

The following 'wave tops' brief is designed to assist clients and their offices in decision making at a time when global events are moving at pace. The '*bottom line up front*' comment is tailored to the client portfolio of interests and the regional links are included for further in-depth reading and back office understanding.

## Wave Tops

### Comment:

In his recent speech

balancing relations with both the US and Europe,

Chancellor Rachel Reeves who will travel to Brussels next week seeking to address the ambitious EU security and trade reset

with Turkey also in a lead role in developments in Syria,

out of the Washington position.

emerge in narratives:

### Quote:

Tony Radakin, Chief of Defence Staff Admiral, delivered his annual RUSI lecture. He warned: "*the world has changed. Global power is shifting and a third nuclear age is upon us. The era of state competition primarily through geo-economics has shifted to a resurgence of geo-politics.*"

## Europe

### UK

- GCHQ chief opens £5.8m cyber and digital centre
- The UK joined the EU and 15 other partners in endorsing shared principles on the security and resilience of subsea cables at the UN General Assembly.
- UK investigators smash Russian networks that helped hide billions in drugs, ransomware and spying operations
- UK underestimates threat of cyber-attacks from hostile states, gangs, says security chief
- Russia and China exploiting UK's technology dependence to cause 'maximum destruction', GCHQ warns
- Balkan gang jailed over £200m of cocaine in banana boxes
- UK Health Security Agency (HSA) to buy more than 5 million doses of human H5 avian flu vaccine
- The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) claims to have "developed the forward presence concept, basing ships overseas to increase availability and global reach, and proving that 5 ships could do the work of 11. This could save the taxpayer £10 billion compared to conventional requirement setting."
- The Combined Space Operations Initiative (CSPO) partners exchanged views on space threats, conducted a tabletop exercise, and endorsed a joint statement. The group is formed of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- The City of London Police decided not to take action against anyone over a complaint made by the Pakistan High Commission in London alleging an attack on Justice (retired) Qazi Faez Isa and the High Commission's diplomatic car outside the Middle Temple by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activists on October 28 2024.
- The Government announced a full asset freeze against Brian Sheridan, which they have reasonable cause to suspect is involved in terrorist activity by facilitating terrorism and associating with members of the New Irish Republican Army ('New IRA').
- The Government also announced three further sanctions on individuals connected to ISIS and Al-Qaeda.
- John Healey, the Defence Secretary, delivered a speech at the London Defence Conference. His department published a Statement of Intent regarding the Defence Industrial Strategy.

### Estonia

- The GRU vandals: Moscow's hired thugs are causing mayhem in Estonia

### France

- France's Macron vows to stay in office till end of term, says he'll name a new PM soon
- French government collapse turns the screws on Macron
- France & the UK considering troop deployment to the Line of Contact in the eastern sector for ceasefire monitoring
- **Comment:** France faces a deepening financial crisis, with a budget deficit and rising government debt exceeding EU thresholds. Prime Minister Michel Barnier's efforts to address the issue through a budget package have stalled due to political gridlock. His government controls only a third of the Assemblée Nationale, far short of a majority. Opposition blocs on the left and far-right have united to block the budget, ensuring it cannot pass without substantial abstentions, which appear unlikely. The crisis has shaken market confidence, reflected in volatile bond markets. Without swift, decisive measures, France risks further financial instability and loss of investor trust.

### Finland

- Finland Crafting Whole-of-Government Defense Posture
- Data cable running across Sweden-Finland border suffers damage

### Norway

- The secretive U-2 spy plane on mission up north as Norway steps up deterrence against Russia

- Germany's cybersecurity and infrastructure under attack by Russia, chancellor says
- German intelligence launches task force to combat foreign election interference

## Netherlands

- Dutch say tight defense market leaves €750M of Ukraine aid unspent

## Romania

- Voting Begins in Crucial Romanian Presidential Runoff Amid Accusations of Russian Meddling
- Romania's presidential front-runner Georgescu benefited from Russia-style booster campaign, declassified docs say
- U.S. Calls for Probe into Russia's 'Malign' Meddling in Romanian Elections
- TikTok removed 3 influence campaigns during Romania's elections

## Poland

- Poland charges wife of jailed Russian activist with spying
- Poland arrests former spy chief in Pegasus spyware probe

## Hungary

- Hungarian CIA reportedly spied on EU officials

## Georgia

- Caught in Riots, Georgia's Protesters Say They Must Choose Between Europe and Russia
- Tensions High in Georgia's Tbilisi After Another Night of Protests
- Stephen Doughty, the Minister for Europe, issued a statement of concern regarding the ongoing situation in Georgia.

