



May 5, 2025

Headlining This Week's Brief

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Top Stories

Heavy Rain and Severe Thunderstorms to Target the South-Central U.S.

The [National Weather Service](#) has issued an extensive [flood watch](#) stretching from East New Mexico through Louisiana as rounds of heavy rain will drive a significant flood threat across the South-Central United States this week. Heavy rain will begin late Monday and continue overnight across most of West Texas, the Texas Panhandle, and eastern New Mexico, leading to an elevated flash flood threat. As the main storm system tracks eastward on Tuesday, most of East Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Arkansas will be [most at risk for scattered flooding](#). Through mid-week, rain amounts between three to six inches, locally eight, are expected. Current forecast model data suggests that coastal areas between Houston (TX) and Mobile (AL) will likely receive the highest rainfall totals. Flash flooding will be a significant concern, especially in low-lying areas and urban centers. Many rivers are already forecast to at least reach [moderate flood stage](#) during the period.

Alongside the elevated flood threat, severe thunderstorms are forecast Monday and Tuesday across most of Texas. Storms are expected to develop late Monday across Southeast New Mexico and West Texas, near Ft. Stockton, Midland, and Lubbock, during the late afternoon. All severe weather hazards will be possible, but the main threat will be very large (two-plus inches) hail, which has prompted a Level 3 (5-tier scale) severe thunderstorm risk from the [Storm Prediction Center](#). The severe thunderstorm risk will shift east on Tuesday, focusing near Austin, Dallas, and Houston. The [Storm Prediction Center](#) has issued a Level 2 (5-tier scale) severe risk due to the threat of damaging winds, large hail, and a few tornadoes, but stated that upgrades to localized Level 3 are possible. Scattered power outages and travel disruptions are likely during peak storm activity each afternoon and evening.

India, Pakistan Announce Further Measures as Tensions Remain High

While conflict between India and Pakistan following the April 22 Pahalgam [attack](#) in Kashmir has been confined to small arms fire across the Line of Control, both countries have announced further trade and diplomatic measures against the other. After closing the Attari-Wagah border crossing immediately following the attack, India has moved to ban all [imports](#) from Pakistan, [blocked](#) farmers from accessing fields between the border fence and international boundary, and prohibited Pakistani ships from docking at Indian [ports](#). Pakistan has countered by banning the import of Indian-origin [goods](#) and [prohibiting](#) Indian-flagged ships from using its ports. Over the past three days, Pakistan has carried out [two missile tests](#) after saying India was planning an [incursion](#).

Meanwhile, India has [reportedly](#) begun work to increase reservoir capacity at two sites in the Himalayas after suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, potentially leading to disruptions downstream in Pakistan. India's Ministry of Home Affairs has also [instructed](#) several states to conduct civil defense drills on May 7, including the operationalization of air raid warning sirens, the training of civilians in civil defense, the provision of crash blackout measures, early camouflaging of vital plants and installations, and updates to evacuation plans.

Impacts of Tariffs Becoming Clearer as Manufacturing Activity, Container Traffic Dips

The [first arrivals](#) of cargo ships from China, subject to 145% tariffs, are due this week, giving us the first indication of what the overall impact of the current trade war will be. In the U.S., the Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles [estimates](#) that arrivals will decline by around 35%, posing a [significant risk](#) to the wider trade and logistics industry in Southern California. While it's [difficult](#) to know exactly the state of China's economy, [job cuts](#), a [dip](#) in export orders, and a [drop](#) in the purchasing managers' index all indicate that the economy is undergoing significant strain. Similar [contractions in manufacturing activity](#) are showing up in data from other countries across Asia and Europe.

There have been some indications of a possible thaw in trade relations between China and the U.S. Bloomberg reports that China is [exempting](#) around a quarter of U.S. goods from tariffs, similar to the exemptions on smartphones and other electronics announced by the U.S. China's Commerce Ministry has said that it is [assessing](#) the possibility of trade talks, while during an interview U.S. President Donald Trump [said](#) that he plans to lower tariffs on China "at some point," implying that a deal is far from imminent. Outside of China, Trump has [suggested](#) that some trade deals could be announced as early as this week, although American businesses will also have to contend with consumer preferences, which in

[Canada](#) and [Europe](#) appear to be shifting away from products from the U.S.

