

# The weekly briefing | 8 September 2014

Political and security risk updates

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**Africa:** Al-Shabaab leader killed in US drone strikes in Somalia.

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## Africa

### Al-Shabaab leader killed in US drone strikes in Somalia

US drone strikes on 1 September destroyed two vehicles being used by militants from al-Shabaab as they travelled from a meeting of the group's leadership towards their main base in the coastal town of Barawe, Somalia. On 5 September, the Pentagon confirmed that Ahmed Abdi Godane, the co-founder and leader of al-Shabaab, had been killed in the strikes, which al-Shabaab reported also killed five other militants.

Godane, also known as Mukhtar Abu Zubeyr, took over the leadership of al-Shabaab in 2008 after the then leader, Adan Hashi Ayro, was killed by a US missile strike. Godane's death marks a serious setback for the militant organisation. During his leadership, al-Shabaab formed an alliance with al-Qaeda and strengthened its presence in large parts of Somalia, while also carrying out attacks in neighbouring Kenya and Uganda, including the Westgate Mall attack in Kenya on 21-24 September 2013.



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Although there is no obvious immediate successor to Godane, and while his death will have an impact on morale among fighters on the ground, it does not mark the end of the al-Shabaab threat. Despite the successful elimination of a key operational figure in the organisation, al-Shabaab will continue to pose a significant threat both nationally and regionally, not least of all to the Somali government, which they have pledged to overthrow. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud has renewed his call for militants to take advantage of a 45-day amnesty period, and to move towards peace in the aftermath of Godane's death. There is a particularly high risk to those countries contributing to African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces. On 8 September, an AU convoy was attacked southwest of Mogadishu by a suicide bomber driving a car laden with explosives, killing 12 civilians and injuring 27, including AU soldiers.

### **Other developments**

**Approximately 26,000 people have been driven from the northeastern Nigerian town of Bama after Boko Haram reportedly seized the town.** On 3 September, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in Borno State announced that more than 26,000 displaced persons had been registered so far, with the number expected to grow further. The Borno State government and military spokesmen, however, continue to deny that Boko Haram have seized the town in an offensive that started on 1 September. Meanwhile, the United States expressed its increased concern over the escalating violence and the territorial gains Boko Haram is making, including the high risk of an attack on Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. The upsurge in violence is a serious threat to the Nigerian government, particularly as Boko Haram has recently turned its attention to holding on to its territorial gains.

**Mozambique's President Armando Guebuza and former rebel group Renamo signed a landmark peace deal on 5 September, after rebel leader Afonso Dhlakama emerged from hiding.** The deal marks the end of two years of clashes between government forces and fighters loyal to Dhlakama, who accused the Mozambican state of renegeing on the peace agreement that followed the 15-year-long civil war in 1992. Although Dhlakama hailed the peace deal as an important step forward, he continued to criticise the rule of civil war victors Frelimo. Having lost every presidential election since 1994, Renamo is struggling to keep its status as the major opposition party, with the ruling party, Frelimo, expected to win by a landslide in the upcoming October elections, the first test of the new peace agreement.

**South Africa's opposition leader, Helen Zille, aims to reopen a corruption case against President Jacob Zuma after winning a five-year battle to obtain tape recordings used in a 2009 court case, before he became president.** Zuma denied the charges, insisting on a political conspiracy by his opponents in the governing African National Congress (ANC). In the 2009 case, the tapes formed the basis on which prosecutors dropped charges against Zuma of accepting bribes to thwart an investigation into a French arms company involved in a late 1990s weapons deal. The recordings were never made public.

### **On the radar**

- **A report on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) is due on 8 September,** with the Security Council to hold consultations on 9 September.
- **The United Nations is warning of grave human rights violations committed by fighters in Libya** as the outgoing government admits to having effectively lost control of the capital.
- **The Liberian government is adjusting the prices of essential commodities** in response to price hikes due to the Ebola outbreak affecting the country's economy.

## Americas

### **Government reshuffle in Venezuela indicates economic and political paralysis**

On 2 September, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro announced a long-awaited government reshuffle in what he termed a 'revolutionary shake-up'. In a three-hour televised speech, Maduro presented the recent government restructuring as a timely solution to the country's rampant economic ills, with a drop of nearly 5% in the country's production output during the first half of 2014 and experts forecasting an inflation rate of over 60%. The major announcement was the removal of Rafael Ramírez from the oil ministry, a role he had held for over a decade. Ramírez was replaced by one of Hugo Chávez's cousins, Asdrúbal Chávez. Rodolfo Marco Torres, a former brigadier-general, is to take on the country's top economic role at the helm of the newly created vice-presidency of economy and finance. Following the shake-up, leaders of the opposition and prominent figures among the business sector have continued to criticise the government for its inability to carry out much-promised liberal economic reforms.

Maduro first mentioned the need for a 'revolutionary shake-up' at the start of July, following the ousting of Jorge Giordani, the then minister of planning and the architect of the Bolivarian economic model. At the time of Giordani dismissal, the Venezuelan president defended a more liberal stance in economic affairs – a posture that was upheld by Ramírez, the then oil minister and a head of state oil firm PDVSA. Ramírez argued for more orthodox macroeconomic measures to tame inflation and dwindling central bank reserves, as well as more fiscal discipline to limit the country's budget deficit. But his removal from the head of the country's major economic institutions represents a dramatic backwards shift.

