



# Biweekly Intelligence Report

12 - 25 Mar 2025  
Edition #016



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EUROPE

AnCR

- |    |                                            |          |
|----|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | UK – Heathrow airport fire                 | Moderate |
| 2. | Russia & Ukraine – Energy attack ceasefire | High     |
| 3. | Europe – Russian sabotage continues apace  | High     |
| 4. | U.S. – Oil tanker allision/collision       | Moderate |

## CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

AnCR

- |    |                                                |          |
|----|------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | Venezuela – Essequibo elections a flashpoint?  | Moderate |
| 2. | Venezuela – Political prisoners as leverage    | High     |
| 3. | Venezuela – FBI to target Maduro-linked cartel | High     |
| 4. | Panama – U.S. military plans ordered           | Moderate |

## NORTH AMERICA & INTERNATIONAL

AnCR

- |    |                                               |          |
|----|-----------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | U.S. & Mexico – Military buffer zone planned  | Moderate |
| 2. | U.S. – Targeted arson attacks continue        | High     |
| 3. | U.S. – First report of H7N9 strain since 2017 | Moderate |

## MIDDLE EAST

AnCR

- |    |                                              |          |
|----|----------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | Yemen / Red Sea – Houthi targeting to resume | High     |
| 2. | Israel – Military operations resume in Gaza  | High     |
| 3. | Iran – Nuclear deal deadline issued          | Moderate |

## AFRICA

AnCR

- |    |                                            |          |
|----|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | DRC – M23 deny peace talks, Rwanda accepts | High     |
| 2. | Nigeria – State of emergency declared      | Moderate |

## INDO-PACIFIC

AnCR

- |    |                                              |      |
|----|----------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Southeast Asia – Boarding of cargo vessel    | High |
| 2. | India – PERSEC considerations for executives | High |
| 3. | North Korea – Zoom as an attack vector       | High |

**Probability Yardstick**  
**AnCR (Analytical Confidence Rating)**



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# EUROPE

## United Kingdom



**Fire at Heathrow Airport substation causes significant delays:** On 20<sup>th</sup> March, a fire was reported at Heathrow Airport. Approximately 1,330 scheduled flights have been cancelled. The closure is expected to have cost around £20mn (\$25.8mn) per day. Counter-terrorism police have been mobilized to lead the investigation but have not yet identified any “indications of foul play.” Deputy chairman of the Security Council of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev was quick to deflect attention from Russia and poke the UK, stating “I’m looking forward to Russia being blamed for the Heathrow fire. What are you waiting for, Starmer?” Fortunately for Medvedev, the ability to gather sufficient intelligence to definitively attribute the cause of the fire will be a lengthy and secretive process.

**RMI Comment:** With scant details on the incident available at ICOD, it is impossible to confidently assess who or what group was responsible; however, the fire at Heathrow aligns with the strategic intent of Russian sabotage operations. Most importantly, it is deniable, especially if conducted by specialist and highly-trained units such as GRU Unit 29155 or the Department of Special Tasks (SSD). The financial and economic impact of the fire is considerable – the estimated £20mn per day in losses is *Almost Certain* to compound existing tension within the UK over cost-of-living issues and economic growth, and the closure of Heathrow Airport will *Likely* undermine confidence in the UK’s infrastructure resilience. These factors are *Almost Certain* to be amplified by longstanding Russian (dis)-information operations targeting the West, seeking to foment discontent.

It remains *Possible* that this incident was a result of negligence or other accidental human factors, even with Russia’s aggressive campaign of destabilizing sabotage events across Europe. Regardless of whether Russia or an activist cell conducted a deliberate attack, or the fire was caused by technical failure – the economic impact of critical national infrastructure (CNI) vulnerability at a high profile and significant GDP earning operation in the UK, is less important than the reputational damage done to the UK and Heathrow. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**



**RMI Recommendation:** Understanding your operations’ resilience against asymmetric threat vectors such as sabotage and misinformation is crucial in today’s security climate. RMI's Comprehensive Security & Operational Resilience (CSOR) surveys are aimed at CNI & similar; speak to us to see how we can assure your resilience. **Ends.**

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# EUROPE Russia / Ukraine

**Russia hesitant to accept ceasefire conditions set:** On 11<sup>th</sup> March, following negotiations in Jeddah, Ukraine issued a statement affirming its willingness to accept the U.S.' proposal to enact a 30-day ceasefire. The pause of military aid and intelligence-sharing to Ukraine was also lifted. On 13<sup>th</sup> March, President Vladimir Putin indicated Russia's hesitancy to agree to a ceasefire, citing issues in ceasefire violation monitoring and whether Ukraine will be allowed to rest, rearm, or refit over the 30 days. In effect, President Putin tacitly declined the ceasefire proposal by issuing a list of demands to ensure a ceasefire is not achieved in the near term. On 20<sup>th</sup> March, two meetings were held in Europe, one between European Union leaders, the other between Western military chiefs to conduct operational planning on Ukrainian peacekeeping once conditions are met to end the war. In a slight back-track, Prime Minister Starmer announced that the UK would not send peacekeeping forces to Ukraine without security guarantees from the U.S and that support would focus on "keeping the skies safe, the seas safe, and the borders safe in Ukraine."

On 17<sup>th</sup> March, Russia stated it requires 'ironclad' security guarantees for lasting peace in Ukraine: Ukrainian neutrality, the permanent exclusion of Ukraine from NATO, and that any peacekeeping force post-conflict to be from non-NATO countries in addition to the ceding of the annexed Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts to Russia. On 18<sup>th</sup> March, following a conversation with President Trump, President Putin announced Russia's most significant concession yet: a 30-day cessation of attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

**RMI Comment:** While President Putin's decision to halt strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure appears positive, commitment towards a comprehensive ceasefire remains extremely limited – and violations of the ceasefire are *Likely*. Ukraine has been successfully targeting Russian energy sites recently; the decision for Russia to pause strikes into Ukraine *Almost Certainly* disproportionately benefits Russia as Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been deliberately targeted for years. Russia will *Almost Certainly* look to secure its energy sites over the next 30 days; an effort that Ukraine has had to undertake under daily unmanned aerial vehicle and missile strikes. Further bilateral talks are to be held over Russia's use of the Black Sea to launch attacks on Ukraine – any concessions will *Highly Likely* be limited, with the expected unacceptable requirements that Russia has been demanding to continue, including the permanent halt of intelligence and materiel support to Ukraine. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**

**RMI Recommendation:** Further delays in ceasefire negotiations regarding the Ukraine war are *Almost Certain*, as Russia will continue to demand concessions that Ukraine will not accept. Moscow's insistence on Ukrainian neutrality, territorial concessions, and restrictions on NATO involvement pose direct threats to Kyiv's security. Likewise, Ukraine's position remains unacceptable to the Kremlin. **Ends.**

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## EUROPE

# Norway, Poland & Lithuania

**Sabotage incident against Norwegian state-owned oil company:** On 16<sup>th</sup> March, emergency services in Norway were alerted to an oil leak of 60 tons coming from a transformer. Upon investigation, authorities identified clear signs of a break-in, including a cut fence overlooking the site. Despite this fact, Oslo Police District has denied having 'concrete evidence' that this incident was an act of sabotage.

**Russian-backed actors charged with arson in Poland and Lithuania:** On 17<sup>th</sup> March, the Lithuanian prosecutor's office announced that the arson attack on an Ikea store in Vilnius in May 2024 was linked to Russian military intelligence. Separately, on 12<sup>th</sup> March, Poland charged a Belarusian citizen with committing an act of sabotage on behalf of Russia following the arson attack on a hardware store in Warsaw, Poland in April 2024.