## Russia

- Russia Massing for Possible Cross-River Offensive In South Ukraine
- Russia closes Poland's consulate in St. Petersburg in tit-for-tat move over espionage accusations
- Russia Is Touting Itself as a Haven for 'Conservative' Westerners. Will They Make the Move?
- Russian hackers hijack Pakistani hackers' servers for their own attacks
- Russia sees 'no grounds for negotiations' with Ukraine, Putin spokesperson says
- Kremlin Stages Oreshnik Propaganda Blitz as Nuclear Threats Lose Their Potency
- Tucker Carlson Interviews Russian FM Lavrov in Moscow
- Putin Ally Says Russia Will Likely Reject Trump's Ukraine Deal
- UAV strike this morning on the building of the Kadyrov's Special Purpose Police Regiment in Grozny.

## Ukraine

- How Ukraine has faced its worst month on the battlefield in two years – visualised
- 'Nowhere Is Safe': Uneasy Stability in Lviv as Russia's War Grinds On

## Czech Republic

- Up to 100 'suspicious incidents' in Europe can be attributed to Russia, Czech minister says

## Kosovo

- Kosovo accuses Serbia of 'terrorist attack' resembling Russian actions in Ukraine

## North America

### USA

- Foreign adversary was likely behind Havana Syndrome, House Intelligence leaders say
- Meet Moscow's alleged 'decolonization' mole
- Senate GOP sees Hegseth SECDEF nomination as likely doomed
- After pardoning son, Biden returns home to a credibility problem
- How a Director of National Intelligence helps POTUS stay on top of threats from around the world
- Trump says venture capitalist David Sacks will be AI and crypto 'czar'
- Who killed UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson? What we know about the suspect on the run
- Americans favor more international engagement, military spending: survey
- T-Mobile US CSO: Spies jumped from one telco to another in a way 'I've not seen in my career'
- Chinese hackers targeting Cisco "features" (not bugs) warns NSA
- How to make sure texts and calls are encrypted after FBI's warning about Chinese hackers
- FBI investigating reports of large drones flying in New Jersey, seeks public's help
- House subcommittee concludes COVID-19 'most likely' leaked from Wuhan lab
- DOJ secretly investigated nonprofit at center of Wuhan COVID lab leak questions, bombshell House report reveals
- Trump's plan for Ukraine comes into focus: Territorial concessions but NATO off the table
- Joint Advisory Warns of PRC-Backed Cyber Espionage Targeting Telecom Networks
- US officials still working to evict Chinese hackers from major US telecom networks
- Russian spies surveilled Ukrainian troops at US base, trial hears
- Trump warns there will be 'all hell to pay' if hostages aren't released by Jan. 20
- US expands list of Chinese technology companies under export controls
- Russian Woman Charged by FBI For Alleged Ties to Russian Intelligence
- The Russian Gen. Valery Gerasimov has a phone call with Gen. CQ Brown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to provide him with that warning and to also discuss Ukraine and how to avoid miscalculation between the U.S. and Russia about that ongoing conflict.

