

November 18, 2024

Headlining This Week's Brief

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Top Stories

Major Atmospheric River to Impact Northern California and the Pacific Northwest U.S.

A rapidly deepening low-pressure (storm) system off British Columbia, Canada's coast, will create a potent [atmospheric river](#) expected to impact Northern California, western Oregon, and western Washington between Wednesday and Saturday. The system will transport extreme moisture from the tropics into the Pacific Northwest, likely leading to at least [six to 12 inches of rain](#) across Northern California, including Eureka and Fort Bragg. Severe rainfall totals will support numerous instances of flash flooding, especially across low-lying areas of northwestern California. Burn scar areas from wildfires in recent years may be most susceptible to flash flooding and debris flows. The [Weather Prediction Center](#) issued a Level 3 (four-tier scale) risk of excessive rainfall for the area with the most dangerous conditions expected on Thursday, and an upgrade to a maximum Level 4 cannot be ruled out. A [flood watch](#) from the National Weather Service is also in effect for portions of the region. The atmospheric river will produce powerful wind gusts during the period, which could lead to scattered power outages and downed trees as the ground becomes increasingly saturated. While snow levels are expected to rise through the week, heavy snow may lead to additional travel disruptions in the higher elevations of the Olympics, Cascades, and Northern Rockies. Residents within the region should pay close attention to warnings from local authorities as substantial disruptions to daily life are expected.

China Sees Two Mass Killing Incidents in One Week

Last week, China experienced two instances of mass violence. On Monday, an individual [drove](#) an SUV into a crowd at a sports stadium in Zhuhai, Guangdong, killing 35 people and injuring 45 others. It was the deadliest incident of public violence in the country in decades. Authorities have attributed the attack to personal grievances related to a divorce settlement. This incident occurred just before the Zhuhai

Airshow; a major event supported by the People's Liberation Army. A few days later, a [knife attack](#) at the Wuxi Vocational Institute of Arts and Technology in China's Jiangsu province left at least eight dead and 17 injured. The assailant, a 21-year-old student who was apprehended at the scene, was reportedly frustrated over failed exams and dissatisfied with his internship pay.

The attacks are part of what is becoming a growing trend of mass casualty incidents in China as the country contends with an extended period of economic doldrums. At least six other [high-profile knife attacks](#) have taken place across the country this year. Some commentators within China have [connected](#) the rise in violent attacks to the country's economic challenges and unaddressed social grievances. Public discourse around the events appears to be [heavily censored](#). Still, following the attack in Zhuhai, Chinese leader Xi Jinping [issued](#) a rare public statement, calling on officials to address the issue of rising violence "at source." Policymakers had recently [approved](#) a \$1.4 trillion stimulus package aimed at jumpstarting the economy but are bracing for more headwinds as U.S. President-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office after promising sweeping new tariffs on all Chinese goods.

Ceasefire Negotiations Between Israel, Hezbollah Continue as Tensions Escalate

Efforts to negotiate a [ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hezbollah are gaining momentum as the United States pushes for a 60-day cessation of hostilities aligned with U.N. Resolution 1701. This proposal would require armed groups to withdraw from south of the Litani River, leaving the area under the control of Lebanese Armed Forces and U.N. peacekeepers. While Lebanese officials remain optimistic about Hezbollah's eventual acceptance, Israeli strikes have intensified, targeting Hezbollah-dominated areas and causing significant civilian casualties. These talks are unfolding alongside President-elect Donald Trump's [announcement](#) that Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee has been nominated as the next U.S. ambassador to Israel, signaling a likely alignment of future U.S. policy with Israel's interests. The destruction of key infrastructure, such as a civil defense headquarters, underscores the challenges of enforcing such a ceasefire. Questions remain about the Lebanese Armed Forces' ability to maintain stability in the region, adding further uncertainty to the negotiations.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza, meanwhile, has escalated to what aid organizations describe as an "apocalyptic" state. Despite U.S. pressure, Israel has failed to fully implement measures aimed at alleviating the crisis. Aid groups [report](#) widespread starvation, while attacks on humanitarian sites continue to hinder relief operations. Despite the dire conditions within Gaza, [U.S. officials](#) "have not made an assessment that the Israelis are in violation of U.S. law" and that they would not be changing their policy towards Israel at this time. Contrasting Washington's stance, a U.N. [report](#) released this week asserted that Israel's actions in Gaza are consistent with genocide.

