



**December 2, 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

### **First Significant Lake Effect Snows Concluding, New Storm to Arrive Mid-Week**

A prolonged lake effect snow event that kicked off Friday is drawing to a close. Over the 72-hour period, extreme snowfall was reported downwind of the Great Lakes in northern Michigan, northeastern Ohio, northwestern Pennsylvania, western and Upstate New York, and southwestern and central Ontario. Over [three to five feet of snow](#) was observed near Watertown, NY. Snowfall rates as high as two to four inches per hour led to near-zero visibility under the persistent bands, severely disrupting travel and necessitating a [State of Emergency](#) for several New York counties. Some of the most dangerous impacts were experienced north of Toronto, in the Muskoka District Municipality, where heavy snow produced power outages and [left travelers stranded](#) on Highway 11. Gravenhurst, one of the hardest-hit communities, declared a State of Emergency as locals attempted to dig out from over three feet of snow. Monday evening through Tuesday night, hazardous snow showers will become more localized but still could cause travel disruptions. By Tuesday night, a new storm system will enter northern Michigan, reintroducing the threat of heavy snow bands. The system will produce widespread snow showers as it moves across the Great Lakes and southern Ontario Wednesday through Thursday night. This event is unlikely to be as extreme as its predecessor, but widespread lake effect snow warnings issuance is likely.

### **Unrest in the Middle East Widens as Syria Faces Renewed Conflict**

Shortly after a U.S. and France-brokered [ceasefire deal](#) between Hezbollah and Israel went into effect, a seemingly frozen conflict in neighboring Syria reignited as an alliance of rebels led by the group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham launched a surprise offensive on Aleppo. The rebels [captured](#) the city on November 29 and 30, including the airport and military academy, and are [reportedly](#) attacking the outskirts of the city of Hama. The rebels now claim to control all of Idlib province and major portions of Hama and Aleppo provinces. The Syrian government has claimed that it is organizing a counterattack to retake the city, and

# Weekly Intelligence Briefing

December 2, 2024



Iranian-backed militias have [deployed](#) to Syria to aid the government's efforts, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and a militia leader. Russia has joined the Syrian army in conducting airstrikes on rebel-held territories in the northwest.

Several competing groups lay claim to portions of Syria, including Türkiye, which backs the rebels in the northwest; the U.S., which has around 900 troops stationed in Northeast Syria alongside Kurdish fighters; and Russia and Iran, which supports the government. The sudden resurgence of fighting in and around Aleppo risks drawing one or more of these groups deeper into open conflict with each other, further destabilizing the region. Underscoring the potential danger and the fragmented nature of the battlefield, rebel groups that swept into Aleppo have, in recent days, [engaged](#) in attacks on Kurdish-held areas in Northwest Syria.

## **Georgia, Romania See Political Unrest Following Recent Elections**

Georgia remains in a heightened state of unrest following October's parliamentary elections. Opposition parties continue to dispute the results and have signaled that protests will continue until a new election is called. In addition, President Salome Zourabichvili [stated](#) that she will remain in her post next month once her term is over, despite Parliament's plan to [select](#) a new president on December 14. Demonstrations in the wake of the election have resulted in violence, with security forces [using](#) significant force, water cannons, and tear gas to disperse crowds.

Further inflaming the situation, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze [announced](#) on November 28 that the government is suspending EU accession talks until 2028, prompting further protests. The U.S. Department of State [condemned](#) the move, and the announcement [resulted](#) in a flurry of [diplomatic resignations](#), including of Georgia's ambassador to the United States. Demonstration activity over the issue is likely to continue in major cities across the country in the coming days.

Across the Black Sea, Romania's top court [ordered](#) a recount of votes cast during the first round of presidential elections due to "TikTok bias claims." The recount could impact the runoff, scheduled for December 8. In the first round, independent candidate Călin Georgescu [received](#) the most votes, with Elena Lasconi of the Save Romania Union (USR) party coming in second. Georgescu's lead was [unexpected](#), and his previous favorable remarks about Russian President Vladimir Putin and lack of disclosure for financing his [TikTok](#) political campaign have raised concerns. Georgescu has also [expressed views](#) against Romania's EU and NATO membership, though he's since [rolled back](#) on those suggestions. Critics of Călin Georgescu [intend to hold](#) daily demonstrations in Bucharest until the runoff.

