

Prodigy Intelligence Threat Centre

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Executive Summary

- COVID-19 Update.
- The Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Anti-Fascist (Antifa) movements enter their 16th week of unrest in US cities since the murder of George Floyd on 25 May. BLM and related social activist groups cancelled a "siege" of the White House and federal buildings in Washington, D.C. due to the potential of violence.
- China India Ladakh border conflict continues with military equipment build up on both sides of the border.
- Iranian attack on US official in Bahrain stopped
- Iranian hacker group Pioneer Kitten targeting the US private sector.

Analysis

COVID-19 - Global Overview

Reports: COVID-19 has reportedly infected over 30 million people in 188 countries and killed over 955,000 people. While many countries have slowed infection rates, an increasing number struggle to contain new outbreaks. A lack of testing, contact tracing, uniform social policies, and contradictory government messaging appear to hinder efforts to control the virus in these countries. India, which is seeing the world's greatest increase, appears to be facing a national catastrophe. Most European countries are now seeing a dramatic rise in cases with some experts declaring it the second wave of the pandemic.

Assessment: These countries will likely continue to see uncontrolled outbreaks in new regions without a strong reversal in government intervention. Governments in Europe will likely enforce reinstated lockdowns guided by what has been learned about COVID-19. Given the size of its population and lack of social services in many regions, India will likely surpass the United States in total infected by the end of October.

Reports: In the United States, COVID-19 has infected over 6.7 million and killed over 200,000 people. North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Oklahoma are fighting new outbreaks. Evacuations from wildfires on the West Coast and hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico have impacted those affected states' ability to maintain pandemic safety measures. A projection model from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), forecasts potentially 400,000 deaths in the US by the end of year if trends

continue. They claim the death toll could be reduced by 30% if more Americans wore face masks, and report that fewer Americans are wearing masks now despite the threat.

Assessment: The increase in outbreaks is alarming given that colder months are approaching and a second wave like that seen in Europe could very likely occur. Modeling from the IHME also predicts this possibility unless safer measures are enforced nationally to contain the pandemic, such as a mandatory mask ordinance. Given the political climate and ongoing natural disasters, it is unlikely a national response will be enforced until after the election in Nov, at the earliest.

COVID-19 - Canada's Case Update

For national figures, you can find COVID-19 case updates [here](#).

For Alberta, you can find the COVID-19 case updates [here](#). On this page, scroll down to the data table for Alberta and information by health zone.

For British Columbia, you can find the COVID-19 case updates [here](#).

Reports: In Canada, COVID-19 has infected over 142,000 and killed over 9,200 people. Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia see a significant increase in cases in the past week. Provincial governments are moving to reclose specific venues and limiting gathering sizes in an attempt to slow the spread. Meanwhile the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada, Tina Namiesniowski, is stepping down, citing exhaustion from the pandemic. The Public Health Agency says they'll announce her replacement "in the coming days." This leaves Canada's federal pandemic response in question until her replacement is named.

Assessment: Provincial health officials are reacting to the increase in cases after measures to control COVID-19 were relaxed just a month ago. It is likely that as long as public health officials use infection numbers to inform COVID-19 safety measures they will not be enforcing restrictions strong enough to stop the pandemic. With models predicting a second wave approaching and alarming evidence coming out of Europe it is likely Canada will see a significant rise in infections unless restrictions similar to those enforced in April are reinstated immediately.

COVID-19- Global Vaccine Development Tracker

For Global figures, you can find COVID-19 Vaccine Development updates [here](#).

Reports: More than 100 teams of scientists worldwide are developing and testing a vaccine against the virus SARS-CoV-2 as quickly as possible. Many groups are working on a COVID-19 vaccine using technologies that have been in development for decades but have never yet been approved for wide-scale human use, such as DNA, RNA, and viral-vector vaccines. Of the 40 vaccines in human clinical trials 9 are in phase three and experts say more than one could potentially be approved before the end of the year.

Assessment: An effective vaccine against COVID-19 is the only likely event that would allow the world to return to a pre-pandemic quality of life. Even in countries with a devastating number of deaths from COVID-19, there is nowhere close to a level of "herd immunity" within the population. While one vaccine candidate by AstraZeneca had paused trials to review potentially dangerous side effects the number of candidates in phase three trials likely suggests a proven vaccine could be announced before the end of the year.

