

# Global Situational Awareness Global Weekly Review

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Global Situational  
Awareness

# Executive Summary



**Afghanistan/Pakistan:** Afghanistan and Pakistan enter sixth day of open war



**Iran/US Israel:** US and Israel launch war against Iran, Tehran expands conflict and shows Economic Leverage



**GCC:** Global markets wobble as Iran and proxies target of logistical nodes continues across GCC



**Cuba/US:** Cuba faces 'zero hour' as sanctions deepen humanitarian crisis



**Colombia:** Russian national detained in Colombia



**North Korea:** North Korean citizens executed over foreign media





Afghanistan and Pakistan enter sixth day of open war

## Afghanistan/Pakistan - Risk Rating: SEVERE

### Situational Update:

Pakistani defence minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif declared an “open war” with the Taliban government in Afghanistan on 27 February 2026. This marks a major escalation between the two countries during decades of border conflict. Since the statement, both sides ramped up border clashes and launched armed strikes. Most recently, Pakistan launched airstrikes on major Afghan cities, including Kabul, in response to the Taliban’s “unprovoked” attacks at the border. The number of casualties remains unclear as both sides claim heavy casualties. The spokesperson for Pakistan’s armed forces, Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, said around 274 Taliban fighters were killed, and 400 were injured since the declaration of open war. The casualties follow the launch of “Operation Ghazab Lil Haq” on 26 February, an effort to coordinate air and ground strikes against Afghan Taliban positions. The Taliban claim 55 Pakistani soldiers were killed following retaliatory attacks. Additionally, Afghanistan claims to have captured several Pakistani soldiers.

This is the biggest escalation since the October 2025 ceasefire brokered by Qatar and Turkey. Negotiations have fallen short in producing a lasting agreement, while Taliban government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated his country wants “dialogue” with Pakistan. This conflict is also the first time the Pakistani government has directly targeted the Taliban government, as it previously focused on Pakistan Taliban (TTP) sites, a militant group which Pakistan accuses Afghan forces of harbouring.

### Assessment and Impact Update:

Several countries are diplomatically implicated in the conflict, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which endeavoured to halt the fighting and introduce dialogue. Efforts have so far failed, worrying the international community due to other militant and terrorist groups present in the region. Al-Qaeda and Islamic State are present in both states and could leverage the fighting to resurface and reconsolidate their forces. With the ongoing conflict in the Middle East due to the US-Israeli joint strikes on Iran, international attention and forces are turned elsewhere, potentially allowing a window of opportunity for regional terrorist organisations. This war could lead to broader regional instability and thwart previous UN-led efforts to establish order.

Afghan and Pakistani authorities have also condemned the strikes in Iran. Afghanistan’s Taliban government has also pledged to help Iran in its fight back against US and Israeli forces, although the details of its commitment are so far unclear. Pakistan’s belligerent relationship with India could also entail the spillover of conflict and refugees. With the current conflict in the Middle East, logistics, security, transit, and infrastructure in the region are likely to take a hit. American and NATO bases in Afghanistan, although devoid of personnel, are most likely to be prioritised as targets.



## Iran's Conflict Expansion and Economic Leverage

### Iran / US / Israel - Risk Rating: SEVERE

#### Situational Update:

US and Israeli military operations against Iran have entered a sustained and expanded phase, with strikes continuing across multiple strategic locations including Tehran, Isfahan, Bushehr and Tabriz. Coalition forces have targeted military command facilities, air defence systems, missile infrastructure and naval assets, significantly degrading elements of Iran's conventional capability. US Central Command has stated that more than 1,200 targets have been struck since operations began, including Iranian naval vessels operating in the Gulf of Oman. Iranian leadership messaging has hardened, framing the confrontation as existential and warning that regional bases, shipping routes and coalition-aligned infrastructure remain legitimate targets. Iran has continued missile and unmanned aerial vehicle launches across the Gulf region, targeting military installations and critical infrastructure. The Strait of Hormuz has become a focal point of escalation, with Iranian Revolutionary Guard elements issuing warnings over maritime radio frequencies that transit is prohibited. While no formal legal closure has been declared, traffic volumes through the strait have dropped sharply, creating a de facto denial environment. Electronic warfare activity and GPS interference near Bandar Abbas have further complicated commercial navigation. Domestically, Iran's internet connectivity has remained severely restricted for more than 48 hours. Information blackouts have historically accompanied internal security operations, limiting visibility into protest activity, internal dissent and regime cohesion during periods of instability.