**RMI Comment:** Given Norway's importance to Europe's energy supply and the clear signs of entry and the targeted nature of the incident, the refusal to call this an act of sabotage is merely a technical legal distinction. While it is feasible that this incident was an act of vandalism, it is far more *Likely* that it was conducted by an actor with a vested interest in displaying its capacity to threaten European energy security. Russia is the most credible actor, although it is *Plausible* that environmentalist groups retain the intent and capability to conduct acts of sabotage against energy infrastructure in Norway and beyond.

In a continuation of Russia's campaign to degrade and destroy Ukraine's energy supply, and intended to sap morale and force capitulation, Russia has turned its sights to continental Europe. It is now *Almost Certainly* firmly embarked on a campaign to destabilize countries that oppose its war in Ukraine across a spectrum of activities – from disinformation and interference in domestic politics and elections to physical acts of sabotage against critical national infrastructure nodes and commercial assets. Further acts of sabotage are *Almost Certain* as Russia continues to interfere with accepted international norms short of war. There is a *Remote Chance* that NATO is currently willing or will be willing in the future to risk war to avoid incidents of sabotage. In effect, the onus is on to private companies to protect themselves against sabotage. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**



**RMI Recommendation:** As Russia consolidates its gains in Ukraine in a *Highly Likely* protracted negotiation process, further acts of destabilization are *Almost Certain* to continue against states (including private entities within those states) that Russia views as opposing its aims. Consider commissioning detailed risk assessments to understand how your operations converge with Russian targeting priorities in the first instance or commissioning an RMI Comprehensive Security & Operational Resilience survey to assure your facilities and personnel are adequately protected. **Ends.**

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# EUROPE

## United States



**Cargo ship crashes into U.S.-flagged oil tanker:** On 10<sup>th</sup> March, the Portuguese-flagged cargo ship, MV Solong collided/allided with the anchored U.S.-flagged Stena Immaculate during a period of heavy fog in the North Sea. The incident resulted in significant damage to both vessels, with the Stena Immaculate carrying 220,000 barrels of aviation fuel intended for the U.S. Department of Defense at the time of impact. Notably, the Solong appears to have made no effort to slow down prior to the allision, raising immediate concerns over intent, human error, or technical failure. By 12<sup>th</sup> March, the fire onboard the Stena Immaculate had been extinguished, and there are no indications that the allision has resulted in meaningful environmental damage.

**RMI Comment:** The captain, a Russian national, of MV Solong was arrested on 11<sup>th</sup> March on suspicion of gross negligence manslaughter. Investigations are ongoing to determine the exact cause, but it is *Likely* that human error and technical failures of the vessel are to blame for the incident, rather than an intentional act of sabotage. MV Solong had previously failed multiple safety inspections, with records showing a failure in the emergency steering compass, among nine other issues highlighted in 2024. The vessel's owner, German shipping firm Ernst Russ, stated that these issues were rectified.

While the current investigation is leaning towards human error and potential technical failures onboard the MV Solong, the circumstances of the incident warrant further scrutiny and are instructive of the risks within global shipping – both innate and intentional. The geopolitical setting in which this incident occurred cannot be ignored; even though it is *Highly Unlikely* that this incident was an intentional act of sabotage, it serves to highlight the vulnerability of critical supply chains, particularly when they involve high-value cargo items linked to national security. **Ends.**

**RMI Recommendation:** This incident highlights the dangers of international shipping; maintaining awareness of emergent risks and ensuring staff onboard are prepared to deal with emergencies are critical. For planning against nefarious maritime activity that you may encounter, transit and strategic risk assessments should be conducted. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **MODERATE**



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# MIDDLE EAST

## Yemen



**Houthis resume kinetic naval blockade on Israeli and U.S. vessels, strikes intensify:** On 12<sup>th</sup> March, the deadline issued by Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi expired, and with it the resumption of the Houthi's intent to strike Israeli-linked vessels in the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait and Gulf of Aden; this was later expanded on 16<sup>th</sup> March, when the Houthis stated that their intent to conduct 'comprehensive action' – which will most *Likely* manifest in the form of targeted strikes against both the state of Israel and Western and Israeli commercial shipping; though it remains a *Realistic Possibility* that Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council targets will be included in the Houthi's escalations. This reignition of hostility received direct support from Hamas, with Houthi officials linking their targeting of vessels to their support of Palestinians in Gaza.

**RMI Comment:** This marks the end of the Houthis' unilateral ceasefire and a resumption of the targeting of Israeli, U.S. and UK-linked vessels in the vicinity of Yemen's littoral. The Houthi's 12<sup>th</sup> March announcement saw the U.S. and UK launch a series of preemptive precision strikes against Houthi positions from 15<sup>th</sup> March onwards, prompting the Houthis to launch two waves of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and ballistic missile attacks against the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group on 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March. These strikes have been confirmed by U.S. Defense sources, though the numbers are inconsistent with those stated by Houthi officials. Additionally, U.S. officials have denied the claim that the USS Harry S. Truman was damaged during the strikes, stating that all the Houthi UAVs were intercepted, while the ballistic missile fell short of U.S. vessels.

On 16<sup>th</sup> March, the U.S. committed to continue its strikes against Houthi positions until attacks on shipping are halted. While convenient for the Houthis, the entangling of the Israel-Hamas situation with the targeting of shipping dismisses the key driver of Houthi activity – Iran, whose relationship with the U.S. has recently soured. Iran is *Almost Certainly* providing intelligence support to the Houthis and is responsible for dictating targeting directives. Given that the conflict is *Almost Certainly* driven by Iran's foreign policy objectives of imposing significant costs on the U.S. and Israel in the Middle East through asymmetric deterrence and exerting control over critical global maritime chokepoints to pressure the U.S. to maintain leverage in nuclear negotiations, Houthi strikes are *Almost Certain* to continue. A comprehensive degradation of Houthi capabilities will *Highly Likely* result in a temporary pause of kinetic strikes, but unless Iran's production and supply of missiles and UAVs is halted, Iranian proxies will continue to use kinetic strikes to disrupt maritime chokepoints. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **EXTREME**



**RMI Recommendation:** As previously assessed, the prospect of stability returning to Middle Eastern waters was short-lived. Poor levels of targeting intelligence increase the risk of *all* vessels transiting the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, though the risk is significantly higher for vessels with Israeli, U.S. or UK affiliation. Marine transits are firmly **not recommended** currently. **Ends.**

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## MIDDLE EAST

# Israel



**Israel conducts extensive strikes on Gaza – a political powder keg:** On 18<sup>th</sup> March, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) announced a wave of strikes against Hamas locations across the Gaza Strip, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stating that the strikes were ordered due to Hamas’ refusal to release Israeli hostages. By 19<sup>th</sup> March, limited IDF ground operations had regained control of half of the Netzarim Corridor, a key operational zone separating northern and southern Gaza. A White House spokesperson affirmed the U.S.’ support for the strikes: “all those who seek to terrorize not just Israel, but also the United States will see a price to pay. All hell will break loose.” Israel’s Defense Minister, Israel Katz, stated on 19<sup>th</sup> March that strikes will continue until all captives are returned “and any threat to southern residents [of Gaza] is eliminated”, leaving a pathway to continued hostilities open.

**RMI Comment:** While the stated impetus of the strikes was Hamas’ refusal to release the captive Israelis, it is politically expedient for Prime Minister Netanyahu to appease far-right elements within his ruling coalition. Notably, former Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir, who left the coalition at the onset of the ceasefire has rejoined, reinforcing the government’s hardline stance and strengthening the political influence of Israel’s far-right. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has voiced support for the strikes, a departure from his January threats to leave the coalition during the short-lived ceasefire. Support from Ben-Gvir and Smotrich is *Highly Likely* essential for the survival of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s coalition as the 2025 state budget deadline in April approaches, requiring far-right support.