### Canada

- Canada lists Houthi militant group as a terrorist entity

### South America

- Behind Bars, Beyond Control: The Fall of Ecuador's Prisons and the Rise of Its Mafias
- Hundreds dead in Mexican city since cartel leaders' September arrest in U.S.: "Scared out of our wits"
- Legendary Medellin cartel drug lord released from U.S. prison after serving 25 years
- Massacres Surge as Gangs Atomize in Ecuador
- The President of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, shares his Bitcoin profit after it skyrocketed past \$100,000.
- Baroness Chapman, the Foreign Office Minister for Latin America, delivered a speech at Canning House. She discussed her work so far in post, and the relationship Britain is trying to carve out with Latin America.
- Lord Vernon Coaker, Defence Minister, met with Chilean Undersecretary of Defence Ricardo Montero for the 21st UK-Chile Defence Dialogue.

## Middle East

### Turkey

- Erdoğan's risky play in Syria
- ISIS fighters deported by Greece allowed to operate with impunity in Turkey for some time

### Syria

- Syrian Militants' Capture of Key City a 'Game-Changer'
- HTS rebel group sweeping Syria tries to shed its jihadist image

- How did Hayat Tahrir al-Sham come to prominence in Syria's civil war?
- IRGC's 'Butcher of Aleppo' returns to Syria as Assad feels the heat
- Aleppo Has Fallen, Assad's Forces Regrouping as Rebels Blitz South
- Syria: Who are the HTS rebels that took Aleppo?
- Rebels in Syria take advantage of Israel's successes against a weakened Iran axis
- Russia evacuates first naval assets from Tartus Naval Base, Latakia province
- **Comment:** Syria becomes a focal point in global geopolitics, with escalating tensions as a rebel coalition, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, challenges Bashar al-Assad's regime. This conflict has drawn in powers like Iran, Russia, the US, China, and Turkey, often through proxies. Syria's role as a narco-state, producing 80% of the world's Captagon drug, exacerbates regional instability, especially affecting Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The UK and US have imposed sanctions on key individuals linked to the Captagon trade, recognising its geopolitical and security implications. Several companies and organisations are alleged to have profited from the chaos, including Russia's Wagner Group, and French cement group Lafarge. With Syria's ongoing economic collapse, Britain continues to collaborate with allies to monitor developments, leveraging international support through forums and potential sanctions. As the region's complexities deepen, Syria remains a critical issue for British foreign policy.

## Lebanon

- US Intel: Hezbollah looking to rebuild after losing half of its weapons stockpiles

## Iran

- Iran, Iraq and Syria hold talks as anti-Assad forces threaten Damascus
- Father, son from northern Druze village accused of spying for Iran's IRGC Quds Force
- Syrian rebels surround strategic city of Hama after Aleppo takeover
- Jihadists, rebel groups, Kurds...Who's who in the offensive against the Syrian regime
- Iranian president paints a bleak picture of country's economy

## Iraq

- Remaining, Waiting for Expansion (Again): The Islamic State's Operations in Iraq and Syria
- How Washington Can Salvage Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service

## Yemen

- US Navy destroys Houthi missiles and drones targeting American ships in Gulf of Aden

## Bahrain

- Alistair Long, Ambassador to Bahrain, met Yasser bin Ibrahim Humaidan, Minister of Electricity and Water Affairs. They discussed "fostering constructive collaboration with Bahrain for the benefit of both nations and their people."

## Qatar

- Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani visited the UK for a state visit, highlighting key economic, geopolitical, and defence partnerships. The UK aims to boost ties with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for investment, especially after a 75% drop in UK imports from Qatar. Despite this, Qatar remains a major UK investor, with a £40 billion portfolio and a new £1 billion pledge for climate technologies. Rolls-Royce notably benefited from these commitments.
- Key agreements included doubling joint aid funding to £79 million for global challenges, enhanced defence cooperation (including Typhoon and Hawk jets), and cybersecurity initiatives. The UK and Qatar also expanded collaboration in AI and genomics, including the launch of an AI research commission and the establishment of a shared Genomics Medicine Academy to improve healthcare and drive economic growth. Additionally, both countries agreed to coordinate on regional geopolitical concerns such as Palestine, Sudan, and Yemen.

## Africa

### Libya

- Martin Longden, Ambassador to Libya, met Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah. Local media reported both sides discussed the return of British oil companies to work in the country.

