



## Weekly

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## Americas Weekly Summary - July 14-20, 2021

### Highlights of the Week

This report reviews notable events this week in the Americas. This includes charges being filed against former President Mauricio Macri in **Argentina** for alleged involvement in the 2019 Bolivian coup attempt; **Chile**'s primary elections results; detainments of suspects involved in planning explosive attacks in **Colombia**; the resignation of **Haiti**'s acting Prime Minister Claude Joseph; and a deterioration of **US-Iran** relations amid allegations of cyber-attacks.

## AMERICAS

### JULY 14-20, 2021

- Charges were filed against former President Mauricio Macri in **Argentina** for alleged involvement in the 2018 Bolivian coup attempt.
- 12 people were detained for planning explosive attacks at protests in **Colombia**.
- Six people were arrested for their involvement in an attempted attack on **Colombian** President Ivan Duque.
- Presidential primary elections were held nationwide in **Chile**
- **Haiti**'s acting Prime Minister Claude Joseph announced his resignation.
- Allegations of Iranian cyber-attacks targeting **US** armed forces surfaced.



### Argentina

#### Notable Developments:

1. Prosecutors in Argentina agreed to file charges against former President Mauricio Macri and several senior officials on July 16 for the alleged shipment of weapons and ammunition to Bolivia during the 2019 social upheaval to oust former Bolivian President Evo Morales. Macri is accused of supporting the attempted coup against Morales in November 2019.
2. According to Bolivian government officials, the alleged shipment contained 70,000 cartridges of rubber bullets, dozens of tear gas cans, and gas grenades to be supplied to anti-government forces to overthrow Morales. In addition, Macri's administration is alleged to have authorized the deployment of elite Argentinian forces to destabilize the Bolivian state.

## **ANALYSIS:**

The incident highlights continued attempts by foreign governments to intervene in domestic affairs regionwide, and is notable given the rare precedent of a former head of state being directly accused of supporting a coup attempt in a foreign state. Although a court still needs to decide on whether to open an investigation, the charges are likely to negatively impact Macri's popularity ahead of the primary elections scheduled for September. Moreover, based on recent statements by Argentina's Justice Minister, Bolivian authorities might request Macri's extradition and that of other officials involved. Despite the close relations between La Paz and Buenos Aires, Macri's extradition remains unlikely at the current time, although the issue might lead to tensions between the two countries going forward.

## **Chile**

### **Notable Developments:**

- On July 18, the presidential primary elections were held nationwide. Gabriel Boric and Sebastian Sichel emerged as the candidates of the leftwing coalition Apruebo Dignidad and right-wing coalition Chile Vamos, respectively, for the November 21 Presidential elections.
1. Reforms to pension, healthcare, and the economy were the focal points of both their campaigns. However, Boric has also campaigned for reforms to the Carabineros de Chile while Sichel aims to establish a free economic zone in Araucania.

**ANALYSIS:** The results reiterate the popularity of independent candidates, as evidenced in the regional and constitutional elections. Boric's reforms concerning the Carabineros are likely to largely appeal to voters, given that Carabineros have been repeatedly criticized for excessive use of force during protests. On the contrary, Sichel's aim to establish an economic free zone is likely to receive significant backlash, especially from indigenous communities. The existing hostilities between the Mapuche community, the government, and businesses in Araucania over territorial distribution supports this. The declining support for Chile Vamos, coupled with the possibility of additional neo-liberal economic proposals, is liable to prove detrimental to Sichel's campaign. In addition, while the traditional ruling parties of Partido Socialista (PS) and the Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC) did not contest in the primaries, they are likely to put forth candidates for the runoffs who will further split the vote, thus rendering the outcome of the November elections uncertain at this point.

## CHILEAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2021



**SEBASTIAN SICHEL**  
Chile Vamos coalition

Age: 43  
Former President of Bank of Chile



**GABRIEL BORIC**  
Apruebo Dignidad coalition

Age: 35  
Former Student Union Leader

## Colombia

### Notable Developments:

1. On July 18, Defense Minister Diego Molano announced that 12 individuals were detained in multiple cities, including in Cucuta and Medellin, for allegedly planning to attack security forces and public property, including buses, with explosives and ammunition at nationwide protests on July 20.
2. Molano stated the detainees were members of the Primera Linea, a loose collective of armed protesters believed to be linked with the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) and the Segunda Marquetalia Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC) dissident group.
3. Government officials believe that the ELN and Clan del Golfo (CDG) may be financing or planning to participate in the demonstrations on July 20. However, members of the ELN have publicly stated that they will not be participating.

### ANALYSIS:

While the connection between Primera Linea and the ELN and FARC clandestine groups remains unverified, it is possible that armed groups are attempting to capitalize on the continuing unrest to advance their agenda. That said, the likelihood of the reports being used to justify the alleged use of excessive police force at protests cannot be ruled out. Given the latest arrest, the possibility of isolated protesters using explosives and weapons to attack security forces at demonstrations on July 20 and forthcoming protests remains. While potential attacks are likely to largely target law enforcement and security personnel, the threat to bystanders remains elevated going forward.