The importance of far-right elements within the ruling coalition does not bode well for regional stability in the near term, combined with rising Iran-U.S. tension, renewed Houthi strikes on commercial shipping, and Syria experiencing brutal communal violence risking a deterioration in the security situation with minimal identifiable positive signs of improvement coming from regional powerbrokers. U.S. support for counter-Hamas operations will be welcomed by Israel, though the latest wave of strikes will do little to support hopes of normalization of relationships with Arab states, *Probably* emboldening Iran to intensify operations through its regional proxies despite their operational degradation. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**



**RMI Recommendation:** It is not surprising that the Israel-Hamas ceasefire has concluded, though the timing coinciding with a period of regional instability is unfortunate for prospects of stabilization in the immediate term. Risks of escalation are elevated – unfortunately, key decisions sit with Iran, artificially nestled at the heart of this key conflict. More on the following page. **Ends.**

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# MIDDLE EAST

## Iran

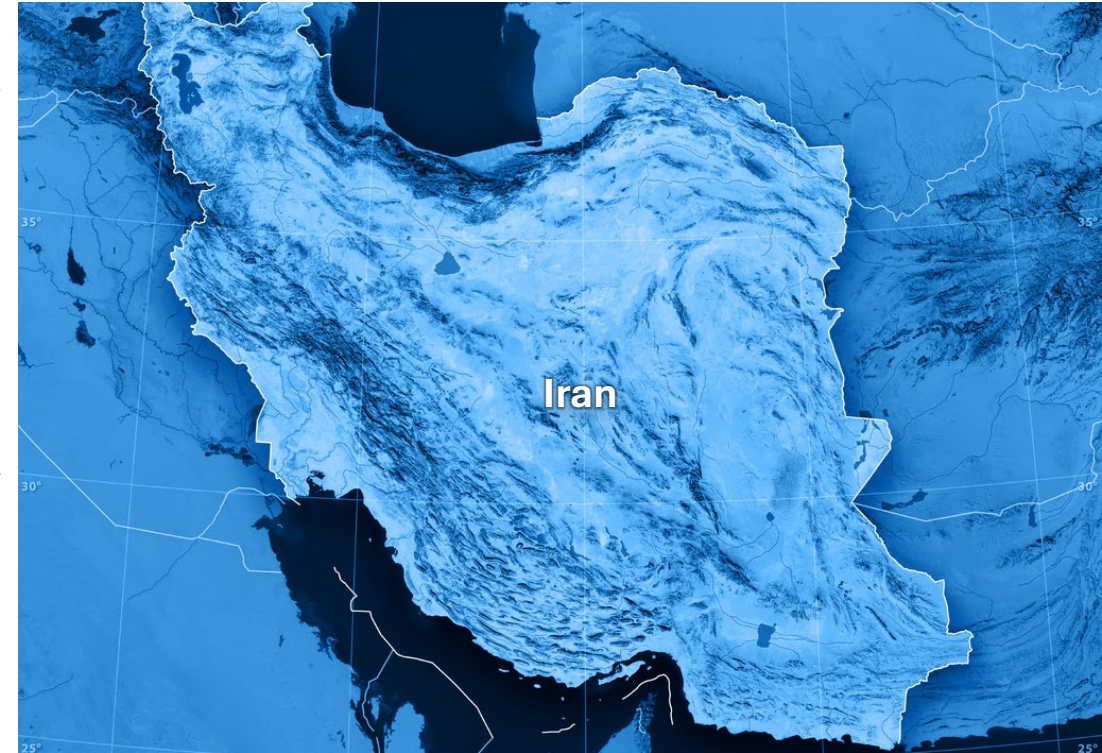


**Iran attempting to portray a moderate stance, U.S. unconvinced, issues nuclear deadline:** On 18<sup>th</sup> March, Iranian officials stated that Iran had delivered a message to the Houthi envoy in Tehran urging the group to cool regional tensions. This conveniently followed President Trump's *Almost Certainly* informed acknowledgment on 17<sup>th</sup> March that Houthi activity is directly supported and enabled by Tehran. President Trump continued, stating that "every shot fired by the Houthis will be looked upon, from this point forward, as being as a shot fired from the weapons and leadership of Iran, and Iran will be held responsible."

The letter from President Trump which was delivered to Tehran on 12<sup>th</sup> March reportedly contained a two-month deadline for Iran to agree to the complete halt of Iran's nuclear program, termination of uranium enrichment, end of arms shipments to the Houthis, cease financial support to Hezbollah, and disband Iraq's Popular Mobilized Brigades. If accepted, Iran will receive sanctions relief. If ignored, a threat of military action was given. If accepted, these demands would *Almost Certainly* cripple Iran's status as a regional power, as such, there is a *Remote Chance* that Iran will accept.

Domestically, hardline factions in Iran are enjoying increasing support for a potential withdrawal of the (Nuclear) Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Given Iran's *Almost Certain* ongoing efforts to continue progress toward fielding a nuclear arsenal (estimates suggest it would take Iran less than a week to enrich enough uranium for five warheads), this is a symbolic threat, but one that threatens to deepen the fractures in the Iran-U.S. relationship at a time of widespread regional conflict.

**RMI Comment:** Iran's 'Axis of Resistance' has been severely weakened, but without a *Highly Likely* politically untenable ground invasion, Iran's primary source of regional power, its proxies, will *Almost Certainly* regroup. As Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, seeks to navigate Tehran's nuclear policy and the newly-issued nuclear deal deadline, it is *Likely* that these groups will again be called upon to act on behalf of Tehran, just as the Houthis are – despite Iranian comments that the Houthis act independently. Therein lies the problem with threatening Iran – its regional proxies retain significant influence across the Middle East and while airstrikes can degrade their operational capabilities; without coordinated ground operations, it is *Highly Likely* that these groups will remain credible threat actors, offering Iran a strategic defensive insulation from direct action, for fear of igniting a significant regional conflict. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **EXTREME**



**RMI Recommendation:** As the situation in the region remains highly volatile, and attacks on Iran by the U.S increasingly *Likely*, all visits and other activity in the region needs to be carefully risk managed. If you do not need to go to the region, don't – and speak with RMI first if activity is non-discretionary to see how can assist in keeping your personnel and operations safe. **Ends.**

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# CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

## Venezuela & Guyana



**Amidst pressure from the U.S., Essequibo's importance is amplified by Venezuela:** On 12<sup>th</sup> March, Secretary General of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Diosdado Cabello, reaffirmed Venezuela's commitment to holding (illegal) elections to nominate governors and elect eight representatives for the National Assembly on 25<sup>th</sup> May. During his speech, Cabello referred to Guyana's sovereign Essequibo region as 'ours' and stated that everything west of the Essequibo River belongs to Venezuela, claiming that Guyana is an 'imperial agent' and that "when they say one thing, it means they want another. Let's learn to read them."

This follows the 1<sup>st</sup> March incursion of a Venezuelan Coast Guard vessel, harassing and attempting to intimidate offshore assets operating within Guyana's EEZ, which came shortly after the Trump administration ordered a halt to Chevron's oil licenses. There is a *Realistic Possibility* that the Trump administration will order additional companies, including Maurel & Prom and Repsol, to end their operations in Venezuela also.

**RMI Comment:** The core of the issue remains the Maduro regime's willingness to accept deportation flights from the U.S. – the initial revocation of oil licenses was due to Caracas' unwillingness to abide by the terms proposed by the Trump administration. On 10<sup>th</sup> March, Cabello announced that Venezuela would not accept further deportation flights because of the 'coercive measures' taken in revoking oil licenses. Venezuela *Almost Certainly* lacks meaningful leverage over the U.S. beyond this: so, increased antagonism and saber-rattling towards Guyana's Essequibo region is *Highly Likely* to continue as Caracas intends to display that it can challenge the U.S.' regional interests.