Climate and Natural Hazards

- **5.7M Earthquake Strikes Off Taiwan:** A magnitude 5.7 earthquake struck offshore approximately 45 kilometers east of Hualien City, at 6:09 pm, local time, Monday. Despite its strength, the offshore epicenter limited the shaking to mainly eastern and central Taiwan. Hualien City and Wanrong Township in Hualien County experienced Level 4 (Moderate) shaking, while Lishan, Sanmen Lake, Caoling, and Erlin reported Level 3 (Light) shaking. Overall, only minor impacts have been reported.
- **Active Storm Pattern in Southeast China This Week:** Several weather disturbances are expected to produce widespread thunderstorms as they track across southeast China through the week and into the weekend. Severe thunderstorms will be capable of producing flash flooding, damaging winds, and large hail, especially during the afternoon and evening as storms reach maximum intensity alongside peak instability. Flooding will be the main risk as there is a strong signal for 150-250mm (6-10in) of rain, with locally higher amounts, from northern and eastern Guangxi to southern Zhejiang and northern and interior Fujian. On Sunday, 10 people died and 70 were hospitalized after strong winds caused [multiple boats to capsize](#) in Qianxi City, Guizhou.
- **More Than 300,000 Without Drinking Water in the Dominican Republic:** A total of [38 aqueducts](#) have been affected by the heavy rain and storms over the last few days, leaving over 323,000 users without water, according to a report from the Emergency Operations Center. Nearly 3,700 people have been displaced as the flooding has damaged homes and road networks, leaving some towns isolated. Scattered thunderstorm activity is expected to continue through at least Tuesday.

Worldwide

- **Simion Wins First Round in Romania's Election Rerun:** George Simion, leader of the nationalist Alliance for the Unity of the Romanians, [won](#) the first round of Romania's presidential election rerun, securing 40.96% of the vote and positioning himself as the frontrunner for the May 18 runoff, ahead of Bucharest mayor Nicușor Dan. The rerun follows the [annulment](#) of the November 2024 election due to allegations of Russian interference. While Simion and his [anti-establishment](#) stance have garnered significant support, particularly from domestic voters and the diaspora, a potential presidency under Simion raises [concerns](#) about Romania's role within

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the EU and NATO, as his focus on national sovereignty could [isolate](#) the country within Western institutions and shift its geopolitical alignment.

- **Increase in Needle Stick Attacks on Mexico City Metro:** In April and May 2025, over 41 needle stick [incidents](#) were reported on the Mexico City Metro, primarily targeting women. At least 15 had medical confirmation of a puncture wound, with four containing a narcotic; one suspect has been [arrested](#) and charged with assault. The government implemented rapid-response protocols, including medical evaluations and toxicology testing. The mayor asserted there is no evidence that the events are part of a criminal pattern related to kidnapping or other high-impact crimes and reiterated that the Federal District Attorney's office is [continuing](#) to investigate each event.
- **Russia Announces Victory Day Ceasefire as Ukraine Inks Minerals Deal With U.S.:** Russia announced a unilateral [72-hour ceasefire](#) in Ukraine from May 8 to 10 as it celebrates Victory Day on May 9, but Kyiv dismissed the gesture as symbolic and renewed its call for a full 30-day truce. Ukraine accused Moscow of past ceasefire violations and warned that only a verified, long-term halt to hostilities would be credible. In Washington, Senator Lindsey Graham announced broad [Senate backing](#) for a bill imposing severe new sanctions on Russia and tariffs on those who buy its oil and gas if Moscow fails to engage in serious peace talks. The European Union has also [expressed](#) support for Graham's sanctions package. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Ukraine finalized a landmark [natural resources deal](#) granting Washington access to Ukraine's critical mineral reserves in exchange for continued military and reconstruction aid.
- **AfD Disputes Extremist Classification Following German Intelligence Ruling:** Germany's domestic intelligence agency has [designated](#) the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party as a right-wing extremist organization, citing its xenophobic views following a three-year investigation. The decision subjects the party to increased [surveillance](#), including the use of informants and audio-visual recordings, and states that the AfD's actions and rhetoric threaten social cohesion and equal participation in society. In response, the AfD has challenged the classification and filed a lawsuit, [claiming](#) the designation is politically motivated and violates their constitutional right to criticize immigration policies. The German Foreign Ministry defended the decision, emphasizing that it was based on an independent investigation to protect Germany's democratic order.
- **Houthis Hit Ben-Gurion Airport as Israel Looks to Ramp Up Gaza Offensive:** A [missile launched](#) by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen struck near an access road to Ben-Gurion International Airport, evading Israel's missile defense systems and briefly halting flights. It marked the first time a missile landed on airport grounds since the Gaza war began. The Houthis warned of further strikes on the airport, while Israeli officials have vowed to respond. The strike came as Israel's security cabinet [authorized](#) a new phase of the conflict, allowing for the full

