



Daily



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MAX - Europe Region Daily Summary - December 29, 2024

Highlights of the Day

- **Austria:** Afghan national arrested for suspected IS-linked plot in Salzburg as per December 27 report; reiterates increasing terrorist threat
- **France:** Pro-migrant protest slated outside La Gaité Lyrique in Paris from 16:00 (local time) on December 29; maintain heightened vigilance
- **Germany:** 15-year-old arrested for plotting Islamist attack on Berlin church, per December 27 report; youth radicalization to continue
- **Slovakia & Ukraine:** Slovak PM threatens to cut electricity to Ukraine, as per December 27 reports; likely to strain Slovakia-EU relations

Actionable Items

France: Pro-migrant protest slated outside La Gaité Lyrique in Paris from 16:00 (local time) on December 29; maintain heightened vigilance

Current Situation - A protest organized by local community members associated with the “Un collectif de jeunes du Parc de Belleville” group is slated to take place in Paris on December 29. The protest will take place in front of La Gaite Lyrique at 16:00 (local time) and is being held to demand immediate accommodation for unaccompanied minors and to fight for equal rights and against racism.

Assessments & Forecast - Based on social media estimates, the slated protest is liable to witness a turnout in the high dozens to low hundreds. Given heightened sentiments surrounding the protest issue, the protest action carries a latent potential for unrest in the form of clashes between protesters and the police. As such, a bolstered security presence is likely near La Gaite Lyrique as a precautionary measure to monitor proceedings. In the event of escalating unrest, police are liable to use forcible crowd dispersal methods, including conducting mass arrests. Localized disruptions to pedestrian and vehicular traffic are expected near La Gaite Lyrique during the late afternoon hours.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Paris on December 29 are advised to maintain heightened vigilance and allot for travel-related disruptions in the vicinity of La Gaite Lyrique due to the slated protest and associated risk of unrest during the late afternoon hours.

Source: [X/Twitter](#)

Russia: State of emergency in effect in Crimea due to oil spill as of December 29; remain cognizant of authorities' updates

Current Situation - On December 28 Sergei Aksionov, the Moscow-appointed governor of occupied Crimea, declared a state of emergency (SoE) in the Leninsky district of Sevastopol and Kerch due to the December 15 oil spill in the Black Sea. Authorities reported that at least 3,700 tons of low-grade fuel oil spilled into the Black Sea. On December 25, an SoE was declared in Krasnodar Krai, which borders the Black Sea.

Assessments & Forecast - Aksionov likely declared a regional state of emergency in Crimea to swiftly access additional resources, deploy emergency services, and request federal assistance amid allegations of an inadequate official response. Given the scale of the oil spill, cleanup operations are expected to continue in the near term, despite Russia’s transport ministry stating that “all polluted aquatic areas...have been cleaned.” With that, disruptions to maritime operations are likely. However, the scale of disruptions is likely to be relatively limited given that operations are limited in Crimea, due to Western sanctions and ongoing hostilities.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Russia on December 29 and in the coming days are advised to remain cognizant of authorities’ updates amid the state of emergency in Crimea. Allot for associated disruptions to maritime operations.

Source: [The Moscow Times](#)

Notable Events

Austria: Afghan national arrested for suspected IS-linked plot in Salzburg as per December 27 report; reiterates increasing terrorist threat

Current Situation - Per December 27 media reports, a 21-year-old Afghan national was arrested in Salzburg for allegedly planning to carry out a terrorist attack on behalf of the Islamic State (IS). The suspect reportedly spread IS propaganda online and was active in IS forums as a “sleeper” agent awaiting instructions for potential attacks. Reports indicate he planned to use knives or explosives to target police, Jews, or Christmas markets. Whether the suspect already possessed weapons remains unconfirmed.

Assessments & Forecast - The incident reiterates the elevated risk of Islamist terrorism during the holiday season, with authorities indicating this was one of multiple foiled Islamist plots in recent weeks. Moreover, that the individual was a “sleeper” awaiting instructions from IS, is in line with an increasing trend of plots involving direct involvement of transnational Islamist groups in recruiting, inciting, and planning attacks in Europe. Such involvement raises the risk of sophisticated plots or mass-casualty attacks given that actors are more likely to have access to instructions, materials, or weapons. However, such attacks are still less likely to succeed compared to lone actor attacks, given the heightened chance of detection.