Venezuelan efforts to consolidate control over the Essequibo as well as demonstrating its ability to harm U.S. interests are *Highly Likely* shortsighted – the Trump administration *Almost Certainly* views Latin America as a higher priority than previous administrations, driven chiefly by concerns over immigration. President Maduro's increased assertiveness towards Guyana is *Highly Unlikely* to favorably alter policy in Washington for Caracas, further restricting the Maduro regime's decision-making space. Regardless, it remains *Highly Likely* that Venezuela will continue its boundary-pushing escalations, with specific dates to note being Venezuelan parliamentary elections on 25<sup>th</sup> May and the Guyanese general election, scheduled for December 2025. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **EXTREME**



**RMI Recommendation:** While *Probably* short-sighted, Venezuela *Almost Certainly* perceives ramping tensions up over the Essequibo region as the most credible and effective method to gain concessions from the U.S. Furthermore, Guyanese elections scheduled for the end of this year represent an opportunity to compel Guyanese voters to elect a party which will seek a peaceful resolution with Venezuela. President Irfaan Ali's approach is *Likely* to be undermined by Venezuela's sustained breaches of international accords and norms. **Ends.**

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# CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

## Venezuela

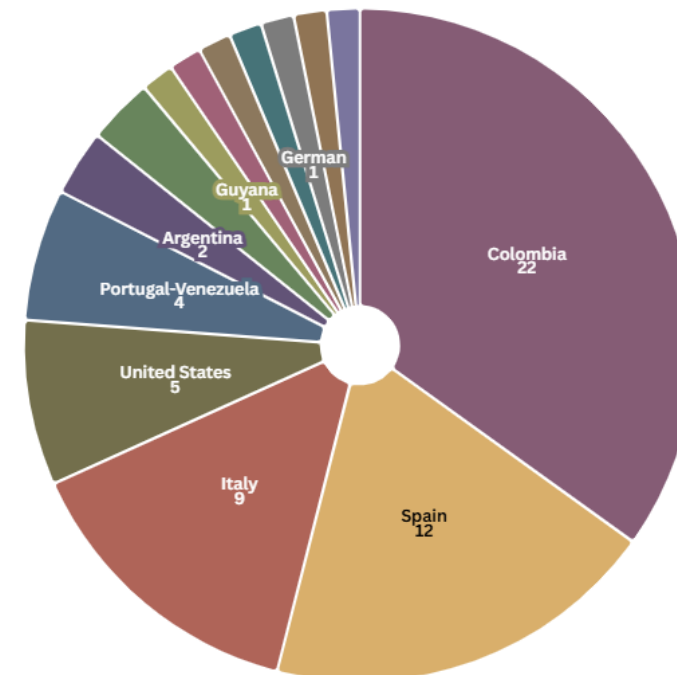
**Venezuela's ongoing campaign of political prisoners as political leverage:** Foro Penal, an NGO specializing in the defense of political prisoners, has listed the total number of individuals detained for political reasons as 66. The detention of foreign nationals in Venezuela is common and serves as a strategic lever for the Maduro administration to exert pressure on foreign governments. Contrasting Foro Penal's claims that there are five U.S. citizens in Venezuelan custody, U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio stated on 7<sup>th</sup> March that the actual figure is nine. Among those detained is Lucas Hunter, a U.S. citizen who has been held since 7<sup>th</sup> January. Hunter was reportedly traveling alone near the Venezuelan border and was kidnapped while in Colombian territory by the National Bolivarian Armed Forces (FANB).

**RMI Comment:** The heightened tensions between the U.S. and Venezuela will *Highly Likely* result in a significantly increased risk of U.S. citizens being detained for political purposes arbitrarily. This risk will *Likely* endure over the next 3 months. The difference between Foro Penal and Secretary of State Rubio's figures on U.S. detainees highlights the lack of transparency coming from Caracas over political detentions and the broader challenge for external governments to secure the rightful release of their citizens from the Maduro regime. Furthermore, the detention of Lucas Hunter highlights the Maduro regime's willingness to conduct operations beyond Venezuela's border to gain political capital in the form of U.S. citizens.

For U.S. and Western businesses operating in *and around* Venezuela's borders, this represents a significant risk. Personnel on the ground are at risk of arbitrary detention under fabricated charges of espionage, subversion or conspiracy, with those working in politically sensitive sectors such as energy and NGOs as well as executives *Highly Likely* at higher risk if identified by Venezuela. Given Caracas' limited foreign policy opportunities, the arrest of additional foreign nationals will *Almost Certainly* be prioritized for use in negotiations.

**Ends.**

### Foreign Nationals Detained in Venezuela by Nationality



Current assessed threat level: **EXTREME**



**RMI Recommendation:** RMI's previous recommendation for U.S. citizens to avoid travel to Venezuela remains extant. There is a high threat of arbitrary detention for use as political leverage by the Maduro regime. Companies with personnel operating near Venezuela's borders should ensure stringent security measures – including personnel and operational security assessments, supported by pre-travel risk assessments. **Ends.**

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# CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA



## Venezuela

**FBI to intensify its operations against the Maduro-linked Cartel of the Suns:** While the group was not included in the recent wave of foreign terrorist organization designations by the U.S. State Department, the Trump administration is enhancing efforts to counter Venezuela's Cartel of the Suns. The group is not a typical cartel – it operates across networks throughout the National Bolivarian Armed Forces of Venezuela (FANB), which support and enable criminal networks involved in drug trafficking. The FBI is intensifying its operations to dismantle the Cartel of the Suns in a blow to the Maduro regime, focusing on disrupting financial networks and targeting key individuals within the organization.

**RMI Comment:** The Cartel of the Suns *Likely* plays a key role in sustaining the Maduro regime – revenues generated provide essential financial support to the politically isolated state. A significant reduction in Caracas' involvement in drug trafficking is *Highly Unlikely* from the FBI's operations – both President Maduro and Diosdado Cabello, among other Venezuelan elites, have previously been charged with narco-terrorism, drug trafficking, and various additional criminal charges.

However, the intensification of FBI's operations comes at a critical juncture for Venezuela; the future of oil revenues appears uncertain as the U.S. applies maximum pressure on the regime. Moreover, if successful, the dismantling of the criminal enterprise will *Likely* weaken President Maduro's internal support amongst the military elite, further destabilizing the Maduro regime's grip over Venezuela. The FBI's intensified operations against the Cartel of the Suns represent a strategic effort to undermine the Maduro regime by targeting its critical financial networks. While these actions are *Highly Likely* to disrupt certain aspects of the cartel's operations, the regime's adaptability and dependence on illicit revenues suggest that it is *Almost Certain* that narcotics trafficking will persist, albeit in potentially altered forms. **Ends.**


**RMI Recommendation:** The Cartel of the Suns is a critical pillar of the Maduro regime's survival strategy. A meaningful erosion of its capacity to conduct drug trafficking will *Highly Likely* create significant internal challenges within the Maduro regime. The recent arrest of the former Philippine president, Rodrigo Duterte, will *Probably* raise fear across Venezuela, though the arrest of President Maduro or his allies is a *Remote Chance*. **Ends.**



**REWARD**  
INCREASE OF UP TO



**\$25,000,000 USD**

FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE ARREST AND/OR CONVICTION OF



**Nicolás Maduro Moros**

FOR NARCO-TERRORISM CONSPIRACY, COCAINE IMPORTATION  
CONSPIRACY, CONSPIRACY TO USE AND CARRY MACHINE GUNS AND  
DESTRUCTIVE DEVICES IN FURTHERANCE OF A DRUG CRIME



SEND TIPS TO DEA:  
[CartelSoleTips@dea.gov](mailto:CartelSoleTips@dea.gov) (e-mail)  
ALL IDENTITIES ARE KEPT STRICTLY  
CONFIDENTIAL.

