



May 4, 2026

## 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

#### **U.S. Launches New Effort to Reopen Strait of Hormuz as Strikes Resume on UAE**

Tensions ratcheted up in the Strait of Hormuz earlier this morning after U.S. President Donald Trump announced the start of "Project Freedom," an effort by the U.S. Navy to "guide" ships through the strait and reopen the vital waterway. While the U.S. has been careful to specify that it will not be providing military escorts for ships—officials have instead said that ships will be "in the vicinity" to respond to potential Iranian attacks and that otherwise they will primarily function as "guides"—the gambit nonetheless has the potential to escalate the situation and precipitate a return to more wide-ranging combat.

The effort appears to have already led to a resumption of hostilities in the Persian Gulf. Monday evening local time the United Arab Emirates said that they detected four loitering munitions coming from Iran, while authorities in Fujairah said that a drone strike on its oil export zone has caused a large fire. Oman also said that a residential building was struck in the Tebat area of Bukha Governorate. The U.K. Maritime

Trade Operations Center (UKMTO) also reported a fire aboard a cargo vessel in the Gulf, just north of Dubai. The attacks have led to disruptions for flights bound for Dubai and Sharjah.

The recent attacks underscore that, absent a more durable peace, it remains unlikely that shipping will resume at scale through the strait and that any effort from the U.S. to secure the strait will be met with resistance from Iran. Tehran's response threatens to escalate the situation further, with the UAE responding to the latest attacks by saying that it reserves the right to respond to attacks on its territory. Meanwhile, Admiral Brad Cooper, head of U.S. Central Command, said that U.S. forces have sunk six Iranian boats. In his comments, Cooper also alluded to the U.S. blockade on Iran, saying that it was "exceeding expectations," although analysts have said that the blockade itself is unlikely to lead to sufficient economic pain in the near-term to force Iranian capitulation. As fighting resumes and neither side seems prepared to budge on its red lines, the situation seems in many ways back at where it started before the ceasefire began on April 8.

## **London Jewish Community on Edge After Another Attack**

The stabbing of two men in North London's Golders Green neighborhood on April 29 is the latest in a string of recent attacks raising safety concerns among the city's Jewish community, with Britain's top Rabbi warning that being "visibly Jewish" in the United Kingdom makes one unsafe. Amid the pattern of violent attacks, members of the city's Jewish community are also airing grievances about the government's failure to protect them from public violence.

In the case of the April 29 stabbing, the first security personnel to respond were community volunteers, highlighting both the government's lack of fast-response support despite the rising threat of public violence and the London Jewish community's recognition of (and attempts to mitigate) the problem. This has led to demonstration activity that has targeted Prime Minister Keir Starmer directly, with the threat of further, increasingly disruptive unrest.

The London situation is a particularly clear example of the broader increase in violence targeting Jewish individuals and sites worldwide, which in 2025 resulted in the most antisemitic killings in 30 years, according to a report from Tel Aviv University. The demonstrations that sprang up in the hours following the incident likely signal what can be expected in the coming days as news of the incident spreads and organizers plan events.

## **Northern Ireland Faces Resurgent New IRA Threat Amid Spate of Bombings**

Northern Ireland authorities are concerned about the threat of further indiscriminate attacks associated with the New IRA, a "dissident Republican" Irish terrorist organization formed from the remnants of the Real IRA, after two recent attempted bombings. The attacks threatened local bystanders, a commercial driver, and police officers, and forced the temporary evacuation of dozens of area residences. The recent uptick in New IRA-affiliated violence is the most significant threat associated with the group since 2023.

Authorities responded with vehicle safety checkpoints across Belfast, which are expected to evolve into a high-visibility policing operation across Northern Ireland in the coming days. Despite the bolstered security footing, the New IRA reportedly continues to threaten further attacks on Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officers, including at their homes. The New IRA has said that it plans to continue this campaign “until the British give a declaration to withdraw.”

As a result, there may be an increased police presence at events or parades taking place across Northern Ireland, particularly the 12 July Orange Order marches. While authorities believe the group no longer benefits from the kind of influence or membership it enjoyed previously, the oft-repeated point that the organization needs only to be “lucky once” emphasizes that even comparatively unsophisticated attacks could still have significant consequences for targeted communities.