Source: [Salzburg.ORE](#)

Belgium: 89 shootings recorded in Brussels-Capital region in 2024, per December 27 report; shootings unlikely to abate due to drug violence

Current Situation - Per December 27 reports, 89 shootings were recorded in the Brussels-Capital region between January and December of 2024, marking a 43 percent increase from 2023, when 62 shootings were recorded. The incidents recorded were shootings in public places in which several shots were fired or at least one person was injured. Brussels police chief Michel Goovaerts stated that “most shootings are about drugs.”

Assessments & Forecast - Considering that drug trafficking is unlikely to abate in the near term, associated crimes, including shootings, are also unlikely to decrease in the Brussels-Capital region. Indeed, in 2023, drug-related violence in Brussels increased by 26 percent, with seven people killed and 131 injured. Given that the 2024 shootings occurred in public spaces, especially near transport hubs, the increase in shootings poses a credible threat to bystanders, evidenced by the December 23 fatal shooting of a bystander near the Aumale metro station. The threat is expected to remain especially high in the areas around Porte de Hal, Midi Station, Nord Station, and Rue de la Colonne/Rue de la Borne, with police designating these as crime hotspots in March 2024.

Source: [Brussels Times](#)

Bosnia & Herzegovina: Minister of Security arrested as part of corruption investigation on December 26; to increase tensions with RS

Current Situation - On December 26, the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) announced the arrest of Nenad Nestic, Minister of Security, along with six others, as part of a corruption investigation into the public roads company of Republika Srpska (RS), the ethnic Serb-majority entity in BiH. RS President Milorad Dodik condemned the arrest, claiming it was politically motivated and orchestrated by foreign embassies to destabilize RS.

Assessments & Forecast - The timing of the arrest is notable, as it follows reports that the National Assembly of RS ordered Serb representatives to block decision-making in state institutions on December 25 and coincides with Dodik's ongoing trial for defying decisions by BiH High Representative Christian Schmidt. As such, the arrests are likely to further escalate dissatisfaction among RS officials, especially given the potential for additional arrests linked to the investigation. As already evidenced by his statements, Dodik is expected to continue using the arrests secessionist rhetoric in order to push for greater autonomy for RS. This will further strain relations with BiH central institutions and complicate the country's EU integration efforts.

Source: [Reuters](#)

Europe: Germany calls for Russian "shadow fleet" sanctions for Baltic Sea sabotage on December 28; expanded regional security likely

Current Situation - On December 28, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock joined EU calls to sanction Russia's alleged "shadow fleet" of tankers evading sanctions, citing their suspected involvement in damaging undersea cables in the Baltic Sea. On the same day, NATO announced that it would enhance its military presence in the Baltic Sea after multiple incidents of cut undersea power and telecom cables in November and December, including damage to power lines between Finland and Estonia on December 25.

Assessments & Forecast - Calls for sanctions on the "shadow fleet" are likely to escalate as previous concerns over its role in circumventing oil sanctions are now joined by suspected direct involvement in sabotage. Moreover, with damage to undersea infrastructure escalating in frequency, diplomatic tensions between countries bordering the Baltic Sea and Russia are likely to escalate as they bolster maritime security. With that, similar sabotage concerns are likely to increase near the North Sea, as already evidenced by six bordering countries pledging to enhance security around undersea energy infrastructure on April 9. As such, NATO is liable to expand patrols to the North Sea to prevent similar sabotage attempts.

Source: [DW](#)

Germany: 15-year-old arrested for plotting Islamist attack on Berlin church, per December 27 report; youth radicalization to continue

Current Situation - Per December 27 reports, Brandenburg police detained a 15-year-old from Teltow-Flaming on December 25 for planning an Islamist terrorist attack on a Berlin church during Christmas. Details on the plot are unconfirmed as of writing. The suspect, whose parents are from Iraq, was in contact with suspected members of the Islamic State (IS) on the encrypted messaging application Telegram. No weapons were found during police raids. The arrest was carried out following a tip from foreign intelligence, with the suspect unknown to police.

Assessments & Forecast - Although no weapons were found, the suspect still posed a credible threat, considering access to bladed weapons. As such, this reiterates the elevated threat of terrorism in Germany, and regionwide, during the holiday period, with authorities likely to carry out raids and arrests at a lower threshold. Moreover, the suspect's profile reiterates the continued targeting of vulnerable youths by Islamist transnational terrorist groups due to their susceptibility to propaganda. Indeed, IS propaganda categorically aims to leverage such individuals' struggle with their identity, integration, and belonging, as well as their perceived social isolation, marginalization, and discrimination for radicalization and recruitment purposes.