STATE.GOV  
DEA.GOV

Current assessed threat level: **EXTREME**

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# CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

## Panama



**President Trump orders military plans for Panama Canal:** On 13<sup>th</sup> March, a U.S. official revealed plans within the Trump administration to consider military options to ensure continued commercial and military U.S. access to the Panama Canal. Options being considered range from taking the canal by force to cooperating with Panama's military. This follows President Trump's statements on 5<sup>th</sup> March that his administration "will be reclaiming the Panama Canal, and we've already started doing it."

Panama has upheld a policy of neutrality towards the operation of the Panama Canal since the Torrijos-Carter Neutrality Treaty of 1977 which also grants the U.S. the right to intervene militarily to ensure the canal's security if it were threatened. The core justification for potential U.S. intervention would *Almost Certainly* be China's stake in the control over infrastructure within the vicinity of the Panama Canal.

**RMI Comment:** The likelihood of direct U.S. military intervention in Panama remains low but not negligible. It is *Highly Likely* that diplomatic and economic measures would need to be exhausted before any military action occurs. Whilst U.S. military posturing near the canal is *Likely*, this would *Probably* entail increasing deployments across Latin America in line with the Trump administration's focus on the Americas, making additional naval deployments in the vicinity of Panama as well as formalized defense and security agreements with Panama more *Likely*.

The prioritization of Panama for the U.S. military would *Highly Likely* have significant consequences, altering the region's geopolitical landscape and reinforcing Latin America's position as a contested space between the U.S. and China. Additional resources being used to secure passage through the canal would ultimately have downstream effects on regional states reliant on the U.S. for military support – a more assertive and brazen Venezuela will *Highly Likely* look to exploit this situation, *Likely* with the tacit support of Russia and China. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **MODERATE**



**RMI Recommendation:** The threat level remains MODERATE – military action is presently *Highly Unlikely*, and indicators and warnings will *Highly Likely* be identified in advance of any decisions that would reorganize the disposition of the U.S.' Southern Command. Regardless, the Panama Canal's importance continues to be emphasized by the Trump administration. It is *Almost Certain* that China will continue its efforts to maintain its presence surrounding the canal, which will in turn drive hostility and great-power competition. **Ends.**

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# Democratic Republic of the Congo



**Progress on DRC-Rwanda peace talks, DRC-M23 talks backpedal:** On 17<sup>th</sup> March, the M23 rebel group announced its withdrawal from scheduled peace talks with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in Angola. This decision was attributed to the imposition of European Union sanctions on M23 leaders and Rwandan military commanders. In a related development, Rwanda severed diplomatic ties with Belgium and expelled its diplomats the same day, accusing Belgium of siding against Rwanda with DRC. On 19<sup>th</sup> March, DRC's President Félix Tshisekedi met with his Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame for bilateral discussions, with both sides' commitment to "an immediate and unconditional" ceasefire reaffirmed.

**RMI Comment:** Despite the supposed bilateral agreement on the need for a ceasefire, the *Almost Certain* Rwandan-backed M23 rebels are continuing their operations across eastern DRC, most recently capturing the mining hub of Walikale on 19<sup>th</sup> March. The coalition of rebel factions headed up by M23 stated that Walikale was liberated, aligning with their rhetorical positioning of themselves as saviors against the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). This narrative allows M23 to pursue a dual-track approach to the conflict; simultaneously seizing territory while also appearing somewhat willing to engage in dialogue to conclude the conflict.

M23's continued territorial gains serve two primary objectives: firstly, and most importantly, increased access to artisanal mining sites and logistics nodes and secondly, coercive leverage in negotiations with DRC to be used to alter the status quo in eastern DRC which will be used to formalize M23 control over the territories it has seized. Conflict over mineral access is *Almost Certain* to remain a security concern for DRC over the next 5 years, though this fighting will *Probably* begin approaching culmination much sooner – with the next 1-3 months *Highly Likely* critical in shaping the trajectory of the conflict. Rwanda's involvement in peace talks is reassuring, even if dishonest, as it enables an off-ramp for M23. Key factors RMI will be monitoring are M23's ability to consolidate its operational gains, regional and international diplomatic pressure on Rwanda, and the ability of FARDC to mount a credible and effective counteroffensive. **Ends.**



**Cobalt**

Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**



**RMI Recommendation:** The assessed threat level has lowered to HIGH – diplomatic pressure and bilateral peace talks between DRC and Rwanda will *Likely* limit the extent of the conflict. M23 has also expressed willingness to uphold a ceasefire, though the exploitation of 'peace' to consolidate control remains a key risk for further destabilization. Access to minerals will remain a key driver of insecurity in eastern DRC over the long term, with continued risks of conflict resurgence, even if ongoing peace negotiations prove fruitful. **Ends.**

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# AFRICA

## Nigeria



**State of emergency declared in Rivers State:** On 18<sup>th</sup> March, President Bola Tinubu declared a state of emergency in Nigeria's oil-rich Rivers State following an explosion on a Nigerian oil consortium's Trans-Niger Pipeline (TNP) the previous day, *Highly Likely* conducted by militants, as well as escalating political instability and recent acts of pipeline vandalism. The pipeline had resumed operational capacity by 20<sup>th</sup> March. This declaration resulted in the suspension of Governor Siminalayi Fubara, alongside his deputy and all state lawmakers, for an initial six-month period. The decision to declare a state of emergency has been widely criticized, with the explosion at the TNP being used as justification to impose federal control over the oil-rich state. Vice Admiral (ret'd) Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas has been declared the interim administrator of Rivers State, ensuring federal oversight of the executive powers, with critics arguing that a state of emergency does not grant authority to dissolve elected governments.

**RMI Comment:** The imposition of Vice Admiral Ibas and emergency rule in Rivers State allows President Tinubu to consolidate federal control over an opposition-aligned stronghold. The likelihood of unrest is extremely high, with protests *Almost Certain*. The oil industry in Rivers will look to benefit in the short term from the *Highly Likely* increase in security apparatus surrounding its infrastructure, but the decision and resulting friction to uninstall a democratically-elected government will strain stability.

Militants operating in the Niger Delta, including those responsible for the *Highly Likely* sabotage of the TNP, pose a sustained and evolving security risk. Armed groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and other criminal syndicates have historically exploited political instability to further attacks on oil infrastructure, either as a means of economic disruption or to extract concessions from the government and foreign companies operating in the region. While the increase in federal security presence will *Probably* deter some immediate attacks, the underlying economic and political grievances that drive militancy remain unresolved, making it *Highly Likely* that the emergency rule will coincide with renewed attempts by insurgents to exert influence their influence on oil operations. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**



**RMI Recommendation:** Nigeria faces broad security challenges with threats from localized militias to Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province presenting large concern to north-eastern Nigerian communities. The imposition of emergency military rule in Rivers State is emblematic of Nigeria's heavy reliance on military intervention to quash instability. This has been largely unsuccessful in Nigeria's majority Muslim north. National actors are *Highly Likely* to attempt to exploit any reallocation of security forces from the north, while militants in the Niger Delta will do the same in the south. Travel, if necessary, should be conducted with closer protection and comprehensive travel planning. **Ends.**

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# NORTH AMERICA

## United States / Mexico

### U.S. plans to establish a military buffer zone to hold illegal migrants on the border:

On 19<sup>th</sup> March, it was revealed that the Trump administration is considering plans to establish a buffer zone along its southern border which could extend from west Texas to the Pacific Ocean in south California, north of Tijuana, controlled by the U.S. military to temporarily hold migrants attempting to enter the country illegally. Service personnel would have the legal authority to detain migrants within the designated 60-foot-high fenced buffer zone, bypassing legal restrictions on the use of active-duty personnel acting as domestic law enforcement through the designation of the buffer zone as a military installation.