## Late-Season Winter Storm Targets Colorado, Impacts Likely in Denver

Forecast confidence continues to increase for a late-season winter storm that will impact northern Colorado beginning tonight. Initial snowfall later today will be focused across north-central Colorado and the higher elevations. The greatest risk for widespread winter weather and accumulating snow, including in cities along I-25, is expected tomorrow evening through Wednesday, as freezing levels fall to roughly 5,200–5,500 feet. Heavy snow is expected to continue into at least Wednesday morning before gradually easing by Wednesday evening.

As of this publication, the National Weather Service (NWS) has expanded Winter Storm Watches along the urban I-25 corridor, including Castle Rock, Denver, Boulder, and Cheyenne. Moderate travel impacts and localized power outages are likely from Tuesday evening through Wednesday afternoon. The NWS is expected to upgrade the Watch within the next 24 hours.

For Denver, Boulder, and Fort Collins, widespread snowfall totals of 3–5 inches are forecast, with locally higher amounts up to 9 inches possible in the western suburbs. In the higher elevations of the Front Range immediately west of the metro area, snow accumulations are increasingly likely to exceed one foot, with 2–3 feet possible near ridge lines. Many mountain passes may become difficult or impassable. Moderate to major travel impacts are likely along I-70, west of Denver.

## Climate and Natural Hazards

- **Western U.S. Fires Increasing With Early Heat, Signals of Mid-May Heatwave:** Early-season wildfire activity has been noted within the last 24 hours across the western U.S., including new fires in Kern County, California, and near Sisters, Oregon. Recent record heat, including early 90-degree temperatures in Portland, is elevating the fire risk. Forecast guidance signals a strong area of high pressure developing along the West Coast by mid-May, bringing another period of well-above normal temperatures.

- **Northeast Europe Hit by Drought, Impacts Emerging:** While the blazes have been contained, the Netherlands experienced a wildfire outbreak within the last week, with France and Germany pledging support resources. The number of hectares burned across the European Union this year is well above the 20-year average. Meanwhile, Hungarian agriculture is suffering following an unusually dry April with little to no rainfall. Soil moisture has declined rapidly, raising concerns.
- **Philippines' Mayon Volcano Forces Expanded Evacuations:** The Mayon Volcano, which has been at Alert Level 3 since January 6, 2026, is once again exhibiting increased activity. Evacuations had been previously carried out for a 6 km radius around the crater, but additional evacuations have expanded following recent activity. On Saturday, Mayon emitted thick ash and smoke that blanketed the skies across Albay.
- **Philippines Earthquake Causes Localized Damage:** A magnitude 6.0 earthquake struck Eastern Visayas earlier Monday. Localized structure damage and at least one injury have been reported. Regional airports remain operational.
- **Severe Storms to Impact Lower South America Ahead of Cold Snap:** AlertMedia meteorologists anticipate a severe thunderstorm outbreak ahead of an approaching cold front across Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and southern Brazil Wednesday and Thursday, with an elevated risk for isolated tornadoes, scattered to numerous damaging winds, large hail, and heavy rainfall. Behind the cold front, a strong polar air mass will surge northward, bringing the first widespread cold outbreak of the season.
- **Powerful Storm to Target South Africa During the Middle of the Week:** Heavy rain and thunderstorms will increase in spatial coverage and intensity by midday Tuesday as a potent storm system begins to develop over the southern half of the country. Portions of the Western Cape and Eastern Cape, especially southern locations between Mossel Bay and Gqeberha, are expected to face the most severe weather through late Thursday. Isolated life-threatening flooding, power outages, and localized infrastructure damage are expected in the hardest-hit locations.