### Tanzania

- Marianne Young, High Commissioner to Tanzania, met President Hussein Ali Mwinyi and Minister of Tourism and Heritage, Mudrick Soraga. British travellers make up the 4th largest group of visitors to Zanzibar, with over 34,000 British tourists visiting the islands this year.
- The British Geological Survey team arrived in Tanzania, where they partnered with the Geological Survey of Tanzania “to provide technical assistance on critical minerals.”

### Somalia

- Mike Nithavrianakis, Ambassador to Somalia, and Brigadier Oliver Bryant met Somali Chief of Defence Forces General Raage to discuss security and defend matters.

### Cameroon

- Lord Collins, the Minister for Africa, attended the UK-Francophone West and Central Africa Trade and Investment Forum in London. Britain closed a finance deal worth over £60 million to help Cameroon improve vast swathes of land for agriculture, supported by British firms.

## Asia

### China

- Xi Jinping Challenged Following Spate of Violent Attacks
- US says ‘Salt Typhoon’ Chinese hacking group behind major metadata theft
- CISA Issues Guidance to Telecom Sector on Salt Typhoon Threat
- China gains, US loses ground in Mideast arms market
- China bans exports to US of gallium, germanium, antimony in response to chip sanctions

### South Korea

- South Korea’s governing party head supports suspending Yoon’s powers, making impeachment more likely
- South Korea: Push to impeach Yoon, defense minister resigns
- What to know about South Korea’s short-lived and chaotic period of martial law
- FBI arrests man allegedly helping prepare ‘surprise attack’ on South Korea

### Bangladesh

- Melinda Bohannon, Director General for Humanitarian and Development at the Foreign Office, was in Pakistan. She met the Minister of Finance “to discuss progress on Pakistan’s IMF-supported programme, and ongoing UK technical assistance to support the Government of Pakistan’s economic reform priorities.”
- **Comment:** Bangladesh has experienced significant political turmoil, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s resignation and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus leading an interim administration. The UK has closely monitored developments, including a parliamentary report detailing over 2,000 “atrocities” since the regime change, and concerns over the rising influence of Islamists. Additionally, Bangladesh has raised concerns about laundered money in the UK, requesting its return to support the country’s economy. Diplomats have shown willingness to address the issue, with attention focused on former Land Minister



Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, whose property acquisitions in the UK have raised suspicions of illicit financial activity.

## India

- The UK and India have signed a Statement of Intent on the design and development of electric propulsion systems for the Indian Navy.

## Malaysia

- David Wallace, Acting High Commissioner to Malaysia, and YB Datuk Seri Utama Tengku Zafrul Aziz, Malaysia's Minister of Investment, Trade, and Industry, jointly unveiled the countdown to the UK's entry into the CPTPP.

## Japan

- US aims to deter China, North Korea with new Space Force unit in Japan
- Pro-Russian hackers hit Japan with DDoS attacks over military ties to the US

## Philippines

- Chinese Warships, Cutters Harass Philippine Patrol Near Scarborough Shoal, Say Officials
- Japan to Transfer Coastal Radars, Small Boats to Philippine Military in Latest Defense Aid Package
- Laure Beaufils, Ambassador to the Philippines, said China's recent in the region actions raised tensions and the risk of miscalculation, and called for them to adhere to international law.

## Uzbekistan

- Philippa Saunders, Deputy Director for China, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia at the UK Department for Business and Trade, met Uzbekistan's Ambassador, Ravshan Usmonov. "The British representatives also expressed strong support for Uzbekistan's efforts to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), commending the country's progress in this regard."

## Taiwan

- Four Taiwanese soldiers charged with spying for China

## Australia

- Melbourne synagogue sustains severe damage in predawn attack by masked arsonists
- AFP and ASIO warn of 'shocking' numbers of teens in terrorism cases
- AFP destroys 500kg of cocaine seized after alleged 'black flight' from PNG to Australia crashed
- Vicki Treadell, High Commissioner to Australia, hosted a lunch with several diplomatic peers focussing on the UK's CPTPP accession.

**END.**

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