**RMI Comment:** Previous proposals to militarize (in presence only) the border have been met with criticism by Department of Defense officials due to the diversion of resources from other Defense activity; however, the current proposal is *Likely* to have gained traction across the administration, showcasing the importance of border security across the Presidency. If the proposal goes ahead, this will mark a significant escalation in border enforcement policy with broad security and legal implications. Those opposed to the measure will *Almost Certainly* vocally criticize the circumvention of the Posse Comitatus Act which prevents active-duty personnel from conducting law enforcement activities, although the Trump administration is *Highly Likely* to maintain popular legal support from the US Supreme Court.

While there is a *Remote Chance* that the creation of a military buffer zone will act as a comprehensive block to illegal migrants due to the scale of the border and the number of troops required to guard it effectively, if positioned along current hot-spots of migrant crossing, a significant reduction in the flow of illegal migrants entering the U.S. is *Likely*. Mexican cartels are *Almost Certain* to react and adapt to the changing landscape, altering smuggling routes to maintain a key source of revenue. There is a *Realistic Possibility* that the presence of U.S. troops will result in miscalculations and sporadic violence along the border, though restraint is *Highly Likely* to be favored on both sides. Within Mexico, violence is *Highly Likely* to increase as competition for access to smuggling routes intensifies. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**



**RMI Recommendation:** Continue monitoring. The assessed threat level remains HIGH and is representative of the overall border security situation. The establishment of a buffer zone is *Unlikely* to meaningfully increase the threat level posed at the border, but the likelihood of sporadic and localized violent incidents would increase. **Ends.**

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# NORTH AMERICA

## United States



### Targeted, politically-motivated attacks continue on Tesla locations:

Throughout the reporting period, the targeting of Tesla dealerships, charging stations and vehicles has continued in the U.S. and Germany. The FBI is investigating the U.S. incidents and related swatting events, where hoax calls are made to emergency services. There are numerous historical reports of swatting events, resulting in the accidental deaths of the targets. An organized group, Tesla Takedown, is leading the charge against Tesla, driven by political disagreements with its CEO, Elon Musk. The group has a total of 221 actions planned between 19<sup>th</sup> March and 26<sup>th</sup> April, with support from other activist groups, Troublemakers and The Disruption Project, who encourage members to visit the private homes of senators. Protests across 500 international sites are scheduled for 29<sup>th</sup> March.

**RMI Comment:** The Department of Justice has charged three suspects for separate attacks on Tesla property, with all charges carrying a minimum of five years and a maximum of 20 years in prison. While this will *Probably* be somewhat significant as a deterrence measure for most protestors, the more radical elements within Tesla Takedown and other anti-Musk activist groups will *Almost Certainly* continue conducting acts of domestic terrorism against Tesla property and privately-owned vehicles up to, and beyond, 29<sup>th</sup> March. **Ends.**

**RMI Recommendation:** The threat current assessed threat level is HIGH for Tesla owners – if you own and drive a Tesla, no matter your political affiliation, your property is *Highly Likely* a political target in the U.S.. As anti-Musk protests and acts of property damage gain momentum, the threat is *Likely* to increase. Consider where possible avoiding parking in public areas and ensure your insurance policy covers acts of vandalism. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**



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# INTERNATIONAL [Medical Intelligence]

## Avian Influenza



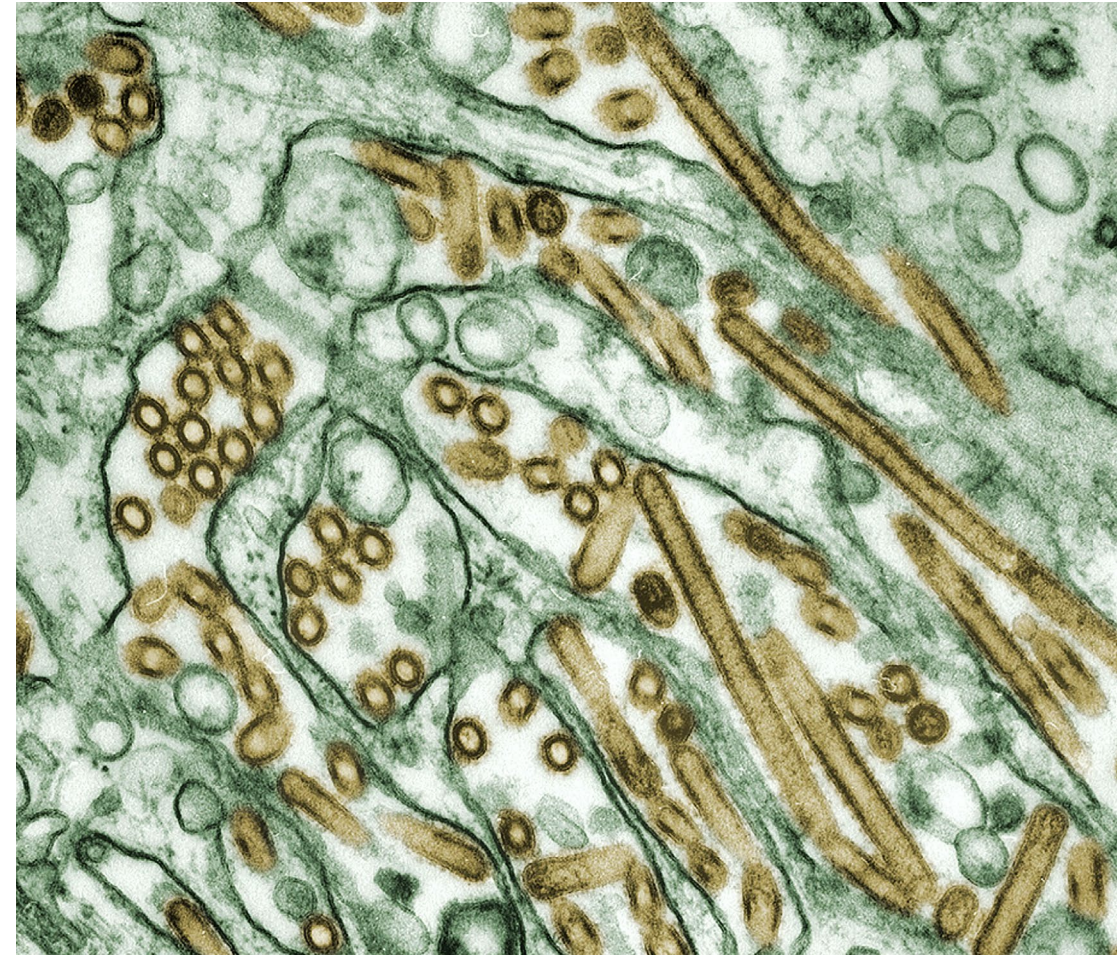
**Outbreak of H7N9 avian influenza strain reported on Mississippi farm:** On 17<sup>th</sup> March, the highly pathogenic H7N9 strain of avian influenza was reported at a farm in Mississippi. H7N9 has not been identified in the U.S. since 2017. The infected birds were culled and reportedly did not enter the food supply. The affected areas were subsequently quarantined. There are no known human cases associated with this outbreak.

**RMI Comment:** H7N9 is notable for its high mortality rate in humans, with a global statistic of 39% fatality rate among the 1,568 confirmed cases in humans. While no human cases have been reported in this outbreak, the reappearance of H7N9 in U.S. poultry highlights the continued risk of zoonotic spillover, particularly among farm workers and individuals with direct exposure to infected birds. **Ends.**

**Warnings of unprecedented scale of avian influenza spread:** On 18<sup>th</sup> March, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) cited hundreds of millions of birds being culled or depopulated globally because of spreading avian influenza. The deputy director-general of the FAO stated that the avian influenza crisis is having a serious impact on "food security and food supply" in various countries and noted the geographic spread of the virus since 2021 due to infections of at least 300 additional wild bird species and the virus' spill-over into other mammals, including cows.