#### Assessment and Impact:

Iran's strategic posture suggests a deliberate effort to impose significant economic and security costs on coalition-aligned states and global markets while sustaining its own defensive coherence. Targeting the Strait of Hormuz and surrounding maritime approaches is intended to leverage Iran's geographic advantage over global energy supply routes, with the potential to exert prolonged pressure on crude, LNG, and freight markets. The interception by Qatar of Iranian fighter aircraft signals a broader involvement of Gulf states in kinetic engagements and underlines the operational risks of multi-national sorties in contested airspace. The operational environment remains highly volatile and prone to miscalculation. Incidents such as the friendly-fire downing of US aircraft by Kuwaiti air defences during active defence operations highlight the complexity and risk inherent in a busy, multi-layered air defence landscape. Continued Iranian retaliation, including maritime drone attacks, missile barrages, and proxy actions by aligned militias, increases the likelihood of wider spillover effects. The degradation of navigation integrity in the Strait of Hormuz and the absence of reliable insurance coverage for transits have created a de facto chokepoint denial environment, with significant implications for global energy logistics. Internally, the combination of wartime measures and an extended internet blackout complicates assessments of regime stability, public sentiment, and elite cohesion, and may serve to reinforce centralised control at least in the near term.



Global markets wobble as Iran and proxies target of logistical nodes continues across GCC

## Gulf Countries - Risk Rating: SEVERE

### Situational Update:

Gulf Cooperation Council states are operating in a heightened defensive environment as Iranian missile and drone attacks have targeted multiple member states and United States assets hosted within GCC territories. In response, the GCC convened an extraordinary ministerial council session on 2 March, condemning what it described as heinous attacks and a serious breach of sovereignty, and reaffirming the collective right to self-defence under international law. GCC leaders underscored that aggression against one member constitutes aggression against all, pledging continued coordination of military, air defence and security measures to protect territories, populations and critical assets. The council also stressed the need to safeguard aerial and maritime security, protect regional waterways and ensure stability in global energy markets. Missile and drone activity has been widespread across Gulf airspace since 28 February, with hundreds of intercepts reported by integrated air defence systems in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Civilian areas have experienced debris fall and shrapnel injuries during interceptions over residential districts. Confirmed casualties across GCC states include at least three fatalities and dozens of injuries. Qatar reported that its air defences shot down two Iranian fighter aircraft that entered its airspace and intercepted multiple missiles and drones, illustrating the expanded scope of direct engagement between national air forces. In Kuwait, authorities have implemented exceptional domestic security measures, including a temporary suspension of food exports and price controls on staple goods to preserve internal supply and maintain social stability amid prolonged crisis conditions. A friendly-fire incident during active air defence operations resulted in the downing of United States aircraft, demonstrating the operational congestion and elevated risk environment across regional airspace. Saudi Arabia has increased logistical and material support to Bahrain and reinforced joint readiness under the GCC Unified Military Command framework. Aviation disruption remains acute, with cancellations exceeding 9,500 flights across Bahrain, Kuwait, Doha, Dubai and Abu Dhabi over the past four days. Airspace across the Gulf is reopening and closing intermittently based on national threat assessments. There is currently no confirmed timeline for full and sustained reopening, and reliability remains highly uncertain.

### Assessment and Impact:

GCC states remain in a high-risk defensive posture amid sustained missile and drone threats. Aviation disruption, Hormuz instability and energy infrastructure attacks are impacting trade, freight costs and investor confidence. Continued Iranian activity risks prolonged instability and broader economic consequences across energy and financial markets. It demonstrates the dynamic character of global tanker markets, in which regulatory developments, freight rates and geopolitical factors are determining the lifecycle of ships from acquisition to dismantling with evident impacts on maritime risk pricing and compliance oversight.



Cuba faces 'zero hour' as sanctions deepen humanitarian crisis

## Cuba/US - Risk Rating: HIGH

### Situational Update:

Cuba is expected to reach a critical breaking point by mid-March, according to analysts. If a tanker fails to arrive by that time, this would mark "zero hour", reducing strategic fuel reserves to zero. The few fuel deliveries greenlit by the US are destined to commercial businesses and humanitarian aid; however, they amount to 150 barrels of fuel per day compared to the usual needs for 22,000 barrels a day. US President Trump's energy quarantine against the country applies pressure to the country in an aim to enact regime change. The US fuel blockade arrived during a decades-long economic crisis, which initially started with a trade embargo being placed on Cuba after the CIA's failed invasion of the Bay of Pigs. Following the US intervention in Venezuela and the halt of fuel from Cuba's major energy supplier, the Trump administration furthered the blockade with a fuel embargo.

On 27 February 2026, Trump suggested the US could pursue a "friendly takeover" in Cuba similar to the US operation in Venezuela in early January, where the military could depose the leaders but maintain the regime in place to demand greater economic cooperation. However, analysts are unconvinced as to a takeover's potential success, as Cuba's government has been steadfast against US threats for over half a century.

### Assessment and Impact:

The US energy blockade specifically exacerbates medicine, food, and water shortages, affecting the entire population of 10 million. Reports state epidemics are increasing throughout the island, and government repression is rising as the state avoids negotiation with the US. Experts state that Cuba either needs to make a deal with the US or risk an extreme humanitarian crisis. A robust assessment of the future of Cuba should be attainable at that point in time. A normalisation of relations will likely take place as either or both sides come to an agreement. Analysts posit that Trump may demand that Cuba renounce its partnerships and relationships with Russia and China.

