

# Risk Intelligence Center

## Monthly Intelligence Summary (INTSUM)

### October 2023

1 November 2023

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## Overview

The aim of the Risk Intelligence Center (RIC) Monthly Intelligence Summary (INTSUM) is to raise awareness of threats, the potential risks they pose, and other security related news.

Items of intelligence interest featured in this INTSUM have been selected based on their severity and ability to influence the security and threat landscape. Additionally, a selection of global items of intelligence interest have been included to enhance situational awareness and decision making.

If you have any questions about the content of this report contact the [RIC](#).

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Intelligence Cut Off Date (ICOD):</b> | 2359hrs, 31 October 2023. |
|--|---------------------------|

| ASSESSED THREAT LEVELS |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>5 – EXTREME</b>     | Very high / extreme threat of disruption. Review and respond if required. |
| <b>4 – HIGH</b>        | High / major threat of disruption. Consider taking appropriate action.    |
| <b>3 – MODERATE</b>    | Moderate threat of disruption. Maintain awareness, consider precautions.  |
| <b>2 – LOW</b>         | Low / limited threat of disruption. Be advised.                           |
| <b>1 – VERY LOW</b>    | Very low / insignificant threat of disruption. For awareness.             |

| LANGUAGE OF PROBABILITY |        |                 |          |                      |                   |               |                |
|-------------------------|--------|-----------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Term:</b>            | Remote | Highly unlikely | Unlikely | Realistic / Possible | Likely / Probable | Highly likely | Almost certain |
| <b>Probability:</b>     | 0-4%   | 10-20%          | 25-35%   | 40-50%               | 55-75%            | 80-90%        | 95-99%         |

## AMEA – Africa, Middle East and Asia



### Situation in brief

**Gaza-Israel conflict experiences significant escalation:** Hamas militants launched a series of surprise cross-border attacks on Israel from Gaza on 7 October, killing both defense personnel and civilians, alongside taking hostages, leading to an Israeli retaliation as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared a 'state of war' with Hamas on 8 October. The operation, which Hamas labeled the Al-Aqsa Flood, was the largest coordinated attack on Israel in years, coinciding with the Jewish holiday Simchat Torah, and 50 years since the Yom Kippur War.

To restrict Hamas' access to weapons, Israel ordered a siege on the Gaza Strip, blocking access to food, aid, gas, and power, however, there have since been reports of an aid agreement being formed to minimize the number of Palestinian casualties, with details yet to be revealed.

Thousands of people on both sides of the conflict have been killed and injured, calling for a significant international response to the growing violence. Though Israeli allies and several other states such as Saudi Arabia have condemned the conflict escalation, Hamas has been supported largely by Iran and Hezbollah, alongside Palestine support groups globally showing their support for Palestinians, inciting large protests worldwide that are highly likely to continue as the conflict escalates.

**Increased cyber threats raise regional concerns:** Several Australian Government websites were hit by pro-Russian hackers in a series of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks in response to a decision to provide Ukraine with locally made counter-drone technology on 6 October. While no personal or sensitive information was accessed by the threat actor, an investigation was launched into the circumstances concluding the DDoS attack was solely designed to prevent access to websites. Cyber warfare risks classified information, national infrastructure, and individuals' personal details being released, with ongoing global issues, such as conflicts, becoming an increasing influencing factor in rising attacks.

As cyber threats continue to advance in the region, as well as globally, some countries, such as the Philippines have announced plans to tackle rising threats. The Philippines Army General Romeo Saturnino Brawner Jr. stated the nation has recently faced cyber-attacks on Government systems almost daily, largely facilitated by Chinese-linked groups, over its ties to the US, and its location in the South China Sea. As such, the attacks prompted the decision to create a Cyber Security Command, independent from the current cyber branch to increase their capabilities and equipment to tackle the attacks. Other countries will likely implement similar schemes to increase national security in the wake of increasing attacks both in the AMEA region and globally.

**Extreme weather causes widespread disruption:** Afghanistan, Oman, Taiwan, and Yemen faced a variety of extreme weather events including earthquakes, typhoons, and cyclones, causing widespread disruption, casualties, and damage throughout the month. The increase in extreme weather conditions has escalated the demand for global humanitarian aid, as poverty-stricken areas especially face increased demands for food, clean water, aid, and medicine.