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has [announced](#) plans to prepare for annexation, citing expected support from the incoming Trump administration. Smotrich has directed the development of infrastructure to extend sovereignty over settlements, a move criticized by Palestinian officials as a blatant violation of international law. The annexation agenda has sparked concerns about further destabilization in the region, particularly as tensions continue to escalate in Gaza and Lebanon. While Israel's Foreign Minister has indicated no formal decision has been made, Smotrich's actions underscore a broader push within the Israeli government to solidify control over the West Bank.

Climate and Natural Hazards

- **Fourth Typhoon Strikes Philippines in Just 10 Days:** The latest storm to impact the Philippines, 'Man-yi' (known in the Philippines as 'Pepito'), made a second landfall as a super typhoon on Sunday in Aurora. As of the [latest update from the NDRRMC](#), over 300,000 people remain in evacuation centers while Man-yi now lies over the [South China Sea](#). The storm triggered a landslide in Ambaguio, Nueva Vizcaya, that [killed at least seven people](#). Over the next seven days, no additional tropical activity is expected over the western Pacific Basin.
- **Widespread Flooding in Honduras Following Sara, U.S. Gulf Coast Now At-Risk:** Tropical Storm Sara produced extreme rainfall over northern Honduras, leading to significant flooding and thousands of evacuations. As of Monday, Sara has dissipated, though over [6,000 people remain in shelters](#) as rivers continue to rise. On Tuesday, moisture from Sara's remnants will promote an elevated [flash flood threat](#) between eastern Louisiana and the Florida Panhandle.
- **Northern Europe to Experience Several Winter Storms:** A series of weather systems are expected to impact the United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, and surrounding countries this week as below-average temperatures settle over the region. Most notably, blizzard conditions may impact Stockholm on Wednesday, and over one to two feet of snow is possible across the Alps between Wednesday and Friday.
- **Stagnant Weather Pattern Leading to Poor Air Quality in Pakistan and India:** Severe air quality levels are a common concern this time of year due to increased heating emissions, seasonal crop burning, and weather patterns that 'trap' smoke and pollutants near ground levels. In Delhi, India, [GRAP Stage 4](#) air pollution control measures were introduced on Monday as air pollution reached its [worst level of the season](#). In Pakistan, the Punjab Health Department has declared a [health emergency](#) due to the smog, as nearly [two million people](#) have sought medical attention in the past 30 days. Both locations have announced school closures for the week of November 18.

Worldwide

- **Flights to Haiti Suspended After Commercial Planes Struck With Gunfire** : The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) [suspended](#) all flights to Haiti for 30 days after a Spirit Airlines plane was struck by gunfire while attempting to land in Port-au-Prince last Monday. En route from Fort Lauderdale, the Spirit flight was diverted to the Dominican Republic, where it landed safely, with only a minor injury reported. It marks the second incident of gunfire targeting an aircraft over Haiti in recent weeks as the Caribbean Islands nation contends with rising gang violence and instability. The incident comes as Haiti's ruling council [fired](#) interim Prime Minister Garry Conille and replaced him with Alix Didier Fils-Aimé. The move raises further questions as to when Haiti, nominally a democracy but which has no elected officials in power at present, will see a return to political stability.
- **Suicide Bomber Dead After Attempting to Blow Up Brazil's Supreme Court**: Last Wednesday, a suicide bomber was [killed](#) by their explosives while attempting to blow up Brazil's Supreme Court building on the eve of the G20 Summit. The suspect was found dead outside the building following two explosions, which bystanders say were caused by devices the suspect threw. No one else was injured, and authorities swiftly secured the area, deploying a bomb disposal robot to inspect the body. Officials are investigating the incident as a "terrorist attack" by politically motivated domestic extremists.
- **U.S. to Allow Ukraine to Strike Targets Deep Inside Russia as Ties Deepen Between Moscow and Pyongyang**: The Biden Administration has [removed previous limitations](#) on the use of U.S.-supplied weapons to conduct long-range strikes on targets deep in Russia. The change in stance was [reportedly](#) in response to Russia's decision to involve North Korean troops as it seeks to retake territory captured by Ukraine in the Kursk region. In another example of deepening ties between North Korea and Russia, the two countries [ratified](#) a comprehensive mutual defense treaty early last week. Meanwhile, away from the frontlines, Russia [continues](#) to launch attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure ahead of winter.
- **Russia Cuts Off Gas Supplies to Austria**: Russia's state-owned energy company Gazprom recently cut off natural [gas supplies to Austria](#) in a move that European leadership has called a [weaponization of energy](#) supplies. The decision mimics similar Russian actions made in [2022](#), when it cut Nord Stream gas flows to Europe and raises the specter of [further threats](#) to critical European infrastructure. Elsewhere, the Russian intelligence ship Yantar was escorted from the Irish Sea after it was observed [using drones](#) to monitor the area near critical commercial undersea internet cables.