Currently, Cuba's trade, business, and tourism sectors are taking a massive hit. Tourism is the largest hit as it accounts for a significant portion of the country's economy. Airline companies now largely avoid Cuba as it can no longer supply planes with fuel, effectively halting traffic to and from the island nation. The Trump administration may ask the country to adopt more liberal economic reforms in the case of a concession. The US also faces serious reputational damage as United Nations human rights experts condemn the trade embargo, calling it a "serious violation of international law and a grave threat to a democratic and equitable international order".



Russian national detained in Colombia

## Colombia - Risk Rating: MODERATE

### Situational Update:

Colombian authorities have detained a Russian national wanted by the United States on charges related to planning targeted killings in Europe, highlighting the persistence of transnational violent networks operating across multiple continents. The 42-year-old suspect was arrested at El Dorado International Airport in Bogotá on 24 February following an international alert issued at the request of US authorities. The detention reflects active intelligence sharing and coordination between Colombian law enforcement agencies and international partners, and forms part of broader efforts to disrupt cross-border assassination plots and organised criminal activity. According to preliminary reporting, the individual is linked to plans involving contract killings targeting individuals in several European countries. While full operational details have not been publicly disclosed, the allegations suggest a structured plot rather than an isolated act of violence. The case shows the increasingly globalised nature of organised targeting networks, which may leverage international travel routes, secondary transit hubs and complex identity arrangements to avoid detection. Latin America, particularly major aviation gateways such as Bogotá, remains a significant transit region for individuals moving between Europe, North America and other parts of the world. The arrest also demonstrates the importance of international legal instruments and extradition frameworks in addressing serious transnational crime. Colombia's decision to detain the suspect on the basis of a US request reinforces growing law enforcement cooperation in countering high-impact threats. The case is likely to proceed to extradition proceedings, subject to Colombian judicial review, and may prompt additional investigations into facilitators, financiers or associated networks operating across Europe or the Americas.

### Assessment and Impact:

This incident highlights the enduring challenge posed by organised assassination plots and politically motivated violence networks capable of operating across borders. Although there is no indication of an imminent threat within Colombia itself, the presence of such individuals in international transit corridors exposes vulnerabilities in global mobility systems. The case reinforces the need for robust watchlist integration, biometric screening and real-time intelligence exchange among partner nations. From a European security perspective, the arrest may reduce near-term risk linked to the alleged plot, but it also signals that networks facilitating targeted violence remain active. The broader implication is that sustained multinational coordination remains essential to identify, track and intercept individuals suspected of planning serious violent offences before operational phases are reached. Continued monitoring of extradition proceedings and any linked investigations will be important in assessing the scope and resilience of the wider network involved.



North Korean citizens executed over foreign media

## North Korea - Risk Rating: MODERATE

### Situational Update:

New testimonial evidence has suggested that North Korean individuals, including schoolchildren, have been executed for consuming foreign media. This includes listening to South Korean K-pop music and watching the Squid Game television series. The testimonials were collected by Amnesty International while conducting 25 in-depth interviews with escapees of Kim Jong-Un's totalitarian regime. The executions were reportedly carried out in the north of the country, including in the Yanggang Province along the Chinese border and the North Hamgyong Province. In a recent statement, Amnesty claimed that "[t]aken together, these reports from different provinces suggest multiple executions related to the shows." They further state that the criminalisation of accessing information violates international law, enabling the regime to maintain a tight grip on control.

### Assessment and Impact:

Evidence suggests that individuals from wealthier backgrounds are able to bribe their way out of prosecution, while more economically-challenged individuals suffer harsher punishments. Individuals who are unable to pay often resort to selling their homes to avoid being sent to re-education camps. Such sums can be from US\$5,000 to US\$10,000. Individuals well-connected to the regime are also able to get out of punishments by leveraging their influence. Additionally, the executions are often made public, gathering up to tens of thousands of individuals. This is often thought to be a part of the regime's efforts at brainwashing and ideologically educating the population.

The revelations come as Kim's government planned for the ninth Workers' Party congress, which is held every five years. While setting out major policy goals, the event is also used as a tool for propaganda messaging to the rest of the world and to set out the country's next priorities. The now-closed congress disclosed Kim's plans to expand the country's nuclear arsenal as well as reinforce defensive and offensive capabilities. He also emphasised the construction of building projects like those in the Hwasong district for "national power" purposes.

As recent drone incursions and the recent testimonies illustrate, bilateral ties between Pyongyang and Seoul remain highly strained. North Korea's recent statements in support of Iran and pledge to support also indicate Kim's effort to enhance North Korea's regional influence and international standing. By emphasising military power, national security, and offensive capabilities, it shows the country will likely remain on the same path it has been pursuing. As US-instigated conflict rises in the Middle East and Central America, concerns emanate from Kim's projected plans.