Afghanistan has faced a series of powerful earthquakes near Herat in the Western Afghani region resulting in mass casualties, and extensive damage, with Taliban officials declaring the death toll amounting to 2,000~ people across the province.

Oman and Yemen were hit by tropical cyclone Tej which made landfall on 24 October displacing 1,000~ people and closing schools throughout Yemen as a State of Emergency was declared by the Internationally Recognised Government of Yemen. In Yemen, areas experienced heavy and torrential rains that led to major damage to infrastructure including health facilities, roads, telecommunications lines, and electricity.

Category Four Typhoon Koinu hit Taiwan on 5 October, with maximum sustained winds recorded at 135mph~ by the Joint Typhoon Warning Center. Although casualties were minimal, the storm caused widespread disruption amid fears it would reach Southern China, resulting in canceled domestic and international travel. It is expected the impact of the extreme weather events will persist in the coming months as recovery efforts remain ongoing.



Thousands have gathered in support of Palestine worldwide following the conflict escalation.



Philippines to recruit cyber warriors for online defense.



Extreme weather cases across the Middle East and Asia

## Significant activities (SIGACTS)

| Date   | Country      | Type             | Details   |
|--------|--------------|------------------|---|
| 1 Oct  | Iran         | Unrest           | A girl was arrested and was hospitalized in critical condition after a confrontation with police agents regarding the country's hijab law.  |
| 4 Oct  | Saudi Arabia | Other            | The Government announced it would keep voluntary oil supply cuts by the end of the year to maintain price levels and market competitiveness.  |
| 5 Oct  | Kenya        | Politics         | Opposition leader Raila Odinga denounced the peacekeeping mission to Haiti over concerns it would unnecessarily risk Kenyan lives.  |
|        | Taiwan       | Weather          | Typhoon Koinu made landfall and left 62,000~ homes without electricity. Wind gusts from the typhoon, 363~kph, were some of the strongest ever recorded.                                       |
|        | Australia    | Cyber            | The Home Affairs Department was targeted by cyber attacks from a Russian-affiliated hacking group following the Government announcement to dispatch anti-drone technology to Ukraine.         |
| 7 Oct  | Israel       | Armed Conflict   | Palestinian authority of the West Bank, Hamas, launched a multi-level military operation in Southern Israel with Israel responding by launching missiles toward Gaza and mobilizing reserves. |
| 8 Oct  | Afghanistan  | Natural disaster | A 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit the country killing 2,000~.  |
| 10 Oct | Zimbabwe     | Health           | The Government banned large gatherings and increased surveillance at ports of entry after an increase in cholera infections.  |
| 14 Oct | Australia    | Politics         | Citizens voted against constitutional recognition and a consultative parliamentary body of indigenous people in nationwide referendum   |
| 17 Oct | China        | Other            | The third Belt and Road Forum took place in Beijing with the participation of 140~ countries and 30~ international organizations.   |
| 19 Oct | Philippines  | Cyber            | The Philippines Military announced plans to create a cyber command to improve defenses against cyber attacks.   |
| 20 Oct | Malaysia     | Other            | Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim proposed a free trade agreement between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Gulf Cooperation Council amid the blocs' summit in Saudi Arabia.      |
| 23 Oct | Various      | Weather          | Major disruptions and casualties were reported in Oman and Yemen following the landfall of cyclone Tej.   |
| 26 Oct | Pakistan     | Other            | The Government announced plans to set up deportation camps for millions of illegal migrants ahead of the deportation date on 1 November.  |
|        | Qatar        | Crime            | Seven Indian nationals were given the death penalty, accused of spying for Israel.  |
| 27 Oct | Bangladesh   | Security         | One person was killed and 100~ injured after protesters of the opposition party demanded the disbanding of the government and a fair vote under a caretaker government.                       |
| 29 Oct | Japan        | Other            | The G7 called for an immediate repeal of bans on Japanese food due to the Fukushima water release.  |

## Americas



### Situation in brief

#### Healthcare services in six US states disrupted following industrial action:

A three-day industrial action involving 75,000~ Kaiser Permanente (KP) medical workers started on 4 October making it the largest healthcare strike in US history according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, with the labor dispute potentially affecting 12.5~ million insured clients of KP and 500~ medical facilities.