occupation of Gaza [with no defined timeline for withdrawal](#). The updated strategy includes relocating civilians to southern Gaza and placing the task of distributing humanitarian aid with private companies instead of the United Nations.

- **Brazilian Authorities Thwart Bomb Threat at Lady Gaga Concert:** Brazilian authorities [thwarted](#) a bomb plot targeting Lady Gaga's May 3 concert in Rio de Janeiro, which drew a record-breaking crowd of approximately 2.5 million people. The suspects, part of a group promoting hate speech and youth radicalization, planned to target the LGBTQ+ community, using improvised explosives and Molotov cocktails to gain social media notoriety. Two individuals were arrested, and multiple raids were conducted across Brazil. The operation, named "Fake Monster," was executed discreetly to prevent public panic, and Lady Gaga's team was informed of the threat only after the event.

Cyber and Regulatory

- **Millions of AirPlay-Enabled Devices Can Be Hacked Via Wi-Fi:** A newly discovered set of [vulnerabilities](#), dubbed "AirBorne," in Apple's AirPlay protocol poses significant security risks. These flaws allow attackers on the same Wi-Fi network to hijack AirPlay-enabled devices—including smart TVs, speakers, and CarPlay systems—potentially leading to malware deployment, network infiltration, and espionage via devices with built-in microphones. While Apple has patched its own devices, third-party products remain vulnerable due to inconsistent update practices. The publication [CyberInsider](#) puts the potential number of devices that use the AirPlay streaming protocol at 2.35 billion, many of which will likely never be updated to account for the vulnerability. Apple users should apply security updates released in April 2025.
- **Deadline for U.S. Real ID Compliance Arrives Wednesday:** Starting Wednesday, May 7, U.S. travelers aged 18 and older must [present](#) a Real ID-compliant license or another acceptable form of identification, such as a passport or military ID, to board domestic commercial flights. Temporary paper IDs will not be accepted for air travel. The transition may lead to delays at airports. The Transport Security Administration (TSA) has [advised](#) those who need to travel after the deadline and who do not have a Real ID or acceptable [alternative](#)—such as a passport or permanent resident card—to bring along any other documentation to confirm their identity and to be prepared for additional delays and potentially not being allowed through security.
- **Cloudflare Records 358% Increase in DDoS Attacks:** Several Romanian government websites were [targeted](#) in a large, distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack as the country went to the polls on Saturday. The attack underscores the findings in a [recent report](#) from Cloudflare that states that Q1 2025 saw the number of DDoS attacks more than triple over the same period last year. In the first quarter of this year, Cloudflare mitigated 20.5 million DDoS attacks—a 358%

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year-over-year increase— nearly matching the total for all of 2024. Network-layer attacks jumped 509% year-over-year, with 16.8 million incidents, including 6.6 million targeting Cloudflare's own infrastructure during an 18-day multi- vector campaign. Germany became the **most targeted country**, with the gambling and casino industries the **hardest hit**, surpassing telecommunications.