COVID-19 Operations Sitrep

Chicago: The Chicago Tribune reports more than 50 restaurants in the Chicago area have permanently closed their doors because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Houston: The Houston Independent School District released 12 locations with presumed positive COVID-19 cases from the past week. The list can be found on the HISD homepage.

Las Vegas: Las Vegas Sands has revealed almost 400 employees have tested positive for COVID-19 since the Venetian and Palazzo resorts reopened in June.

Pittsburgh: The Oklahoma State Department of Health reported 212 active cases of COVID-19 in Pittsburg County Sept. 17 with the majority continuing to be attributed to an outbreak at a local prison.

Salt Lake City: An "open streets" initiative to support businesses impacted by the pandemic will run until Oct 10. Businesses are encouraged to set up a safer open air market in a designated block of Main st.

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

Reports: The Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Anti Facist (Antifa) movements enter their 16th week of unrest in US cities since the murder of George Floyd on May 25th. Two incidents, the shooting of two police officers in Compton, CA. and the police shooting of a knife wielding man in Lancaster, PA. were a new catalyst for riots in those cities. With the recent news of the death of Supreme Court Justice(SCJ) Ruth Bader Ginsburg (RBG), riots broke out again in Portland, OR. President Trump has already expressed his intent to install a new SCJ before the election, skewing the Supreme Court 6-3 in favor of republicans.

The "siege" of the White House and federal buildings in Washington DC on Sept 17th was cancelled by its organizers for fear of violence on both sides. The original messaging of the campaign could be misconstrued as a call to violence against the government and even after rebranding the protest as "non violent" jazz performances, that new message was not as resonant with expected participants. The organizers cited threats they had

received by email and social media, promising violence if they proceeded with the siege, and made the decision to officially cancel the entire event.

Assessment: The BLM movement is losing the stage to its affiliated movement Antifa as the election looms closer and motivations for unrest become more politicised. It is likely their goal of justice for black victims of police brutality will take a back seat to their political agenda closer to the election. RBG's death is a flash point for radical left extremism. Notable Democrats including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are calling for democrats to "radicalize" against republicans. Antifa will very likely be emboldened by this rhetoric from the democratic establishment and increase violence leading up to the election. If President Trump is successful in appointing a new SCJ there will very likely be a violent response from the radical left against federal buildings as well as police and republican officials.

Operations BLM Sitrep

Chicago: Hundreds of Chicago Police supporters rallied in front of the 16th District Police Department on Wed Sep 16 for a pro-police rally. They were met by a smaller group of BLM protesters who remained peaceful.

Las Vegas: Federal prosecutors announced on Thur Sep 17 that five people have been charged with defacing the Foley Federal Building and the Lloyd George U.S. Courthouse during a Black Lives Matter riot on May 30.

Pittsburgh: Three BLM protesters are facing charges for their involvement in a confrontation with diners in downtown Pittsburg two weeks ago.

Salt Lake City: A man was arrested for assaulting BLM protesters in front of the West Valley City Police Department Wed Sep 16.

St Petersburg: Two arrested after protest on Howard Ave. A driver in Kia blocking traffic, intentionally hit another driver in a Jeep trying to go around. A second person was taken into custody for obstructing the investigation Tue Sep 15.

China

Reports: The dispute along the Ladakh border between India and China is ongoing. Sunday India stated that over the last 20 days it has "beat" the Chinese military in occupying several key mountain positions which would give them "a strategic advantage". India has been moving key supplies into the region that would solidify their positions along the contested border over the winter. India states that these deployments are in response to Chinese military buildups. Reporting also indicates that the Chinese military is deploying troops to more locations across the disputed border.

Assessment: Given the continued buildup of military equipment and supplies along the Ladakh border it is likely that the border tensions will continue for the duration of the winter and that any statements of de-escalation will be seen solely as disinformation by the other side. The increase of troops along the border increases the probability that another border skirmish, similar to that which occurred in June, will occur as tensions continue to rise.