- **Protesters Take Over Government Buildings in Abkhazia:** On Friday, [demonstrations and clashes](#) broke out during the storming and seizure of the parliament building and presidential office in the capital city of Sukhumi in the Georgian breakaway province of Abkhazia. Demonstrations began during a parliamentary discussion on ratifying a measure allowing Russians to buy property in the province, a move that demonstrators worried would increase property rates and Russian influence. President Aslan Bzhania vowed to remove the measure and possibly resign if demonstrators leave the parliament. However, demonstrators are demanding his immediate resignation and snap elections. As of Sunday, demonstrators [continued](#) to occupy the buildings.

Cyber and Regulatory

- **News Organizations, Other Users Migrating From X to Bluesky:** British news outlet [The Guardian](#) and Spanish newspaper [La Vanguardia](#) announced that they would stop posting to the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), citing the proliferation of “often disturbing content.” Their decision is a part of the [larger user exodus](#) from the platform that has gained momentum since April 2022, when Elon Musk acquired the platform. Users appear to be joining [Bluesky](#), a newer social media platform that opened to the public in February 2024. The new platform saw [2.5 million new users](#) sign up in the first week following the U.S. presidential election, while X saw the largest number of account deactivations since Musk’s acquisition.
- **FBI, CISA Warn of “Significant” Chinese Cyberespionage Against Government Workers:** A joint statement from the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) cautioned that there is a [“broad and significant”](#) cyberespionage effort by the Chinese government underway aimed at stealing information from “a limited number of individuals who are primarily involved in government or political activity.” As part of the effort, China has compromised the networks of multiple telecommunications companies, with the Wall Street Journal [reporting](#) that T-Mobile has become the latest victim of Beijing’s “Salt Typhoon” hacking campaign. Other impacted companies include AT&T, Verizon, and Lumen Technologies.
- **FDA Ruling Targets Deceptive Pharmaceutical Advertisements:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [finalized](#) a ruling in late 2023 targeting pharmaceutical ads on TV and radio. The instructions, which have a compliance date of November 20, [state](#) that the advertisements must state a drug’s “side effects and contraindications in a clear, conspicuous, and neutral manner” without distractions. Although TV advertisements remain the primary format, a bill [introduced](#) to Congress seeks to bring influencers and telehealth providers under the FDA’s purview and require drug companies to publicize how much they pay influencers.

- **Federal Judge Blocks Overtime Pay Expansion:** U.S. District Judge Sean Jordan, a federal judge in Texas, **blocked** an overtime pay expansion finalized by the Biden administration in early 2024. The ruling sought to increase the overtime eligibility to over four million salaried workers by **increasing** the threshold set in 2019 from \$35,568 to \$58,656 by the start of 2025. Judge Jordan claimed the Labor Department overstepped its legal boundaries by “prioritizing employee wages over job duties when determining eligibility.”
- **Cyber Attackers Move to Disruptive Attacks Against Israel:** Researchers have **identified** the hacking group “WIRTE” as the threat actors behind at least two attacks against Israeli critical infrastructure and government entities. The most recent attacks in October 2024 **targeted** hospitals and other Israeli entities in a phishing campaign that used a newer version of a wiper deployed earlier in the year. WIRTE has continued to strengthen its ties with Hamas through espionage campaigns that have persisted since the start of the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **Netherlands to Join Germany in Reinstating Border Checks:** The Netherlands will **reinstate** land border checks starting December 9 to address irregular migration, following Germany’s recent **decision** to do the same last month. Dutch Migration Minister Marjolein Faber, from Geert Wilders’ anti-immigration Party for Freedom, stated that these checks aim to curb migrant smuggling and irregular migration and align with EU rules that permit temporary border controls in cases of serious security threats. It is unclear how the increased checks will be implemented since no additional funding has been allocated. Faber has said they should be conducted with as little disruption to cross-border traffic as possible.
- **China, Mexico Poised to Retaliate With Trade Restrictions Amid Threats by Trump:** Last week, China laid out new **export controls** on critical metals and raw materials like tungsten, graphite, magnesium, and aluminum alloys as well as “dual use” technologies used for both military and civilian purposes. The measures are set to take effect on December 1, one and a half months ahead of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump’s return to office. China is **reportedly** preparing to strike back against any new tariffs that Trump enacts in office, which analysts speculate may involve measures like agricultural tariffs or sanctions. Last Monday, Mexico **signaled** it would retaliate if Trump followed his threats to impose steep tariffs on Mexican goods.
- **Numerous Natural Disasters Trigger First-Ever IFRC Insurance Payout:** Multiple natural disasters **triggered** the first-ever insurance payout from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) disaster policy. The IFRC’s policy kicked in once Typhoon Yagi topped the \$37.84 million minimum cost threshold for the organization’s disaster spending.