- **SK Telecom Hack May Have Exposed Data of Nearly 25 Million Users:** A universal subscriber identity module (USIM) **breach** at SK Telecom, South Korea's largest mobile carrier, may have compromised the personal data of all of the company's nearly 25 million users. The breach, which was detected on April 18, prompted SK Telecom to offer free USIM replacements to all customers and to offer a USIM Protection Service. As of Sunday morning, nearly 20 million people had signed up for the protection service, while nearly a million had **replaced** their chips. Starting Monday, at the request of the South Korean government, the company is suspending new subscriber sign-ups. SK Telecom has said that the breach was due to malware and has not provided further details.
- **British Retailer Marks & Spencer Faces Severe Disruptions Due to Cyberattack:** In April, Marks & Spencer (M&S) **experienced** a major cyberattack, reportedly linked to the Scattered Spider hacking group using DragonForce ransomware. The attack disrupted online orders, automated stock systems, and payment processes, leading to manual operations in stores. While customer data remains secure, full recovery may take weeks or months. Authorities, including the National Crime Agency and National Cyber Security Centre, are investigating, and the incident has prompted a broader review of cybersecurity protocols across the retail industry. Following the incident at M&S, attacks were also **recorded** against luxury department store Harrods and supermarket chain The Co-op.

Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **Iberian Blackout Exposes Grid Vulnerabilities, Cause Remains Unclear:** On April 28, Spain and Portugal **experienced** an unprecedented 18-hour blackout, affecting millions across the Iberian Peninsula and parts of southern France. The outage started around 12 pm and impacted transport, communications, and businesses, halting trains, shuttering airports, and causing widespread disruptions. Spain's grid operator, Red Eléctrica, reported a **sudden** 15-gigawatt power drop, linked to two disconnection events in southwestern Spain, though the exact cause of the outage remains unclear. Speculation about renewable energy's role, particularly solar, was dismissed by officials, who also ruled out cyberattacks and weather as a cause. Investigations continue, with **calls** for grid upgrades and better renewable integration. During the blackout

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event, misinformation proliferated online, with some commentators blaming renewables for the outages.

- **Mexico-U.S. Agree on Rio Grande Water Transfer to Texas Farmers:** Last week, Mexico and the United States [announced](#) an agreement for Mexico to immediately transfer additional water from the shared Rio Grande basin to Texas farmers following U.S. President Donald Trump's recent [threats](#) of tariffs and sanctions. The deal includes increased U.S. water shares from six Mexican tributaries through the current five-year cycle, as per the 1944 treaty, which requires Mexico to deliver 1.75 million acre-feet of water every five years. Both nations affirmed the treaty's value without needing renegotiation. Mexico, however, [faces](#) challenges meeting the October 2025 deadline, although the treaty does contain a provision allowing a water debt to be carried over for one cycle. Mexico's efforts to fulfill its treaty obligations are expected to make its northern states even more vulnerable to future disruptions in its water supplies.
- **U.S. Executive Order on Truck Driver English Proficiency:** On April 28, U.S. President Donald Trump [signed](#) an executive order mandating that commercial truck drivers demonstrate sufficient English language speaking and reading skills. Non-compliant drivers will be placed out of service, reversing a 2016 Obama-era Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) policy that relaxed enforcement of ELP rules. The order aims to enhance roadway safety amid rising trucking fatalities and aligns with Trump's previous designation of English as the official language of the U.S. Additional directives include reviewing non-domiciled commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) and improving truck drivers' working conditions.
- **China Launches Direct Shipping Route to Peru, Boosting Latin America Trade:** Guangzhou Port in China has [launched](#) a direct shipping route to Chancay Port in Peru, significantly strengthening trade between Asia and Latin America amid U.S.-China trade tensions. The new route reduces transit time to about 30 days and cuts logistics costs by around 20%. Chancay is a \$1.4 billion port built by COSCO Shipping, a Chinese-owned shipping and port operator. It is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. In related news, COSCO Shipping is [considering](#) legal action against Peru following a regulatory decision to impose price controls at its Chancay mega port. Peru's transportation authority announced it would regulate tariffs after the market watchdog INDECOPI ruled that the port operated without sufficient competition.
- **Air Traffic Control Staffing Shortages Disrupt Newark Airport Operations:** Newark Liberty International Airport has been facing [severe](#) disruptions recently due to reported FAA staffing shortages as well as equipment failures and runway construction. Over 300 flights were [delayed](#) or canceled as of Sunday. The FAA has not commented officially on the staffing issues; however, staffing has been listed by the FAA as the reason for delays since last Monday. Equipment outages and FAA controller walkouts have caused United Airlines to [cancel](#) more than 100 flights,

