities **warn** that the EEE risk level is "critical" in Douglas, Oxford, Sutton, and Webster. Health officials advise residents in these areas to avoid being outside during peak mosquito hours (after 6 pm) until at least September 30 and after 5 pm following the first hard frost. While EEE is rare, it has a fatality rate of about 30%, and survivors of the virus are often permanently disabled.

Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **Pro-Palestine Demonstrations Continue Worldwide, U.S. Campuses Ban Certain Activities:** As college students return to campuses across the U.S., university officials are **rolling out** measures to prevent disruptions seen from pro-Palestine protests in the spring. The University of California has **directed** its 10 campuses to enforce bans against campus encampments and certain activities, including overnight protests and "unauthorized temporary or permanent structures." Off-campus, notable demonstrations planned this coming Saturday include Dublin (Garden of Remembrance), Mexico City (The Angel of Independence), Munich (Marienplatz), and Ottawa (Human Rights Monument). Early next week, Within Our Lifetime is calling on supporters to 'Flood New York City for Gaza' on Monday, September 2, at noon at Manhattan's Union Square.
- **Judiciary Strike Continues in Mexico Over Proposed Government Reforms:** Disruptions to court proceedings in Mexico are expected to continue this week as judicial workers maintain their strike against proposed **reforms** by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's government that would allow for the popular election of judges. Judges and magistrates across Mexico began a work stoppage last week over **concerns** that the reforms would allow political parties and outside actors to have undue influence over the appointment of judicial authorities. Thousands of people demonstrated against the proposed measures on Sunday in Mexico City, with another **gathering planned tonight** at the Angel of Independence at 7 pm.
- **Notable Climate Demonstrations Across Europe:** The climate activist group Fossilvrij Netherlands (Fossil Free Netherlands) will kick off an action camp Wednesday at Pernisserpark, just outside Rotterdam. While most activities at the park should remain nondisruptive, the group is planning a "mass action" against the fuel industry on Saturday.

Meanwhile, in England, Extinction Rebellion intends to conduct a three-day “mass occupation” of Windsor Great Park beginning Friday. Heightened security and large crowds can be expected in the area. XR organizers anticipate thousands of people will participate in what they call a “peaceful” event demanding that the government create a “Citizens’ Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice.”

- **Possible Flight Disruptions During Upcoming European Strikes:** Travel disruptions are possible at London’s Heathrow Airport (LHR) at the end of the month due to a **strike** by Border Force officers. The PCS union expects approximately 650 employees to take part in a four-day walkout beginning August 31. Previous strikes at Heathrow have led to varied levels of disruption and primarily affected arriving passengers. The strikes typically cause longer wait times at immigration checkpoints, leading to potential knock-on effects like flight delays or cancellations. In Portugal, airport ground handling workers **intend to strike** from August 31 to September 1 over salaries and working conditions. The STTAMP union is calling for a two-day strike by ground handling staff employed by Groundforce. It is **warning** of “major disruptions” at all national airports across Portugal, including Porto and Lisbon.
- **Kenya to Reintroduce Some Tax Proposals After Fatal Protests Earlier This Summer:** Activists are planning to restart demonstrations this week, demanding that President Ruto step down amid the **reinstatement of some tax proposals**. Calls are circulating online for people to demonstrate nationwide on Tuesday. Widespread protests broke out across Kenya in June against Finance Bill 2024, a piece of legislation under consideration by the government that would introduce new taxes. This summer’s demonstrations have involved **clashes** with the police, resulting in more than 50 deaths and extensive arrests, especially in the capital Nairobi.

Upcoming Events

- August 19-29: Ulchi Freedom Shield Military Exercises (South Korea)
- 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 7: Ganesh Chaturthi (India)
- September 10: Presidential Debate (Philadelphia, PA)
- September 10: Legislative Elections (Jordan)
- September 10-24: United Nations General Assembly (New York City, NY)
- September 11: Nayrouz (Egypt)
- September 15-16: Mawlid (Eid-e-Milad an-Nabi) (Global)
- September 15-October 15: Fiestas Patrias, Hispanic Heritage Month (Global)