The IFRC has helped over 1.5 million victims of natural disasters, including flooding in Nigeria and landslide events in Nepal. The payout underscores the accelerating and intensifying pace of natural disasters across the globe.

- **Beijing-Funded Megaport in Peru May Reshape Global Trade Routes:** Chinese President Xi Jinping [oversaw](#) the inauguration of the Beijing-funded “Chancay” mega port in Peru during his visit to the country to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. Xi touted the port as the successful starting point to “forge a new maritime-land corridor between China and Latin America” as part of Beijing’s [Belt and Road Initiative](#). The [\\$3.5 billion](#) deep-water port is part of an effort to build alternative trade routes through Latin America amid tensions with Europe and the U.S. China’s forays into the region come amid perceptions of America’s “[indifference](#)” towards the region. China’s investments in Latin America largely center on natural resources like mining and agriculture, although they are increasingly involving technology, space, and telecommunications.
- **Subsea Cable Linking Germany and Finland Severed: [A fault has been detected](#)** in a submarine cable connecting Finland and Germany, disrupting telecommunications on the cable. Cinia Oy’s C-Lion1 submarine cable, which links Nordic and continental European markets, spans 1,173 kilometers and runs between Helsinki’s Santahamina island and Germany’s Rostock. Cinia says it’s unclear how long it will take to fix the cable, but repairs like this typically take up to 15 days.
- **General Motors Recalls of Over 500,000 Vehicles:** Last Wednesday, General Motors (GM) [recalled](#) over 461,000 vehicles due to a transmission issue. The recall applies to certain 2020-2022 Chevrolet, GMC Sierra, 2021 Cadillac Escalade, Chevrolet Tahoe, and GMC Yukon models. The defect involves a possible failure of the transmission control valve, which may cause crashes. Additionally, GM has [recalled](#) another nearly 78,000 2022-2023 Chevrolet Express and GMC Savana models due to a software issue in the vehicles’ transmission control module.

Health

- **Trump Selects RFK Jr. to Head HHS:** President-elect Donald Trump selected Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to become the next [secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS). The appointment has alarmed several public health experts, who have expressed concern over Kennedy’s history of [spreading health information scientists say is false](#), especially around [vaccines](#). Kennedy has also threatened wide-ranging personnel changes at the agencies he oversees to “[clean up corruption](#).” Some parts of Kennedy’s agenda may be difficult to implement, including attempts to further regulate chemicals in food, which would likely need [Congressional support](#), and the removal of fluoride from public water systems since such policy is set at the local and state levels.

- **First U.S. Mpox Case Confirmed, WHO Reports Further Spread:** U.S. health authorities [confirmed](#) the country's first case of the new, more severe strain of mpox known as clade 1. The disease was found in an individual in northern California who had traveled to eastern Africa, although officials say the risk to the public is low. Meanwhile, mpox case counts [continue to rise within Africa](#), particularly in countries bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As the epidemic continues, the WHO Emergency Committee is set to meet on November 22 to [evaluate](#) whether mpox remains a global health emergency. Efforts to contain the virus in Africa have been hampered by a persistent [vaccine shortage](#)
- **Additional H5N1 Activity in North America:** [Hawaii's Department of Health](#) reports H5N1 avian flu was detected in an Oahu wastewater site for the first time, even though there have been no reported H5N1 human or animal cases in Hawaii. Oregon [reported](#) its first human case of H5N1 elsewhere, while California reported an additional five. Meanwhile, in British Columbia, Canada, a teen who contracted the virus is in [critical condition](#). The patient did not have any known connection to affected farms or poultry. Additional [H5N1 outbreaks in dairy cows and poultry](#) were also reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).
- **WHO: Measles Cases Surge Globally From 2022 to 2023:** The World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that there was a 20% increase in measles cases between 2022 and 2023, with approximately [10.3 million cases](#) reported worldwide last year. The driving force behind the rise is "[inadequate](#)" vaccine coverage, especially in countries dealing with conflict and economic strife. Around [22 million children](#) worldwide went without getting their recommended measles vaccinations in 2023. Measles vaccine coverage was also lacking in developed nations like the U.S., where coverage in kindergartners decreased to 92.7%, [contributing](#) to 277 known cases spread across 32 states.
- **Mask Mandates Return in Some Settings as Respiratory Virus Season Ramps Up:** [Health officials](#) in Sonoma County, CA, have issued a mask mandate for all healthcare workers in patient care areas through April 30. Sonoma County is joining several other counties in the [Bay Area](#) that have also issued mask mandates as the country [prepares](#) for respiratory virus season. The orders come as other parts of the country, including Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., witness an alarming number of cases of "[walking pneumonia.](#)" [Whooping cough](#) is also on the rise, with [Clark County, WA](#), reporting over 400 cases, the most in the state.

Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **Pro-Palestine Groups Organizing Around Black Friday, Day of Solidarity:** Demonstrators are continuing to press their case for a ceasefire in the Middle East, with an uptick in protest activity expected towards the end of the month, timed to coincide with the International Day of Solidarity

with the Palestinian People on November 29. At least one pro-Palestine group has called for a “Global Escalation” on November 27-29, overlapping with the Thanksgiving holiday and Black Friday shopping day in the U.S. On Black Friday, the Palestinian Youth Movement has called for a demonstration at Columbus Circle at 2 pm, while in the U.K., the Palestine Solidarity Campaign is planning a national march in London on Saturday, November 30.

- **French Farmers Protesting Against Mercosur Trade Deal:** France’s main farmers’ unions, FNSEA and Jeunes Agriculteurs (JA), [launched](#) a nationwide demonstration campaign against a [proposed free trade agreement](#) between the European Union and the South American Mercosur trade bloc. The president of the FNSEA [stated](#) that the mobilization will involve a presence in all departments “from Monday for a few days” but that they will not block highways as in previous protest campaigns. Demonstration activity is expected to continue after today. The agricultural group Coordination Rurale (CR) is [calling](#) for an “agricultural revolt” on Tuesday, with the chapter local to Lot-et-Garonne (CR47) calling for multiple demonstrations on roadways across the department. CR47 has also called for a possible freight blockade action on Wednesday.
- **Greek Workers to Stage General Strike:** Disruptions are likely across Greece this Wednesday during a 24-hour nationwide general strike. The Civil Servants’ Confederation (ADEDY) and General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) unions are [calling](#) on workers in the public and private sectors to walk off the job for 24 hours. Schools and banks are expected to remain closed; however, it is [unclear](#) as of this writing whether public transportation workers will participate in the work stoppage. Ship, ferry, and other maritime services will be affected as the Panhellenic Seamen’s Federation is [expected](#) to participate in the work stoppage. Demonstrations are planned in conjunction with the strike. Demonstrators intend to gather in [Athens](#) at Klafthmonos Square at 1 pm and in [Thessaloniki](#) at the Labor and Employment Center at 10:30 am.
- **North American Strikes Put Supply Chain on Edge:** The threat of another U.S. port strike looms as talks [stalled](#) between dockworkers on the East and Gulf Coasts and their employers. After unionized dockworkers held a three-day [strike](#) in October to demand higher wages, workers of the International Longshoremen’s Association may have another work stoppage if an agreement is not reached by January 15, 2025, with automation the key sticking point. In Canada, around 55,000 postal workers [began](#) a 72-hour strike last Friday after failing to reach an agreement with Canada Post regarding wage increases and working conditions. The strike has disrupted mail services ahead of the busy holiday season.
- **Several Organizations to Mark Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women:** Several women’s rights organizations are planning demonstrations on and around November 25 to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. In Costa Rica, Pan y Rosas has called for a national march on November 25, beginning at Parque Central in San Jose at 5 pm. Madrid will see [two separate marches](#), one by the Comisión 8M and the other by the Foro de

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Madrid, with both set to begin at 7 pm. Catalonia will see several actions as well, with the main demonstration expected to take place in Barcelona at the intersection of Pg de Gràcia and Av Diagonal at 6:30 pm. In Bogota, Somos Un Rostro Colectivo plans to hold a sit-in outside of the Attorney General's Office beginning at 3 pm. Several other gatherings are expected.

Upcoming Events

- November 11-22: COP29 - United Nations Climate Change Conference (Baku, Azerbaijan)
- November 18: Independence Day (Morocco)
- November 18-19: G20 2024 Summit (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
- November 20: Legislative Assembly Election (Maharashtra, India)
- November 24: Presidential Election (Romania)
- November 24: Presidential Election, Second Round (Uruguay)
- November 27: General Election (Namibia)
- November 27: Regional Elections (Indonesia)
- November 28: Thanksgiving (United States)
- November 28: Independence Day (Panama)
- November 29: Parliamentary Elections (Ireland)
- November 29: Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (Global)
- November 30: Parliamentary Elections (Iceland)
- November 30: Independence Day (Yemen)
- December 1: Legislative Election (Romania)
- December 7: General Election (Ghana)
- December 14: Martyred Intellectuals Day (Bangladesh)