Source: [rbb24](#)

Italy: Pro-Russia hackers claim responsibility for cyberattacks on airports, foreign ministry on December 28; cyberattacks to persist

Current Situation - On December 28, pro-Russia hacking group NoName057(16) claimed responsibility for a distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack targeting airports in Milan and the Foreign Ministry on the same day. According to Agenzia per la Cybersicurezza Nazionale (ACN), Italy's national cybersecurity agency, the attack was mitigated in less than two hours and did not cause disruptions at the Milano Malpensa (MXP) and Milan-Linate (LIN) airports.

Assessments & Forecast - This development reiterates the persistent risk of cyberattacks by pro-Russia actors targeting countries considered "unfriendly" by Russia due to their support for Ukraine. As seen in the recent DDoS attack, government institutions and critical infrastructure, including airports, are at a high risk of attacks going forward. In addition to DDoS attacks, hostile actors are also likely to utilize ransomware attacks, especially given reports from October that Russia is increasingly utilizing cybercriminal networks to carry out cyberattacks and cyberespionage. While these attacks primarily target websites, leading to online disruptions, the potential for on-ground implications remains. Authorities are expected to continue bolstering cybersecurity measures, with the foreign affairs office already announcing that the security threshold will be raised for all offices globally.

Source: [DW](#)

Slovakia & Ukraine: Slovak PM threatens to cut electricity to Ukraine, as per December 27 reports; likely to strain Slovakia-EU relations

Current Situation - On December 27, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico threatened to stop supplying electricity to Ukraine after January 1, following Ukraine's decision to suspend Russian gas transit, which expires on December 31. In response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated that Fico's actions appeared to be influenced by Moscow, effectively opening a second energy front against Ukraine while disregarding Slovakia's own interests.

Assessments & Forecast - Fico's threat to cut electricity to Ukraine appears to be a strategic move likely aimed at influencing Ukraine's stance on Russian gas transit, with Slovakia being much more dependent on Ukraine than other EU members. Despite Bratislava's threat, Kyiv is unlikely to revoke its decision on gas transit considering that it has other electricity sources from Romania, Poland, Hungary and Moldova. Moreover, Fico's pro-Russia stance risks further undermining EU unity, likely straining Slovakia's relations with the bloc. Slovakia, Hungary, and Austria's dependency on Russian gas are likely to challenge the EU's unified energy stance, particularly as countries like France and Germany have pledged to stop buying Russian gas.

Source: [Facebook](#)

UK: Unknown individuals stole power cables worth 100,000 GBP from railway, as per December 28 reports; underscores trend of cable theft

Current Situation - December 28 reports indicate that unknown individuals stole 100,000 GBP worth of power cables from a railway line in Lostock, Bolton on December 24-26. Network Rail issued a warning of significant disruption to services between Chorley and Bolton, with delays also affecting routes to Preston on December 29. The line is temporarily closed to facilitate the replacement of the cables and necessary system testing.

Assessments & Forecast - The incident and subsequent disruptions to rail services reflect the risk associated with power cables thefts. Moreover, such incidents may pose a threat to life if not promptly addressed, as removing power cables can expose live wires or cause faulty connections, risking electric shock, fires, or explosions. Furthermore, the theft of copper cables in the UK has increased by 20 percent in 2024 compared to 2023, indicating a growing trend. Given the inadequate surveillance of railway lines, coupled with the increasing demand and high resale value of copper contained in power cables, such thefts are likely to persist. These thefts are likely to disrupt supply chains and critical infrastructure, causing transport delays, power outages, and communication breakdowns.

Source: [BBC](#)

Other Developments

- In a December 28 newspaper op-ed, Elon Musk restated his support for **Germany's** far-right populist Alternative fur Deutschland (AfD). The resulting backlash from mainstream political leaders highlights growing concerns over the AfD's rising social and political influence ahead of the February 23 snap elections.
- As per December 27 reports, **Irish** police have arrested more than 8,000 suspected shoplifters in 2024 as part of a crackdown on organized retail crime gangs. With theft crime at its highest level in five years, this will likely prompt further security operations to dismantle networks of organized retail theft.
- On December 27, **Poland** indicated that it would take **Hungary** to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) over its decision to grant asylum to a Polish opposition politician wanted on criminal corruption charges. With Poland recalling its ambassador to Hungary, bilateral tensions between Warsaw and Budapest are expected to persist in the near term.

Notable Dates

28 Europe Holiday: Ramadan
FEB

1 Moldova & Romania Holiday: Martisor
MAR

1 Bosnia and Herzegovina Holiday: Independence Day
MAR

1 Spain Holiday: Balearic Day
MAR

1 Switzerland Holiday: Republic Day in Neuchatel
MAR

1 UK Holiday: St. David's Day in Wales
MAR