## Worldwide

- **Mounting U.S.-Mexico Security Frictions Raise Questions Ahead of World Cup Planning and Public Safety:** Mounting security tensions between the United States and Mexico are raising concerns ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026, particularly in key host regions such as Guadalajara, where a national safety survey reports 90.2% of residents perceive insecurity amid cartel-related violence. Perceptions of risk have also surged in nearby Zapopan following major federal actions against CJNG-linked leadership. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has called for greater transparency regarding alleged unauthorized U.S. involvement in counternarcotics activity in northern Mexico.
- **Violence Escalates in Colombia Ahead of Presidential Election Amid Security Concerns:** Armed violence has surged in southwestern Colombia ahead of the May 31 presidential election, with coordinated attacks using explosives, drones, and gunfire reported across Cauca, Valle del

Cauca, and Nariño. Dozens of incidents have killed civilians and security forces while disrupting highways, towns, and rural communities. Authorities blame FARC dissident groups led by Iván Mordisco, who are seeking control of drug trafficking routes and illegal mining areas.

- **Philippines to Host “Scaled-Down” ASEAN Summit Amid Energy Crisis:** The Philippines is preparing to host the 48th ASEAN Summit in Cebu from May 6–8 as the ongoing energy crisis stemming from the conflict in Iran has buffeted the region and forced Philippines’ President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to scale down the gathering from five days to three. More than 7,300 security personnel have been mobilized. Primary topics of discussion will be oil, food prices, and migrant workers.
- **India State Elections See BJP Likely to Score Key Win in West Bengal, Newcomer TVK Notch Upset in Tamil Nadu:** As counting progresses for state assembly elections in several Indian states, the BJP is likely to retain Assam for a third consecutive term while appearing poised for a historic breakthrough in West Bengal. Meanwhile, actor Vijay’s newly formed party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) will likely unseat the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu. The transitions appear largely orderly, though clashes between rival party workers in West Bengal increase the probability of post-poll violence in the coming weeks.
- **Significant Changes Could be Coming to U.S. Electoral Practices Ahead of Key Midterms:** Actions by federal agencies and a landmark Supreme Court decision could affect electoral processes and voter participation in November 2026 midterm elections. The U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in a Louisiana Congressional redistricting matter has been interpreted by some legal analysts as raising the burden of proof for those seeking to address racial discrimination through redistricting. A Reuters investigation has also reported multiple cases where federal agencies pressured electoral officials and sought access to personally identifiable information and polling machines.

## Cyber and Regulatory

- **Trump Administration Mandates Enhanced Security Checks for Immigration Applicants:** The Trump administration has mandated “enhanced” background checks for immigration applicants, which may slow processing times and affect hiring timelines for employers relying on foreign workers. Pending applications for green cards, asylum, citizenship, and family sponsorships must now undergo updated FBI screening. Delays are expected to be temporary but could persist or be extended depending on implementation capacity and future policy changes.
- **U.S. AI Legislation Proposed to Crack Down on Deepfakes, Protect Whistleblowers:** A bipartisan U.S. House bill would tighten restrictions on deepfakes and expand protections for AI whistleblowers, signaling increased federal oversight that could raise compliance requirements for businesses using AI. The proposal would impose stricter penalties on distributing non-consensual deepfake content and establish protections for employees reporting AI-related risks. The bill also encourages U.S. participation in setting international AI standards.

- **Brazil Regulator Investigates LATAM, Gol Airlines Over Price Alignment:** Brazil's antitrust regulator (CADE) has launched an investigation into LATAM and Gol over suspected anti-competitive practices, raising concerns about competition fairness and potentially higher fares in Brazil's aviation market. The case stems from a 2023 probe that identified consistent patterns of interdependent pricing behavior using advanced data analysis, including algorithms, shared data tools, and fare intelligence services that may have facilitated tacit coordination on major routes.
- **U.S. Congress Advances Federal Data Privacy Framework to Replace State Patchwork:** Congress is advancing the SECURE Data Act, which would establish federal standards for how companies collect, use, and share personal data, largely replacing state regulations. Proponents argue a single federal standard would reduce compliance complexity for businesses, while critics caution that federal preemption could weaken stronger protections already enacted in states such as California and Colorado.
- **China Tightens Control on U.S. Investments in Tech Sector:** China is moving to tighten restrictions on U.S. investments into its domestic technology sector, particularly in areas like artificial intelligence. Officials are expected to introduce new rules requiring government approval before Chinese firms can accept American capital. Chinese regulators have already blocked and ordered the unwinding of Meta's reported attempt to acquire AI startup Manus, citing national security concerns.

## Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **Somali Piracy Sees Resurgence Amid Shifting Maritime Security Pressures:** At least four shipping vessels were targeted in April off the coast of Somalia, raising alarm over the resurgence of Somalian piracy. The revival is likely linked to the conflict in the Middle East, which has constrained access through the Strait of Hormuz, forcing vessels to reroute around the Horn of Africa. The diversion of antipiracy patrols to the Red Sea to counter Houthi attacks may also have contributed to the revival. If the conflict persists, the piracy could cause severe losses for shipping firms.
- **Spirit Airlines Collapse Underscores Widening Global Aviation Crisis:** The U.S.'s Spirit Airlines ceased operations over the weekend following failed bailout talks, underscoring the severity of the global aviation crisis as rising jet fuel prices driven by the conflict in the Middle East disrupt airlines worldwide. Indian carriers have threatened suspension of services, Qantas Group has slowed its planned international expansion, and Thai AirAsia has reduced seat capacities. The International Energy Agency has warned that Europe could run out of jet fuel within weeks.
- **China Invokes "Blocking" Rules for First Time in Response to U.S. Sanctions:** China has ordered domestic companies to ignore U.S. sanctions targeting five Chinese oil refiners accused of trading Iranian petroleum, marking a significant escalation in Beijing's pushback against American extraterritorial enforcement. The directive prohibits compliance with the sanctions and allows affected firms to seek damages in Chinese courts. The decision underscores China's intent to protect energy security and economic interests amid geopolitical rivalry.

- **Shipping Firms Adjust to Continued Blockage of Strait of Hormuz:** As firms continue to adapt to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, increased pressure is being placed on other vital chokepoints and ports. The Panama Canal has reported a spike in vessel traffic attributed to the Middle East conflict. MSC Mediterranean Shipping Co, the world's largest container carrier, has announced a new service linking isolated Middle Eastern ports via the Suez Canal, with cargo trucked across the Arabian Peninsula. The new route is expected to take longer and be more expensive than shipping via the Strait of Hormuz.

## Health

- **Studies Warn Against CDC's Recommendation as Legal Battles Continue:** Two studies published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics concluded that the CDC's newest recommendation against birth-dose hepatitis B (HBV) vaccination could lead to increased infections, healthcare expenses, and deaths. In December 2025, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted to change the recommendation to vaccinating a child when they are two months old. With a court ruling pausing the ACIP's recommendations and the Trump administration's appeal, official recommendations for childhood vaccines remain in limbo.
- **FDA Attempts to Boost Pharmaceutical Production by Using AI in Clinical Trials:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) started an initiative for clinical trials using artificial intelligence to streamline data collection to bring medicine to patients faster. The initiative will use AI data collection from electronic-health records and will be piloted in two trials by pharmaceutical companies AstraZeneca and Amgen, where the FDA would receive midtrial data. The end goal is to trim drug approval timelines.
- **Health Insurance Companies Announce Standard for Pre-Treatment Review Requirements:** Major insurers, including UnitedHealthcare, Aetna, and Cigna, have signed an agreement promising to standardize more prior authorizations through automation and digitization, with a pledge to deliver at least 80% of decisions in real time by 2027. The standardized prior authorization forms will be for regularly submitted requests for medical services including orthopedic surgeries, CT scans, and MRIs but will not include prescription drugs. This standardization is set to take place January 1, 2027.
- **Suspected Hantavirus Outbreak Reported on Cruise Ship:** Three people have died following a suspected hantavirus outbreak aboard the MV Hondius, a cruise ship traveling from Argentina to Cape Verde, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Medics were working to evacuate two more people with symptoms as the vessel remains held off of West Africa. Hantavirus, typically transmitted via rodent waste, can cause severe respiratory illness. The WHO assesses the risk to the wider population as low.
- **Supreme Court Temporarily Reinstates Mail-Order Access to Mifepristone After Appeals Court Revived In-Person Prescription Requirement:** The U.S. Supreme Court temporarily restored nationwide access to the abortion pill mifepristone, allowing it to be prescribed via telehealth and delivered by mail or pharmacies. The decision blocks a recent appeals court ruling,

driven by a Louisiana lawsuit, that sought to reinstate in-person dispensing requirements. The Supreme Court's order will remain in effect until at least May 11 while it considers the next steps.

## Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **Local Demonstrations Across Mexico Target Tourism Development:** Protests are intensifying along Nayarit's Pacific coast as residents push back against luxury developments in Punta Mita and San Pancho. Demonstrators accuse developers of damaging wetlands and turtle nesting sites while restricting access to public beaches. This week, protesters blocked the Higuera Blanca road into Punta de Mita, demanding access to Playa Las Cocinas and greater transparency on permits. Similar protests in Tulum highlight growing nationwide resistance to tourism projects seen as unsustainable and exclusionary.
- **Students Face End-of-Year Disruptions as Teachers Strike in Spain, Romania:** Teachers in Valencia will launch an indefinite strike from May 11, highlighting widespread unrest in Spain's education sector. Cataloñia's main teaching union, USTEC, announced 17 days of strike actions across the next month. Meanwhile, Romania's education unions are preparing strikes later this month, with a two-hour warning strike planned on May 18 and a full strike the following Monday. The strikes are organized to demand increased salaries and better working conditions.
- **Opposing Demonstrations Planned in Major Cities in France, Italy, Spain:** The French May 9 Committee (C9M), described as a neo-fascist and ultra-nationalist group, is organizing its annual march this Saturday in Paris. Meanwhile, antifascist groups in Spain are calling on supporters to gather in Madrid's Tirso de Molina Square this Friday to oppose an anti-immigration march by Falange Madrid. In Italy, the Remigration and Reconquest Committee is organizing a presentation on a "remigration" bill in Turin on Saturday. A similar event in Naples in late April saw clashes between activists and riot police, resulting in major traffic disruptions.
- **Belgium Braces for Second Nationwide General Strike this Year:** Significant travel disruptions can be expected across Belgium next Tuesday, May 12, during a nationwide strike against government policies. Public transportation services and schools are highly likely to face disruptions, and a major demonstration is planned in Brussels the same day. Brussels Airport (BRU) is warning passengers that a large number of departing flights will be canceled. Belgian unions' last national day of action, March 12, saw over 80,000 people take to the streets. A similar turnout is expected next Tuesday.
- **Other Stories We're Watching:** In Prague, the Million Moments for Democracy movement is planning a major march this Tuesday in defense of public media. In Karachi, Aurat March organizers are calling on supporters to gather at Sea View on Mother's Day this Sunday for a demonstration in support of women's rights. In London, pro-Palestine activist groups are planning to protest outside Barclays Annual General Meeting this Thursday. Meanwhile, the U.K. is looking to ban some pro-Palestine marches following attacks on London's Jewish community.

# Weekly Intelligence Briefing

May 4, 2026



## Upcoming Events

- April 26 – May 6: Golden Week (Japan)
- May 4: Met Gala (New York City, United States)
- May 5: Cinco de Mayo (Mexico)
- May 8-9: 48th ASEAN Leaders' Summit (Cebu, Philippines)
- May 9: Victory Day (Russia)
- May 12: Parliamentary Elections (Bahamas)
- May 12-16: Eurovision (Vienna, Austria)
- May 14: Jerusalem Day (Israel)
- May 14-15: U.S. President Trump Visits China (Beijing, China)
- May 15: Nakba Day (Palestinian Territories)
- May 17: Parliamentary Elections (Cape Verde)
- May 18: Victoria Day (Canada)
- May 21-23: Shavuot (Global)
- May 24: Parliamentary Elections (Cyprus)
- May 24-30: Hajj (Saudi Arabia) Dates may vary
- May 24: National Assembly Elections (Guinea)
- May 25: Memorial Day (United States)
- May 26-31: Eid al-Adha (Global) Date may vary based on location
- May 30: UEFA Champions League Final (Budapest, Hungary)
- May 31: Presidential Election (Colombia)
- June 1: General Elections (Ethiopia)
- June 1-30: Pride Month (Global)