# Weekly Intelligence Briefing

December 2, 2024



The presidential contest has largely overshadowed [parliamentary elections](#), which took place on Sunday and showed the ruling Social Democrat Party [on course](#) to secure the most votes, holding off a surge by far-right parties.

## Climate and Natural Hazards

- **More Weather Disruptions Coming for United Kingdom, Ireland:** At least two to three strong storm systems will impact the region between Wednesday and Friday night, producing periods of disruptive winds, heavy rain, and mountain snow. [U.K. Met Office](#) officials advise, "Given the potential for disruption from this system, it is important to keep up to date with the latest forecast."
- **Severe Flooding From Storm Bora Leaves Two Dead in Greece:** A strong low-pressure storm system, designated Storm Bora, led to significant flooding over the weekend, particularly in [Lemnos and Rhodes](#). Both islands instituted traffic bans as flooding left several roads severely damaged. Dozens of evacuations and rescues have been reported. Two fatalities were confirmed in Lemnos.
- **Southern Thailand, Malaysia Face Worst Flooding in Decades:** An active monsoonal pattern over northern Malaysia and southern Thailand has produced extreme flooding, displacing well over 750,000 within the region. [At least 27 fatalities](#) have been reported as residents describe the situation as the 'worst flooding in decades.' Forecast guidance suggests that the active pattern will intensify again between Tuesday and Thursday, worsening the ongoing flooding.
- **Australia Faces Above-Normal Wildfire Danger:** AFAC, the National Council for Fire and Emergency Services, released its [summer 2024 Bushfire Outlook](#), which calls for above-normal fire potential across coastal and southeastern South Australia, much of Victoria, interior central New South Wales, parts of Western Australia, and interior Northern Territory.
- **Atlantic Hurricane Season Comes to an End:** The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season officially ended on November 30 after producing 18 named storms, 11 hurricanes, and five major hurricanes. According to the [World Meteorological Organization](#), the 2024 season marks the ninth consecutive year with above- average tropical activity. Eight Atlantic hurricanes made landfall, including Helene, the [deadliest storm to hit the U.S. mainland](#) since Katrina (2005).

# Weekly Intelligence Briefing

December 2, 2024



## Worldwide

- **Israel, Hezbollah Accuse Each Other of Violating Ceasefire:** Not even a week out, the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah is appearing increasingly fragile. Lebanon has [accused](#) Israel of killing two people during strikes in southern Lebanon, adding to what Lebanon's parliament speaker claims is a list of over 50 Israeli violations of the truce so far. For its part, Israel has accused Hezbollah of [launching](#) two projectiles towards the disputed Mount Dov. Meanwhile, in Gaza, the United Nations has [halted](#) aid shipments through the territory's only cargo crossing, Kerem Shalom, due to looting and security concerns. The U.N.'s announcement came after an Israeli airstrike [killed](#) at least three workers in World Central Kitchen. The ceasefire deal with Hezbollah has also [prompted](#) the U.S. and other interlocutors to renew efforts to end the fighting in Gaza.
- **French Government on Brink of Collapse:** After surviving [protests](#) against his appointment to France's premiership, Michel Barnier's short time in the post appears to be nearing its end, with his government [on the verge of collapse](#) over a social security bill that he pushed through the legislature [without a vote](#). Opposition parties on the left have [announced](#) their intention to lodge an official no-confidence motion in the government. Marine Le Pen, whose far-right National Rally party would be crucial for a successful vote, has [signaled](#) her support for Barnier's ouster. The fall of Barnier's government could come as early as Wednesday, forcing President Emmanuel Macron to find a new prime minister. This task could prove challenging given [competing interests](#) within the country's political power structure.
- **Violence in Mozambique Continues as Protests Persist:** At least two demonstrators were killed amid a fresh wave of [protests](#) that swept Mozambique last week. One demonstrator appeared to have been rammed by a military vehicle in Maputo, an incident that drew condemnation from various nations and domestic activists. Last Wednesday, Mozambican police reportedly shot and killed two demonstrators in Nampula amid clashes, bringing the total [death toll](#) amid the current unrest to around 67. The demonstrations, led by opposition groups, also [spread](#) to the border with South Africa, where authorities said protesters blocked trucks at the primary crossing between the countries. Opposition leaders have indicated that "the demonstrations will continue."
- **U.S. Intelligence Agencies Warn of Russian "Sabotage Operations" on Europe's Military, Private Industry:** U.S. intelligence agencies issued a [warning](#) outlining Russian "sabotage operations" targeting Europe's defense and private industry." The warning reports that the Russian government and proxies have conducted "sabotage attacks" on military installations, defense companies, and logistics and public facilities. The agencies advise U.S. companies,