The industrial action resulted in major disruptions in healthcare services across five US states and Washington DC, with the walkout taking place in California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, and Virginia.

The strikes ended on 6 October as a coalition of eight unions representing medical professionals and support staff at KP reached a tentative deal, with the new contract including pay increases that will amount to 21% increases over the next four years, as well as aiming to address staffing shortages that remain from COVID-19, and must be ratified by union membership. 2023 represents the busiest year for strike action in the US since 2019, with 310,000~ workers striking across several labor sectors, including automotive, medical, and entertainment industries.

#### US President Biden to continue construction of US-Mexico border wall:

US President Joe Biden's administration announced on 5 October he would use executive powers to waive 26 federal laws to enable quick construction of sections of the US-Mexico border wall to stop rising immigration levels. It remains unclear how extensive the project will be, but a map published in June indicated that an additional 20~ miles of wall would be built in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas as 245,000~ illegal entries have been recorded in the area since October 2022. Parts of the US-Mexico border are already lined with barriers, with 450~ miles of wall constructed under former President Donald Trump, a key tenet of his 2016 presidential campaign.

Constructing a barrier is a contentious issue that has split Democrat and Republican supporters. President Biden pledged in 2020 that he would not add to the wall if he were elected, however, he conceded that he could not stop the construction of the border wall because the funding for it had already been appropriated by Congress, which refused his request to redirect the money elsewhere. The US-Mexico border, and immigration more generally, will be a contentious issue leading up to the 2024 presidential elections on 5 November.

**Hurricane season causes disruption in Mexico:** Mexico has coastlines along both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans where an increase in hot weather between May and November creates perfect conditions for the formation of hurricanes and tropical storms. Due to climate change, scientists claim that these storms are becoming more severe due to increased sea surface temperatures. Hurricane Otis made landfall on 25 October near Acapulco, Guerrero State on the west coast of Mexico. The hurricane was a Category Five hurricane, the highest designation given to tropical storms and unprecedented for the East Pacific Region. Mexico's army and navy deployed 8,000~ troops to assist with rescues and to prevent looting. Power outages and other infrastructural damage were reported, including damage to the commercial and military airports, causing significant disruption to organizations in the local area.

Hurricane Lidia made landfall as a Category Four Storm on 10 October near Las Peñitas in Jalisco state after rapid intensification in the Eastern Pacific. Puerto Vallarta Airport was closed on 11 October and two people were reported to have died. Once over land, Lidia rapidly weakened over the mountainous terrain of western Mexico, however coastal areas sustained damage, and two people were killed and travel was closed on 11 October.

Category One Hurricane Norma made landfall in the south of Mexico's Baja California on 21 October. Tens of thousands were left without electricity and the storm's strong winds continued to cause damage as it crossed the Gulf of Mexico toward Sinaloa State, where schools were closed, and shelters were set up with a capacity for 13,000~ people. Flights were canceled from La Paz International Airport in La Paz due to flooding and many of the highways were blocked with debris, limiting access to the capital of Baja California Sur.



Striking KP workers on the picket line in front of a hospital in Vallejo, California in support of healthcare strikes for increased pay



US President Biden walks along US-Mexico border in El Paso, Texas as immigration continues to increase after COVID-19.



Street stalls damaged by Hurricane Otis near the entrance to Acapulco on 25 October