**RMI Comment:** The scale of avian influenza's spread suggests that current containment measures are *Probably* insufficient in addressing the virus' transmission. While poultry culling remains a necessary intervention to control outbreaks, the cascading effects on food supply chains could *Realistically* lead to geopolitical friction as governments prioritize domestic food security over exports, especially since domestic stocks of poultry are constrained by culling requirements. **Ends.**

**RMI Recommendation:** No change from Edition #015. The current assessed threat level is LOW. The WHO recommends limiting exposure to potentially infected poultry and environments and performing good hand hygiene to mitigate risk of infection. Experts warn of the risk increasing dramatically if human-to-human transmission is identified, but to date there have been no reported cases of this occurring. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **LOW**



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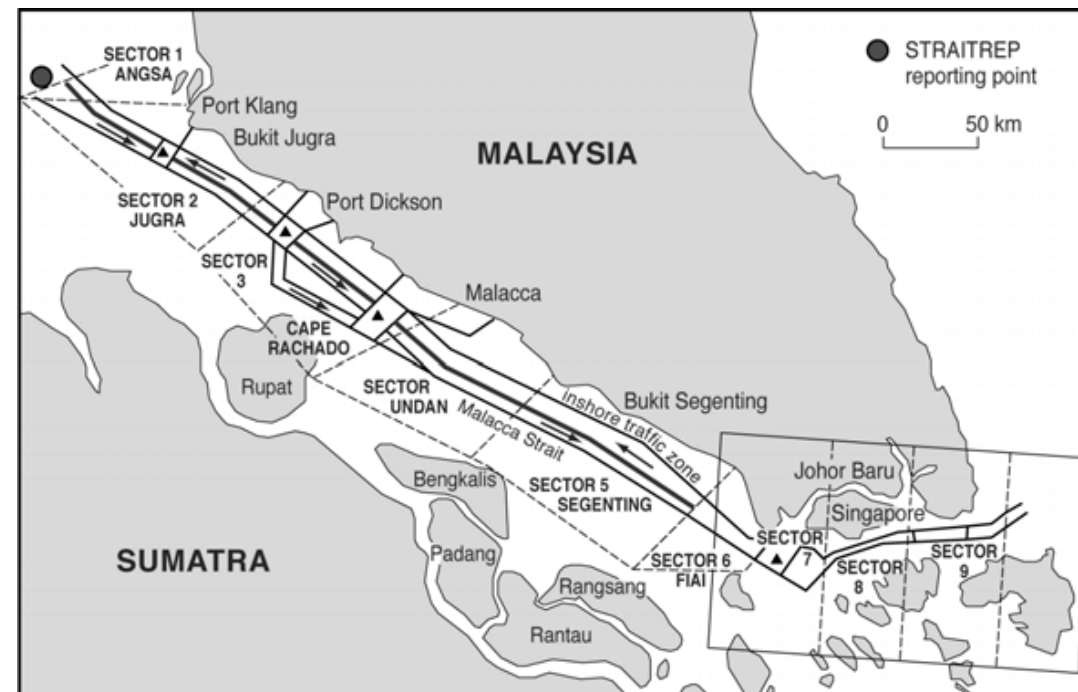
# INDO-PACIFIC

## Southeast Asia

**Significant maritime piracy in Southeast Asia:** Between 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> March, a series of five maritime robbery incidents were reported in the Singapore Strait. All events were robberies, with two incidents affecting container ships while the remainder were barges. These incidents occurred in both the eastbound and westbound lanes of the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS). The most significant incident came on 13<sup>th</sup> March, when pirates boarded an unnamed container ship while underway in the eastbound lane of the Singapore Strait TSS, restraining the duty oiler inside a side room before escaping with stolen engine parts – the first such event targeting a container ship in almost 10 years. On 19<sup>th</sup> March, a similar event was reported, with two robbers boarding another container ship while also underway in the eastbound lane of the Singapore Strait TSS, where robbers escaped with stolen ship's stores.

The remaining three incidents occurred in the westbound lane of the Singapore Strait TSS and involved barges under tow by Malaysian-flagged tugboats. On 16<sup>th</sup> March, robbers boarded the barge *POE 2502* under tow by *Bonsped 10* and escaped with stolen scrap metal. A similar incident involving the same barge and tug combination occurred on 17<sup>th</sup> March, with robbers again boarding and removing scrap metal before fleeing. Also on 16<sup>th</sup> March, a separate incident was reported involving the barge *Linau 135* under tow by *Dawn 70*. Upon arrival at Singapore's Western Anchorage, its crew discovered items missing from containers and evidence of forced entry, including a stolen gangway ladder and broken seals. No injuries were reported in any of the barge-related incidents.

**RMI Comment:** Criminal actors are continuing to exploit the high volume of slow-moving maritime traffic transiting the TSS, *Highly Likely* indicative of the overall heightened maritime threat environment in the Singapore Strait. The re-emergence of container ship boardings – particularly the 13<sup>th</sup> March incident involving crew restraint and targeted engine component theft, marks a significant escalation in both capability and intent. It is the first such incident in nearly a decade and *Almost Certainly* signals renewed confidence among more capable pirate groups operating within the Strait. The repeated targeting of *POE 2502* over consecutive days also *Highly Likely* indicates that attacks are reconnaissance-led, where perpetrators track vulnerable targets based on predictable routing and low onboard security. The preference for scrap metal theft across the incidents further suggests a focus on low-risk, high-yield cargo with limited confrontation. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **EXTREME**

**RMI Recommendation:** These events are *Highly Unlikely* to be isolated occurrences, with further maritime piracy in this region *Almost Certain*. However, the nature of maritime piracy in Southeast Asia differs from that of West Africa and the Indian Ocean due to the limited number of violent events. Risks remain, however, noting the presence of armed robbers in multiple recent events, necessitating enhanced security measures for vessels transiting the Singapore Strait and detailed risk assessments. **Ends.**

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# INDO-PACIFIC India / Global

## The targeting of an Indian influencer is instructive of the dangers faced by executives:

On 16<sup>th</sup> March, a grenade-like object was thrown towards the house of a YouTube influencer based in India. The event itself may initially seem of little interest to the audience of these reports; however, the incident aligns with an increasing trend of violence against high-profile individuals as well as risks faced in public areas. These incidents can be mitigated through the implementation of personal (PERSEC) and operational security (OPSEC) protocols.

**RMI Comment:** The modern convergence of digital presence and real-world threats poses a risk to individuals involved in potentially contentious industries. This incident involving an unnamed influencer highlights how public figures are increasingly vulnerable to targeting due to the widespread availability of personally identifiable information (PII) online. The expansion of digital footprints without the utilization of PERSEC and OPSEC understanding exposes more PII to hostile actors capable of planning and executing targeted attacks using increasingly rudimentary attack vectors.