“particularly those supporting entities involved in the Ukraine conflict or other ongoing geopolitical conflicts,” to increase security measures. Analysts [report](#) that private sector exposure to threats related to geopolitical events has significantly expanded and highlights the need for companies to bolster threat monitoring efforts.

- **Heightened Tensions in Bangladesh, Demonstrations in India:** Clashes among students, demonstrations by rickshaw drivers, as well as arrests of religious figures have caused [heightened tensions](#) in Bangladesh. Multiple universities have seen student clashes as well as attacks on educational institutions and a hospital. Authorities have also [arrested](#) multiple Hindu priests, leading to additional clashes with police and [multiple injuries](#). In a show of solidarity with Hindus in Bangladesh, India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has announced [demonstrations](#) to express their support in multiple district capitals on Wednesday.
- **Russia Increases Defense Budget as War on Ukraine Continues:** On Sunday, Russian President Vladimir Putin [approved](#) new national defense budget plans, raising Russia’s military spending to a record \$145 billion for 2025. In Ukraine, at least seven people were [killed](#) in two separate strikes by Russia as Russian offenses continued. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently [stated](#) that a NATO invitation for Kyiv would end “the hot stage of the war” in Ukraine but signaled that he would refuse any proposal to join the alliance unless it is extended to the rest of the country. Amid rising geopolitical tensions, Germany [proposed](#) converting buildings and subway stations into bunkers to bolster domestic defense.

## Cyber and Regulatory

- **Mexican Congress Advances Amendment to End Regulatory Organizations:** As part of a broad reform push, the lower house of the Congress in Mexico advanced a [constitutional amendment](#) to end seven regulatory organizations, including the antitrust regulator (Cofece) and the telecommunications watchdog (IFT). Government ministries would be tasked with undertaking the responsibilities of these organizations while new, decentralized agencies would be created to maintain the independence of antitrust and communications oversight. [Critics](#) of the restructuring believe it could jeopardize parts of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which is up for review in 2026. Mexico’s Economy Minister stated that the Mexican government will seek to speak with President-elect Donald Trump regarding the USMCA in February.
- **Blue Yonder Targeted in Ransomware Attack Disrupting Retail Services:** Supply chain management service provider Blue Yonder was [targeted](#) in a ransomware attack on November 21, causing worldwide disruptions. Two U.K. grocery chains, Sainsbury and Morrisons, as well as retailers like Starbucks, were among the companies whose services were [disrupted](#) in what

# Weekly Intelligence Briefing

December 2, 2024



security experts believe was a calculated attack ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday. As of December 1, Blue Yonder's [mitigation](#) efforts were ongoing, with assistance from several external cybersecurity firms like CrowdStrike. No group has claimed responsibility.