## Significant activities (SIGACTS)

| Date   | Country     | Type             | Details   |
|--------|-------------|------------------|---|
| 2 Oct  | Chile       | Unrest           | Hundreds of healthcare workers staged a strike to demand an improvement in working conditions and salaries as COVID-19 cases continued to increase throughout regional areas across the country.  |
| 4 Oct  | US          | Security         | The Biden administration waived federal laws to allow border wall construction in South Texas after 245,000~ illegal crossings were recorded in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.  |
|        | US          | Health           | 75,000~ health workers commenced three days of industrial action over unfair labor practices and unsafe staffing levels at Kaiser Permanente hospitals.   |
| 6 Oct  | Panama      | Security         | Presidents of Costa Rica and Panama discussed security measures regarding illegal migration at the Darién Gap, the single overland route connecting Central and South America.  |
| 9 Oct  | Argentina   | Natural Disaster | The province of Cordoba declared a State of Emergency, ordering evacuations as wildfires spread amid an ongoing heatwave.   |
| 10 Oct | Mexico      | Natural Disaster | Category Four hurricane Lidia made landfall in the state of Jalisco with winds reaching 140mph~, torrential rainfall, and strong winds, resulting in extensive damage across southwestern Mexico leading to the closure of airports and schools.      |
| 11 Oct | El Salvador | Security         | National Congress extended emergency powers to combat gang activity as 4,000~ security forces were deployed near the capital to root out gang members.  |
| 15 Oct | Ecuador     | Politics         | Daniel Noboa was elected President following her victory in the second round of Ecuador's general election.   |
| 16 Oct | US          | Crime            | Muslim boy stabbed 26~ times by his landlord in hate crime over Gaza-Israel conflict.   |
| 20 Oct | Canada      | Politics         | The Government announced it would temporarily suspend consular services in multiple Indian cities following the assassination of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia. Canada was forced to repatriate 41 of its 62 diplomats based in India. |
| 22 Oct | Argentina   | Politics         | The presidential election required a run-off vote to take place on 19 November after all three candidates did not receive the required 45% of votes.  |
| 25 Oct | Mexico      | Natural Disaster | Category Five hurricane Otis made landfall in Acapulco with winds of 165mph~ causing floods, destruction of homes, hotels, and other businesses, and destroying local infrastructure including roads, airports, and electricity.                      |
|        | US          | Politics         | Mike Johnson elected the new Speaker of the House of Representatives following three~ weeks of political deadlock.  |
|        | US          | Crime            | 16~ people were killed in twin mass shootings in Lewiston, Maine.   |
| 26 Oct | El Salvador | Politics         | President Nayib Bukele applied for re-election despite a constitutional ban on presidential terms.  |
|        | Panama      | Unrest           | Thousands attended nationwide demonstrations organized to demand the repeal of a mining contract signed with private organizations.   |
| 29 Oct | US          | Politics         | US halts exports of most civilian firearms for 90 days citing national security concerns and foreign policy interests.  |

## Europe



### Situation in brief

**Fighting continues along the banks of the Dnipro while the Russian offensive against Avdiivka persists:** Fighting intensified along the banks of the Dnipro, central Ukraine, as the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) continues its offensive across the river from the Kherson Oblast, which it liberated 12~months ago. In Avdiivka, Ukrainian authorities reported that Russia lost 400~ armored vehicles and suffered 5,000 ~ casualties as its Donbas offensive continues to be repelled by fortified Ukrainian positions.

October saw the first use of US long-range army tactical missiles (ATACMS) which targeted the Berdyansk and Luhansk airfields, destroying 14~ military helicopters. ATAMCS will likely force Russian aviation to be withdrawn or dispersed around frontline areas which will hinder its ability to rapidly aid in defensive operations. ATAMCS could also threaten Russian ammunition depots which will also likely need to be fortified or dispersed.

Western support for Ukraine remains firm despite attention being diverted towards the Gaza-Israel conflict at the start of October. US President Joe Biden requested a further \$60~ billion for funding Ukraine and replenishing US stockpiles as a part of a larger urgent funding request and donated ~1.1 million seized Iranian bullets to Ukraine. Despite this, concerns remain about Ukraine's allies' ability to sustain their consumption of munitions.

**The French Government raises national threat level to highest level:** France raised its national threat level to its highest level 'EMERGENCY ATTACK', following a fatal stabbing, likely linked to the Gaza-Israel conflict, which occurred at a school in Arras, northern France, on 13 October. This threat level is described as maximum vigilance and protection in the event of an imminent threat of a terrorist act or in the immediate aftermath of an attack.

An increased threat level increases the likelihood of evacuations taking place in crowded areas such as airports, public transport stations, tourist sites, sports venues, schools, places of worship, and other large commercial centers, the effects of which have been seen at the Palace of Versailles which was evacuated three times across a five-day period following bomb threats.

Security fears across Europe are fueled by the civil unrest following the Gaza-Israel conflict which saw a spike in hate crimes against Jewish and Muslim communities. Reported hate crimes include a petrol bomb attack against a synagogue in Berlin and a foiled terrorist attack on a pro-Israel rally.