An abundance of PII available on a principal significantly increases the risk of ‘doxing’, where PII such as home addresses, phone numbers and email addresses are exposed. This information can then be used by hostile actors to harass, intimidate, extort or plan attacks, as seen in the assassination of UnitedHealthcare CEO, Brian Thompson. OPSEC and PERSEC measures are fundamental to mitigating these risks and reducing exposure to hostile targeting, physical and financial. **Ends.**

**RMI Recommendation:** In the modern threat landscape, digital exposure directly correlates to physical vulnerability. As such, it is paramount that your OPSEC and PERSEC procedures are solid. Audits of your digital footprint are recommended to understand your PII exposure levels, maintain an awareness of the content you post to social media (including LinkedIn) ensuring to limit posts that contain identifiable location features when you are unprotected (landmarks and street signs are the most easily avoidable, though it is possible to geolocate individuals through shadows, electrical pylons, and foliage) and avoid sharing meeting times and locations through public channels entirely. **Ends.**



Current assessed threat level: **HIGH**



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# INDO-PACIFIC

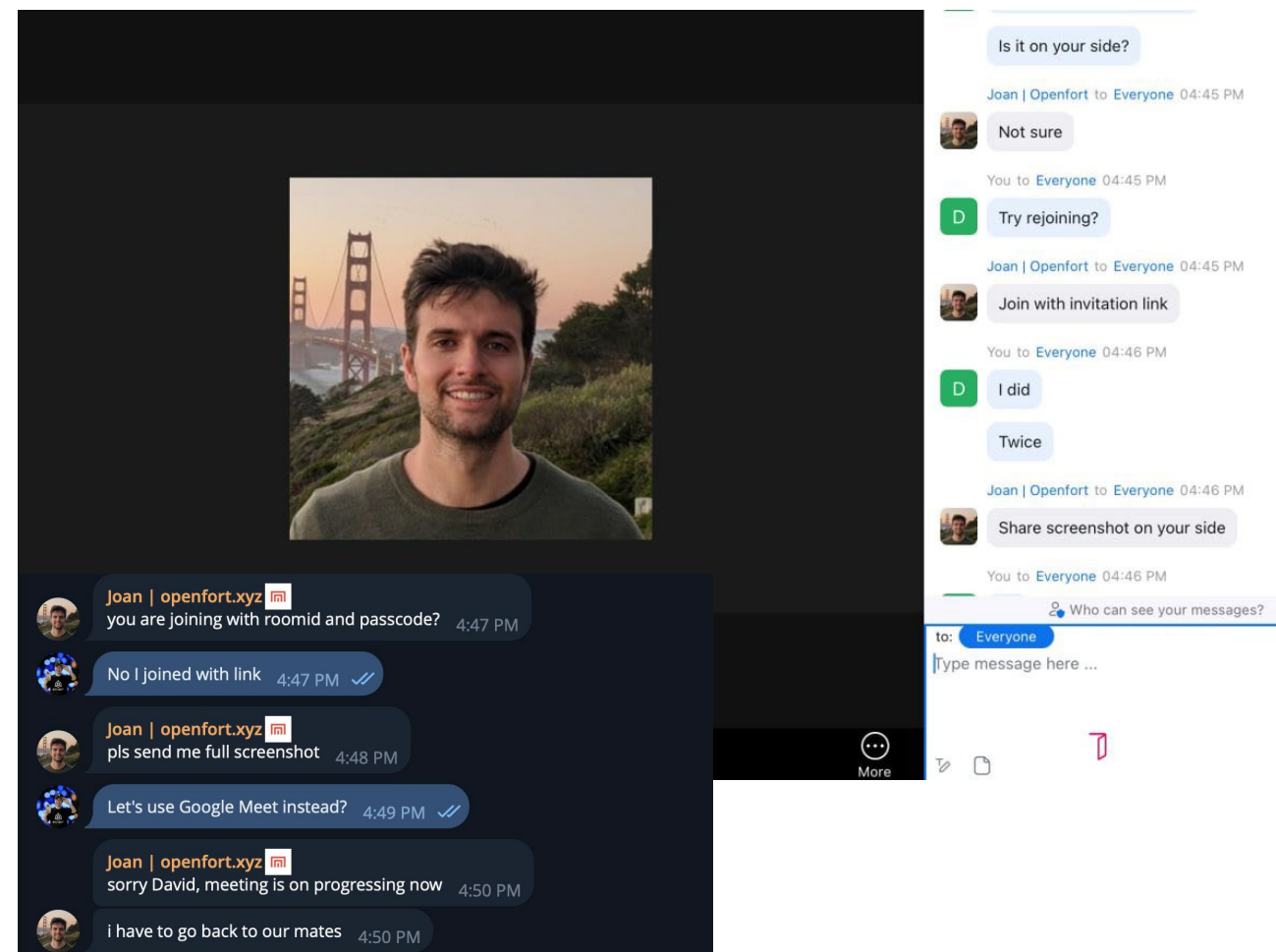
## North Korea

**Businesses targeted by North Korean hackers using Zoom calls:** From 12<sup>th</sup> March, at least three cryptocurrency executives have reported North Korean hacking attempts made via Zoom calls. These attacks represent the expansion of North Korean social engineering operations, using the widespread use of video conferencing in the private sector to enable malicious activity. In the hack attempt, meetings are set up through fake copies of Zoom, where the hacker alleges to not be able to hear the target before prompting the target to either install audio drivers through the fake Zoom client or access another link, installing malware designed to extract sensitive information.

**RMI Comment:** This recent tactic builds on North Korea's previous cybercrime campaign where North Korean hackers attempted to infiltrate Western companies, advertising themselves as skilled employees using fake identities and LinkedIn profiles. One (declared) example of this resulted in the breach of corporate systems and subsequent extortion following his dismissal from the company.

Cryptocurrency companies are the most logical target, providing North Korea a source of revenue that can be used to evade sanctions. However, attempts at infiltration across a range of industries should not be discounted, particularly those involved in critical services such as healthcare and energy. North Korea *Almost Certainly* retains highly technically skilled hackers, most notably the Advanced Persistent Threat (APT), Lazarus Group, who stole \$1.5bn from cryptocurrency exchange ByBit on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, and the *Highly Likely* perpetrators behind the WannaCry ransomware in 2017 which infected 230,000 systems globally, including a third of Britain's National Health Service trusts. **Ends.**

**RMI Recommendation:** To mitigate against this specific threat, RMI recommends verifying any unfamiliar meeting requests' authenticity, and exercising caution with unexpected requests through issuing meeting requests yourself if feasible. For more specific cybersecurity solutions, contact our cyber-SME industry partners at [Trustwave](#), who can advise on cyber resilience solutions. **Ends.**

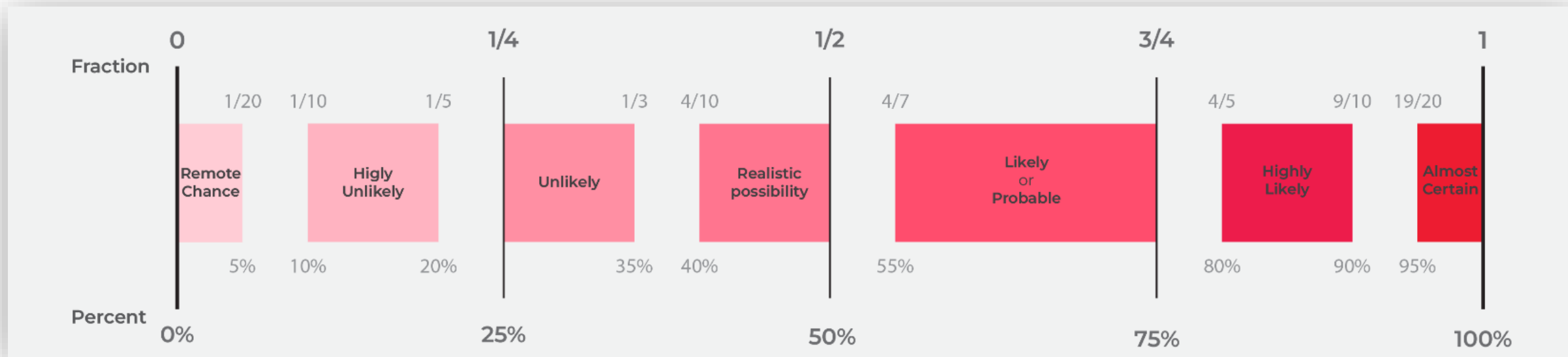


Current assessed threat level: **MODERATE**



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# Probability Yardstick



## Analytical Confidence Rating (AnCR)

**HIGH.** Uncertainties remaining should have negligible or no effect on the key judgement(s).

**MODERATE.** Uncertainties remain that could expose the key judgements to change.

**LOW.** Critical uncertainties remain that could invalidate the key judgements.

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