- **Australia Bans Children Under 16 From Social Media:** Australia has passed a law to prevent children under 16 from [creating](#) accounts on certain social media platforms. Officials state that companies like TikTok, Facebook, and X will likely be included, though a final decision has not been made. The government will test various age verification technologies that social media companies will need to implement. Testing will begin in January, and the ban will be put into effect by the end of 2025. Social media platforms found [non-compliant](#) can face fines of up to \$50 million AUS. Critics have [voiced](#) privacy concerns regarding the data collected by the technologies and warn that they can be circumvented using tools like a VPN.
- **Microsoft Outlook, Teams Outage Affects Thousands Worldwide:** Microsoft's Outlook and Teams services were [affected](#) by an outage for nearly 36 hours beginning on November 25. The outage was linked to a recent update, and while most users were able to use the services by the evening, the issue was not fully [resolved](#) until the following afternoon. Thousands of users worldwide reported the issue on tech outage tracker DownDetector, with some reports indicating problems [accessing](#) additional Microsoft 365 functionalities like Outlook Calendars.

## Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **Incoming U.S. President Trump Tariff Threats Proliferate:** Incoming U.S. President Donald Trump has [threatened](#) to implement a 25% tariff upon his inauguration on all products from Mexico and Canada unless they take additional steps to address illegal immigration and drug trafficking. He also said he'd [add 10%](#) to any tariffs on Chinese goods that his administration levies. Days later, Trump claimed that [BRICS countries](#) would face 100% tariffs if they attempted to pursue an alternative currency to the U.S. dollar. The flurry of threats has prompted protests from [Washington's neighbors](#), with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum [promising](#) retaliatory action. As the tariff warnings pile up, concerns grow over their potential impact, including on prices for [numerous products](#), from cars to [avocados](#).
- **Europe Faces Energy Concerns as Winter Arrives:** A Bloomberg [analysis](#) of European weather forecast data for the coming months found that this winter will be the coldest for the region since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. The cold arrives amid persistent questions over energy security in Europe, where gas reserves are [reportedly](#) rapidly depleted. Natural gas prices remain high and the market [relatively tight](#), and concerns over European supply are being exacerbated by a [looming end to Russian transfers](#) via Ukraine in January—even though the route [does not](#)

# Weekly Intelligence Briefing

December 2, 2024



- [make up a significant portion](#) of overall imports— and new U.S. sanctions on Gazprombank, which [could result](#) in additional supply cuts by Moscow.
- **Coffee Futures Spike Amid Adverse Weather, Supply Chain Pressures:** Coffee futures last week [surged](#) to nearly 50-year highs as adverse weather impacts agriculture in Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer, and [other major growing countries](#) in the Americas and Asia. Earlier than usual buying by European importers seeking to get ahead of the EU's forthcoming deforestation law, which would require importers to "prove the coffee they import into the bloc was not grown on deforested land," has also [reportedly](#) increased pressure on futures prices. Coffee is not the only product being impacted by weather extremes this year. Sugar, grain, and other commodities [have also been affected](#).
  - **Major Shippers Rising Holiday Rates Squeeze Retailers, Consumers:** Retailers face mounting [holiday shipping costs](#) as FedEx and UPS [implement surcharges](#) lasting 111 days—nearly a third of the year— amid sluggish shipping demand. According to experts cited by Bloomberg, cumulative baseline rate hikes by the carriers since 2021 will reach 33% by 2025. That number does not include additional fees for things like rural delivery premiums and hard-to-handle packages. While some companies pass costs to customers, others absorb the charges, impacting margins. The situation has [some shipping competitors](#) seeing an opportunity in the marketplace.
  - **Other Related Stories the Global Intelligence Team Is Watching:** Last week, Cuba introduced a [contingency plan and new restrictions](#) to address its [enduring power crisis](#). In addition to requiring that businesses generate 50% of their daylight electricity from renewables within three years or purchase government-supplied renewable energy, the government is cracking down on air conditioning, prohibiting its use below 24°C (~75°F) in non-technological offices. As Havana attempts to right-size its energy issues to the south, Venezuela's government is working to address a [significant propane shortage](#) from an explosion at a key plant. Fuel is hugely important to the country's populace, as most people use it to cook food in their homes. Finally, in other notable supply chain news, New Zealand has [halted all poultry exports](#) after identifying a case of bird flu at a rural farm.