**EU reaches preliminary agreement on migration legislation:** The EU reached an agreement on how member states will deal with a sudden influx of people seeking asylum in the event of war, natural disasters, or climate emergency as announced by ambassadors in Brussels on 4 October.

The agreement will allow frontline states to fast-track asylum applications and swiftly move people to other European states to avoid a significantly uneven distribution of migrants between the EU states as was present in the response to the wave of 1~ million migrants that arrived in 2015.

The new agreement includes the authorization of exceptional measures in a situation of crisis that allows member states to apply specific rules concerning the asylum and return procedure. Member states in a crisis situation may request solidarity contributions from other member states in the form of the relocation of asylum seekers, in which the supporting member states would take over the responsibility of examining asylum claims, and financial contributions.

The EU migration policy is expected to be finalized this year, aiming to close existing loopholes and facilitate timely repatriations following Islamist attacks like the shooting of two Swedish nationals in Brussels that was conducted by a gunman living in the EU who arrived illegally in Italy in 2011.



Fighting continues across the banks of the Dnipro and in the Donbas region.



The Palace of Versailles was evacuated three times in five days over following bomb threats.



Asylum seekers arriving on the Italian island of Lampedusa.



## Significant activities (SIGACTS)

| Date   | Country     | Type      | Details   |
|--------|-------------|-----------|---|
| 1 Oct  | Poland      | Unrest    | Poland's opposition held a rally in Warsaw attended by a million~ people.   |
| 2 Oct  | Various     | Other     | Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine reached a deal to expedite grain exports by moving grain inspections to the Baltic Sea.  |
| 3 Oct  | Various     | Security  | The Czech Republic and Poland introduced checks along borders with Slovakia to curb illegal migration flows and smuggler activity.  |
| 4 Oct  | Russia      | Other     | The Government announced it would keep voluntary oil supply cuts by the end of the year to maintain price levels and market competitiveness.  |
|        | Various     | Politics  | EU reached preliminary agreement on migration legislation forcing inner EU states to accept asylum seekers from frontline states in case of emergency.  |
| 5 Oct  | Belgium     | Security  | Intelligence officials began monitoring Alibaba's logistics center in Liege due to evidence of espionage and interference activities by Chinese entities.   |
| 8 Oct  | Spain       | Unrest    | 50,000~ people demonstrated in Catalan to protest a potential amnesty deal.   |
| 13 Oct | France      | Terrorism | The Government raised its national threat level to EMERGENCY ATTACK, the highest level, following the knife attack at a school in Arras.  |
| 14 Oct | France      | Security  | The Louvre Art Gallery and the Palace of Versailles were evacuated and closed for one day following reports of written bomb threats.  |
| 17 Oct | Spain       | Unrest    | Private Security staff at Alicante and Elche airports carried out partial stoppages affecting baggage checks.   |
| 18 Oct | Germany     | Security  | A synagogue was attacked with firebombs in Germany amid an antisemitic spike.   |
| 20 Oct | France      | Security  | Multiple people were arrested following a wave of hoax bomb threats affecting the Palace of Versailles, the Louvre, as well as schools, airports, and hospitals.  |
| 21 Oct | Slovenia    | Security  | The Slovenian government announced the temporary deployment of police at the Croatian and Hungarian borders over security concerns  |
| 22 Oct | Switzerland | Politics  | Anti-immigrant right-wing People's Party won by a landslide in federal elections.   |
| 27 Oct | Russia      | Politics  | The Foreign Ministry summoned the Finnish ambassador to end the cross-border cooperation agreement due to Finland's confrontational actions against Russia.   |
| 28 Oct | Spain       | Politics  | Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez agreed to provide a controversial amnesty to the Catalan leaders who supported the region's independent referendum to convince local parties to support his Government bid.            |
| 29 Oct | Russia      | Unrest    | Hundreds~ of anti-Israeli protestors in Dagestan bypassed security at Makhachkala Airport, forcing an Israeli flight to be diverted to another airport in the city after protesters were able to access the runway. |
| 31 Oct | France      | Security  | Counter-terrorism police shot an alleged suicide bomber at the Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand train station.  |