Reports: The United States Commerce Department at the direction of President Trump made a statement this week that they are requiring Apple and Google to cease the availability of the app TikTok on September 27th. This is following statements by senior officials within the US government that the app is a “spy tool” for China. The ban on downloading the app was initially set for Sept 20th though a one-week extension was granted while negotiations for the sale of the app to Walmart and Oracle are being decided.

Assessment: It is unlikely that the sale of TikTok will be finalized in the next week given the complexities of the political situation which surrounds it and the geo-political repercussions which the sale of the app may have for China and the US. It is also unlikely that the Chinese government will approve the sale of the app within this time frame given its worth to the CCP in terms of both data collection and revenue.

Reports: On Sunday the Chinese government issues new “guidance” on the integration of the Chinese economy and government. This new integration will require all businesses to have a minimum number of Communist party members employed within the business and that these individuals will be there to “boost law abidance and moral standards.”

Assessment: Though the integration of the Chinese government with businesses is not new that the government is looking at small and medium business at this time shows a distinct transition and desire to exert control within the regime to a new level. This may be due to numerous issues which Chairman Xi has faced recently and his extension of control over the party and business sectors likely indicates that increasing measures to control Chinese society are likely in the near future.

Reports: A former director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) Richard Fadden this week stated that Canada should prohibit Chinese students from partaking in research of sensitive matters (those related to or which can be applied to national defense). This comes after 1000 Chinese students had their visas revoked in the US on suspicion of sending sensitive information to China.

Assessment: As the US and other NATO and intelligence partners increase their scrutiny around Chinese students and their role in academic research it is likely that the pressure on the Canadian government to act on this matter will grow both from within and

externally. Given that the government is biding its time with the Huawei 5G situation in an attempt to appease all sides it is likely that a similar approach will be taken regarding Chinese students for the near term, saving the decision to be used in wider negotiations.

Iran

Report: It is reported that a terrorist attack against a senior US official in Bahrain was stopped this week by Bahraini, Saudi and American personnel. The target of the attack is currently unknown, though reporting indicates that the terrorist attack was backed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and would have been in retaliation for the death of General Qassem Soleimani in January. 9 people associated with the attack were arrested and it is believed numerous other personnel were able to return to Iran. Reports also indicate that Iran had plans to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa recently though that plan appears to have been thwarted.

Assessment: Given that the US has its 5th Fleet Headquarters in Bahrain there are numerous senior personnel who the attack could have been targeting, though it is likely that the attack would have targeted military personnel. It is likely that Iran will continue to attempt to retaliate for the death of General Qassem Soleimani, and that these attempts will focus on personnel in the Middle East as Iran can draw on the disenfranchised Shia populations of the region to assist.

Report: US Cyber Command is warning the private sector about an Iranian hacker group which has been dubbed "Pioneer Kitten." that is believed to have been operating since 2017. Pioneer Kitten has been reported to target areas of National Security though has also been known to sell access to private systems which have been compromised. US Cyber Command reports that although Pioneer Kitten acts as a key intelligence gathering arm of Iranian Intelligence it is not a government entity and that is why they sell access to compromised systems that would otherwise benefit Iranian Intelligence.

Assessment: Cyber attacks on key US sectors by Iran and other state actors are not a new phenomenon. These style attacks have been occurring for a number of years and will likely continue into the future as rogue states like Iran increase their cyber warfare capabilities. It is likely that numerous other Iranian hacker groups are operating at this time either in cooperation with or in parallel to Pioneer Kitten.

Report: Reports indicate the US will be reimposing sanctions on Iran under the 2015 nuclear deal which the US backed out of in 2018. All other countries involved with the nuclear deal state that the US does not have the legal authority to impose these sanctions. The sanctions will target more than two dozen people and entities involved in the Iranian nuclear, missile and conventional arms programmes with further announcements being made on Monday, Sep 21. Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has said the US "faces defeat" if it is to reimpose UN sanctions on the country.

Assessment: Iranian statements that the US will be defeated or will have any repercussions are likely only propaganda measures meant to reassure the Iranian population and the regime's supporters. As the US nears the Nov 3rd election it is likely



that US President Donald Trump will take further actions in response to Iran's growing nuclear program to further rally his base. Growing tensions between Iran and the US are unlikely to have any significant impact on the US election, unless Iran succeeds in assassinating a senior US official.

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