## Health

- **Cause of Human Bird Flu Case in Canada Remains Unknown, Cases Rise in U.S. Dairy Herds:** Canada reported its first human case of H5N1 avian influenza in early November, and its cause [is still unknown](#) as of last week. The patient, a teenager from British Columbia hospitalized in critical condition, had no known contact with infected poultry or farms. Scientists are concerned

# Weekly Intelligence Briefing

December 2, 2024



about this case because the virus's variation has mutational changes that would make it [more transmissible](#) among people. In California, public health officials [reported](#) that a sample of retail raw milk tested positive for avian flu as cases in dairy cattle herds [continue to rise](#).

- **British Lawmakers Give Initial Approval in Support of Assisted Dying Bill:** Britain's Parliament [voted](#) last Friday to allow assisted dying for terminally ill patients in England and Wales. However, the new legislation has not yet officially been approved. The legislation would apply to only a narrow group of people under strict conditions, with two doctors and a judge required to give advance approval. In Europe, countries like Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain allow assisted dying under similarly strict conditions. In the U.S., assisted dying is legal in multiple states, including Oregon and California, with regulations requiring terminal illness and mental competence. Opinions polls of people in Britain [found](#) that a majority are in favor of allowing people to seek assisted dying, and a similar bill has been [introduced](#) in the Scottish Parliament.
- **Meat Products, Eggs, Produce Account for Latest Round of U.S. Food Recalls:** Public health officials are [investigating](#) a multistate *Listeria* outbreak linked to Yu Shang Food ready-to-eat meat and poultry products. There has been [one death](#) and nine hospitalizations linked to the *Listeria* outbreak. A full list of recalled products can be found [here](#). Costco is [recalling](#) 10,800 units of egg cartons sold under the company's Kirkland Signature brand due to the potential risk of Salmonella contamination. Additionally, the FDA reported a [recall](#) for cucumbers from SunFed Produce, LLC, due to possible risks from Salmonella. The recall applies to fresh American cucumbers packaged in bulk cardboard containers distributed to more than 25 U.S. states and several Canadian provinces.
- **Canada Confirms First Mpox Case From More Concerning Variant:** Health officials in Canada [confirmed](#) the country's first imported case of clade 1b mpox. The confirmation marks Canada as the seventh country outside of Africa to report an illness with clade 1b, the variant fueling the recent outbreak in eastern and central Africa. The case, a patient in Manitoba, is related to travel. England [confirmed](#) its fifth clade 1b case this past week. Health officials in Canada and England reiterated that the risk of mpox infections remains low for the public outside of the outbreak's epicenter in Africa, where the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [expects](#) cases to continue to rise over the next four weeks before plateauing in early 2025.
- **New Study Finds Kidney Transplants Between People With HIV Safe:** A study [published](#) in the New England Journal of Medicine followed 198 kidney transplant recipients living with HIV and found similar health outcomes, whether the donated organ came from a person with or without HIV. The study comes amid a recent [proposed rule change](#) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that would allow patients with HIV to receive kidney and liver



transplants from donors with HIV. If approved, the new rule could take effect in the coming year and would expand the organ donor pool, regardless of HIV status. Relatedly, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) [found](#) that countries have made significant progress in reducing HIV incidence and mortality. Still, it is unlikely that the world will hit UNAIDS 2030 targets.

## Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **USPS Suspends Acceptance of Canada-Bound Mail Due to Strike:** As of November 29, the United States Postal Service (USPS) [stopped accepting](#) mail or packages being sent to Canada due to the ongoing Canadian Union of Postal Workers strike. Canada Post also recently announced it was [temporarily laying off](#) an unspecified number of union workers, prompting the union [to file](#) an unfair labor practice complaint. Canada Post submitted a [new framework](#) for negotiations with the union yesterday to further talks and reach an agreement to end the strike.
- **Multiple Sectors Plan Strikes in France Over Coming Days:** The CGT, CFDT, UNSA, FSU, Solidaires, CFE-CGC, and FA-FP unions are calling on civil servants to [strike](#) on December 5 to protest proposed sick leave changes for public sector workers. Additionally, the unions have called for a strike “in all companies in the [electricity and gas sector](#)” beginning at 9 pm on December 4. The FSU, UNSA Éducation, and SUD Éducation unions also plan to participate. Rallies will accompany the strike, including at the Place du Bataillon du Pacifique (Bercy) in Paris at 2 pm. Following the strike by public sector workers, the FNSEA is calling for mobilizations by [farmers](#) on December 9 and 10. Port workers with the CGT have also announced a walkout for the same day. The SNCF inter-union (CGT, Unsa, Sud- Rail, and CFDT Cheminots) is [calling](#) for an unlimited strike for rail services on December 11. Finally, the CGT has called for a “national convergence of mobilizations” on December 12.
- **Indian Farmers March on Delhi:** Several umbrella organizations representing farmers—the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political), Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, and Bhartiya Kisan Parishad—are [marching from Noida to Delhi](#) today to press for several key benefits. The march began at the Maha Maya flyover in Noida, with farmers planning to proceed to the Parliament complex in central Delhi. Police have [erected barricades](#) and formed human chains in order to halt the farmers’ advance, eventually compelling them to [halt](#) on the campus of Dalit Prerna Sthal in Noida. However, the farmers have [threatened](#) to resume their march if their demands are not met. Additional groups of farmers are currently [gathered](#) at Khanauri and Shambhu on the Punjab-Haryana border and plan to stage their [march](#) to Delhi on December 6. Farmers in

# Weekly Intelligence Briefing

December 2, 2024



Kerala, Uttarakhand, and Tamil Nadu also plan to conduct [marches](#) to their respective state assemblies on December 6.

- **Brazilian Federal Revenue Service Workers Strike:** Brazil is experiencing disruptions to various logistics and commercial operations following a [strike](#) by Federal Revenue Service workers that began on Tuesday, [impacting](#) operations at customs posts. The striking workers indicated that 30% of customs offices “must still operate,” and customs stations unaffected by the strike will continue to process live cargo, perishable goods, and “dangerous items.” In conjunction with the strike, the group plans to stage a [demonstration](#) in front of the country’s Finance Ministry in Brasilia on Wednesday.
- **South Korean Union Members Plan Series of Strikes, Protests:** Around 70,000 workers affiliated with the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) are [planning](#) to hold walkouts and demonstrations to demand improved wages and working conditions and to [call](#) for President Yoon Suk-yeol’s resignation. Earlier today, workers with the KCTU-affiliated Cargo Truckers Solidarity initiated a three-day strike. Workers of the National Pension Service, Korea Gas, and other civil service workers also walked off the job. On Thursday, workers with Korea Railroad (KORAIL) are planning to launch an indefinite strike. They’ll be followed on Friday by members of the Seoul Metro and Subway, as well as [education](#) public service workers. Finally, on Saturday, the KCTU is planning a mass rally calling for Yoon’s resignation in the Seoul City Center beginning at 3 pm.

## Upcoming Events

- December 5: King Bhumibol’s Birthday/Father’s Day (Thailand)
- December 6: Day of the Armed Forces (Ukraine)
- December 6: Constitution Day (Spain)
- December 7: General Election (Ghana)
- December 7-8: Doha Forum (Qatar)
- December 8: Runoff Presidential Election (Romania)
- December 8: Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Global)
- December 10: Human Rights Day (Global)
- December 14: Martyred Intellectuals Day (Bangladesh)
- December 24: Christmas Eve (Global)
- December 25: Christmas (Global)
- December 26: Boxing Day (Global)
- December 29: Parliamentary Elections (Chad)
- December 29: Presidential Election (Croatia)
- December 31: New Year’s Eve (Global)
- January 1: New Year’s Day (Global)
- January 6: Counting and Certification of Electoral Votes (United States)