## Colombia

### Notable Developments:

1. Six alleged perpetrators of the June 26 attack against the helicopter carrying President Ivan Duque and other government officials were detained on July 18. The detentions were carried out as part of a large-scale operation in the Norte de Santander's municipalities of Cucuta and Tibu.
2. Reports indicate that the detainees are members linked with the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) dissident groups. Investigations indicate that the AK-47 and FAL 7-62 rifles allegedly used in the attack bore marks of the Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana (FANB), the Venezuelan armed forces. The perpetrators are believed to have taken refuge in Venezuela following the incident.

### ANALYSIS:

Given the latest arrests and the large mobilization of security forces in the area, investigations are likely to gain momentum and may lead to additional arrests in the coming days. Moreover, the security enforcements in Norte de Santander, particularly in Cucuta and along the border entry points between Colombia and Venezuela are liable to remain bolstered in the near-to-medium term, carrying out operations targeting ELN and FARC members. That the rifles bore marks of the FANB and that the perpetrators presumably fled to Venezuela, supports allegations concerning the alliance between Colombian clandestine groups and the Venezuelan government. Such claims may additionally heighten tensions between Colombia and Venezuela. With that, cross-border military enforcements are liable to remain bolstered along the border moving forward, increasing the potential for escalation between the Colombian and Venezuelan armed forces should they come into direct conflict.

## Haiti

### Notable Developments:

1. On July 19, acting Prime Minister Claude Joseph announced his resignation. Joseph has been acting as de-facto PM since the assassination of former President Jovenel Moise on July 7.
2. The development ends a power struggle between Joseph and Ariel Henry, who was appointed PM by Moise two days before the assassination.
3. Joseph stated that he and Henry had been privately meeting over the past week in an attempt to solve the leadership dispute, with Joseph agreeing to step down on July 18 "for the good of the nation."
4. Moise's wife, Martine Moise, returned to Haiti on July 17 after receiving medical treatment in Florida, USA, for wounds suffered during the attack.

### ANALYSIS:

While the development is not unexpected, given reports of strong US support for Henry as well as the lack of elected officials and well-functioning justice system in Haiti in the

aftermath of the assassination, the rapid transfer of power is likely to lead to further complications in terms of forming a government in the near term. This is supported by the return of Moise's wife and her promise to "continue (her) husband's work." As such, the political situation is likely to remain tense in the coming weeks and months. Given that civil society groups have currently been backing Joseph, the potential for large protests with turnouts in the tens of thousands remains high, especially in urban centers such as Port-au-Prince. While the Police Nationale d'Haiti (PNH) may use forcible dispersal measures to control the growing insecurity and civil unrest, armed groups will likely continue to capitalize on the deteriorating security environment moving forward.

## USA

### Notable Developments:

1. A large social media platform announced on July 15 that it had taken down 200 accounts run by 'Tortoiseshell', a group of hackers based in Iran, as part of a cyber-spying operation targeting US military personnel and individuals working at defense and aerospace companies.
2. Reports indicate that the group used fake online profiles to connect with targets and trick them into clicking malicious links to infect their devices with spying malware. The hackers also used tailored domains, including fake recruiting websites for defense companies. Most targets were individuals based in the USA, as well as some in the UK and Europe.
3. Additionally, the investigation found that a portion of the malware was developed by Mhak Rayan afraz (MRA), an IT company with ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

### ANALYSIS:

The latest incident highlights recent attempts by Iran to conduct operations targeting US officials and individuals, evidenced by the US Department of Justice (DOJ) charging four alleged Iranian intelligence operatives on July 13 in a kidnapping plot targeting a prominent Iranian-American journalist. Moreover, the campaign reflects an expansion of the group's activity, which previously focused primarily on IT and other industries in the Middle East. Given prevailing tensions between the two countries, as well as the hardliner Ebrahim Raisi's recent presidential victory, further cyber operations targeting US military and government officials are possible, likely hampering ongoing bilateral nuclear talks.

### Other Developments:

- In **Cuba**, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero announced the lifting of customs restrictions on food, medicines, and sanitary products, effective July 19, following widespread anti-government protests over shortages of essential commodities.
- In **Canada**, more than 300 wildfires continued in British Columbia on July 18, prompting residents to evacuate. Affected areas remain restricted as of writing.
- Hurricane Felicia intensified into a Major Hurricane on July 16. Emergency units were deployed in **Mexico** due to the hurricane. Hurricane Felicia weakened rapidly as it moved towards the west-northwest along the Pacific coast of the **USA** on July 19.
- Major wildfires in California and Oregon in the **USA** prompted a wave of evacuations, as wildfires continue along the West coast.

## The Week Ahead

- **July 24:** Protest March in Mexico City, **Mexico**
- **July 25:** Cuba solidarity protests in Washington, DC, **USA**
- **July 26:** Revolution Anniversary in **Cuba**, solidarity protests in Washington, DC, **USA**
- **July 27:** Revolution Anniversary in **Cuba**
- **July 28:** Independence Day in Peru, Revolution Anniversary in **Cuba**