according to CEO Scott Kirby. In related news, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duff aims to [release](#) a proposal in the coming weeks for a new system for the FAA that will include upgrades to air traffic control systems and facilities .

Health

- **Uganda Declares End of Ebola Outbreak:** On April 26, Uganda officially [declared](#) the end of its latest Ebola outbreak after reporting 42 consecutive days without new cases, meeting the World Health Organization's (WHO) criteria for containment. The outbreak was caused by the Sudan strain of the virus, which does not have an approved vaccine, and began in the capital, Kampala, on January 30, with the death of a nurse. In total, there were 14 reported cases, four of which resulted in fatalities. Authorities are continuing to [boost](#) preventative measures and monitor for any new infections.
- **U.S. Health Department Halts More Education, Research Programs, Issues New Vaccine Mandate:** Last week, amid rising bird flu cases and [growing concern](#) from experts over a future pandemic, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [ordered](#) the cancellation of a workshop on preventing human bird flu infections. The workshop was aimed at providing guidance on protective measures for high-risk individuals like farmworkers and veterinarians. In a separate development, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [instructed](#) a key lab studying deadly pathogens such as Ebola to halt all experimental work. Additionally, HHS head Robert F Kennedy Jr [mandated](#) that all new vaccines undergo placebo-controlled trials before approval, prompting concern from health experts on how this could delay availability, hinder development, and erode public confidence in vaccines.
- **Indonesia Free School Meal Program Marred by Food Poisoning Cases, Demonstrations:** Cases of food poisoning have been [recorded](#) and linked to Indonesia's free school meal program, launched by President Prabowo Subianto earlier this year. Officials [reported](#) a food poisoning outbreak in Cianjur in recent weeks, leaving around 80 students ill, most of whom were hospitalized. The cases have prompted [demonstrations](#) throughout Indonesia calling on the president to use the money spent on the \$10 billion program to instead fund a free education program. Last week, on Indonesia's National Education Day, demonstrations [took place](#) across Indonesia with participants calling on the government to improve education in the country; several arrests were made, and violence was reported.
- **Measles Outbreak in Mexico's Chihuahua State:** The Mexican Ministry of Health has [confirmed](#) over 700 cases of measles, with a majority in the state of Chihuahua. The United States and Canada have seen a recent increase in measles cases, leading Mexican officials to issue an [alert](#) warning travelers to take precautions to prevent the disease from spreading

further. Health officials state the outbreak is largely the result of low vaccination rates, and a nationwide vaccination program began on April 26. Additionally, the Ministry of Health [announced](#) a weeklong immunization campaign targeting the most vulnerable population—children under 10 years old—and is urging the public to prioritize early detection and medical response.

- **CDC Issues Yellow Fever Notice for Travel to South America:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has [issued](#) a Level 2 notice advising travelers to practice enhanced precautions and obtain a yellow fever vaccination before heading to certain parts of South America. Health officials state that cases have increased in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru, including Machu Picchu, though the uptick is primarily near regions where the vaccine is already recommended. The CDC alert [recommends](#) that individuals traveling to affected areas acquire the vaccine at least 10 days before travel, try to avoid mosquito bites, and seek medical care if they develop symptoms.

Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **Strikes in France, Portugal to Disrupt Rail Traffic:** Disruptions to SNCF railway services can be expected until Wednesday and again between Friday and Sunday, May 9-11, due to strikes by railway workers. The CGT-Cheminots union, which is the SNCF's largest union, has [called](#) for its members to strike beginning today, while Sud-Rail, which represents a large number of train drivers for SNCF, has [called](#) for work stoppages on Wednesday and between May 9 and 11. The CNA rail union has also [expressed support](#) for the strike action. Specific train information can be found on the [SNCF website](#). In addition to the strike in France, disruptions are also expected in [Portugal](#) on Comboios de Portugal (CP) rail services due to a strike by multiple unions on Wednesday and Thursday.
- **Madrid to See Mass Demonstration Against Prime Minister:** More than 100 associations are calling for a new rally on Saturday, May 10, to demand that Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez resign and hold elections. Civil society associations are [calling](#) on supporters to gather at Plaza de Colón at 12 pm. Among the issues around which demonstrators are organizing is alleged corruption by Sanchez's Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and concessions made to the Catalan independence movement. Tens of thousands of people [attended](#) a related demonstration in October 2024.
- **Two Pending Strikes Could Affect North American Infrastructure:** New Jersey Transit is [encouraging](#) riders to work from home starting May 16 due to a potential strike by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. Should a strike occur, it would force a shutdown of NJ Transit rail service, including Metro-Northwest of Hudson. NJ Transit has said that it is adding "very limited capacity" to some bus routes as a contingency. Meanwhile, after a [breakdown](#) in talks in March, Canada Post is [threatening](#) to strike beginning May 22 if an

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agreement isn't reached with the government. A strike during peak shipping season at the end of 2024 went on for over a month before the Canada Industrial Relations Board ended the walkout on [December 17](#).

- **Significant Demonstration Activity Expected Mid-May to Mark Nakba Day:** An uptick in pro-Palestinian demonstration activity is anticipated on May 15 and the following weekend for Nakba Day, which [commemorates](#) the displacement of Palestinians in Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Since the outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas, many pro-Palestinian organizations have marked the day by holding mass rallies and marches. Several actions have already been identified, including in Berlin (Südstern Station at 4 pm) and Sydney (Town Hall at 6:30 pm) on May 15 and on Saturday, May 17 and in New York City (Golda Meir Square at 2 pm), Toronto (Yonge and Dundas Square at 2 pm), Washington DC (Farragut Square at 12 pm), and Los Angeles (Israeli Consulate at 2 pm).
- **Several Major Demonstrations Planned in France This Weekend:** La France Insoumise (LFI) has [called](#) for a national march against Islamophobia on May 11. The march is in response to the [murder](#) of Aboubakar Cissé, who was stabbed to death in a mosque in La Grand Combe on April 25. Since Cisse's death, [several rallies](#) have been [held across](#) France to denounce Islamophobia, while security has been reinforced at mosques across the country. The march will come a day after opposing demonstrations in Paris by antifascist groups and the May 9 Committee (C9M). CPM plans to gather at Port-Royal at 3 pm for a march, while opposing groups plan to gather at Place du Panthéon at 11 am. Confrontations between the two groups are possible.

Upcoming Events

- May 7: Papal Conclave Begins (Vatican City)
- May 8: Victory in Europe Day (Europe)
- May 9: Victory Day (Europe, Central Asia)
- May 11: Parliamentary Elections (Albania)
- May 12: General Election (Philippines)
- May 15: Nakba Day (Israel, West Bank, and Gaza)
- May 18: Presidential Election (Poland)
- May 18: Presidential Run-off Election (Romania)
- May 18: Parliamentary Election (Portugal)
- May 19-27: World Health Assembly (Geneva, Switzerland)
- May 23-26: NATO Parliamentary Assembly (Dayton, Ohio, United States)
- May 25: Parliamentary Election (Suriname)
- May 25: Parliamentary Election (Venezuela)

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- May 25-26: Jerusalem Day (Israel, West Bank)
- May 26: Independence Day (Georgia)
- June 1: Judicial Elections (Mexico)
- June 4-9: Hajj (Mecca, Saudi Arabia)