The recent cabinet reshuffle reflects the broader struggle between the more pragmatic and radical branches of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), amid the ongoing crisis of legitimacy in Maduro's leadership. Accordingly, the recent nomination of Torres and Chávez strengthens the position of the radical and military sections of the PSUV to better influence government policymaking. This latest episode in Venezuelan politics represents a major blow to the more pragmatic camp of the PSUV. With Ramírez sidelined, the potential for a liberal push within the ruling socialist party appears more remote than ever. In contrast, Diosdado Cabello, a retired military officer and current chairman of the parliament and vice-president of the PSUV, has risen as the most-powerful contender to Maduro's rule. In this context, it seems unlikely that any meaningful liberal economic reforms will be implemented before the upcoming 2015 legislative election.

### **Other developments**

#### **Revelations of an alleged large-scale corruption scandal have tarnished the image of Brazilian**

**President Dilma Rousseff.** On 6 September, the media revealed the names of 40 politicians supposedly involved in bribery and money laundering through Petrobras, the state-owned oil company. The list includes a minister and several governors and congressmen of the ruling Workers' Party (PT). Rousseff has so far rejected the allegations, and urged a thorough investigation of the matter. But the leaked accusations are likely to boost support for the main contender in the upcoming presidential election, Marina Silva.

**Around 4,000 workers and students marched in Chile's capital, Santiago, to urge President Michelle Bachelet to implement reforms that were promised during her election campaign.** The protest was organised by the Workers' United Centre of Chile, which demands that the government enacts reforms that would strengthen the power of unions, among other things. The Chilean minister of labour, Javiera Blanco, assured that the government was willing to enact such reforms, and stated that a draft law would be passed in congress later in the year. The hurdles faced by Bachelet to fulfil the promises made during her election campaign have led to a surge of protest over the past few months.

**The newly appointed general secretary of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), Ernesto Samper, has vowed to reactivate the political dialogue between the government and the opposition in Venezuela.** Samper, the president of Colombia between 1994 and 1998, will start his mandate with a tour of Venezuela, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. According to some sources, he will meet with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro during his visit to the capital, Caracas. Over the past year, UNASUR has attempted to ease political tensions in Venezuela by fostering a dialogue between the government and the opposition; however, a general lack of political will has meant the dialogue has so far failed to live up to expectations.

#### **On the radar**

- **'Peace Week' to continue in Colombia up to 14 September** as part of the ongoing negotiations between the government and FARC.
- **Uruguay general election scheduled for 26 October.**
- **Further protests possible in Iquique, Chile,** due to delayed reconstruction work following an earthquake in April.
- **Further protests and clashes possible in Peru's capital, Lima,** amid the ongoing strike by health workers.

## **Asia and Pacific**

### **Japanese and Indian prime ministers agree to accelerate nuclear talks**

At a diplomatic summit in Tokyo last week, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to speed up a nuclear energy pact, though the deal was not finalised during Modi's visit to Japan. Abe wants Modi to agree to frequent inspections of nuclear power plants to ensure that spent nuclear fuel is not used for military purposes. Among several other safeguards, Japan also wishes to limit the number of nuclear tests in India. India has not signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Modi and Abe also agreed to work towards India gaining full member status at the Nuclear Suppliers Group. In addition to nuclear-related discussions, Tokyo agreed to push towards a doubling of Japan's direct investment in India over the next five years, aiming to reach a total \$4 billion. Abe also agreed to distribute an aid loan of \$480 million to the India Infrastructure Finance Company.

Civil nuclear negotiations between India and Japan began in 2010, but were halted after the Fukushima Daiichi plant disaster in March 2011. Negotiations reportedly resumed between then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Abe in May 2013. Despite not being a signature to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, India has signed bilateral agreements with several countries, including Canada, the United States, Britain, France, Kazakhstan and Russia. On 5 September, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott signed a nuclear energy deal in New Delhi. In addition to progress on the nuclear cooperation and economic ties, the two parties also agreed to regular maritime military exercises and to hasten talks regarding India's purchase of ShinMaywa US-2 amphibious aircraft. India and Japan maintain similar interests in maritime security and have recently participated in joint military exercises with the United States. Most recently, the Indian Navy participated in Exercise Malabar with the United States and Japan near Sasebo, Japan, on 24 July 2014.

While Japan's enthusiasm at increasing and deepening cooperation and engagement with India is consistent with the two countries' historically strong bilateral relationship, Abe's actions also fit into a larger effort to hedge against Chinese influence. At the summit in Japan, Modi expressed a thinly veiled distaste for Chinese geographic and naval expansionism. Japan, traditionally embroiled in territorial disputes with China in the East China Sea, has been actively working to deepen and widen its relations with other Asian countries. Indeed, on 6 September, Abe began a three-day visit to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Abe is the first Japanese prime minister to visit Sri Lanka in 24 years and to visit Bangladesh in 14 years. China too has been actively expanding its ties with these South Asian countries. Thus, as China becomes more assertive territorially, militarily and economically, it is likely that competition for political and diplomatic clout within the Asia-Pacific will continue to intensify.

### **Other developments**

**Chinese Premier Xi Jinping has cancelled an official visit to Pakistan amid anti-government protests in Islamabad.** During his visit to Pakistan, which was originally scheduled for later this month, Xi was expected to sign over \$34 billion in bilateral trade deals. China and Pakistan have historically maintained strong economic and political ties. China is Pakistan's largest trading partner. The cancellation of the visit means that the signing of the bilateral trade deals could be postponed. If this occurs, it could further weaken the domestic political position of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Sharif has been facing calls for his resignation and allegations that Sharif's party had rigged last year's general election. Such anti-government protests began last month, and became violent on 30 August. The demonstrations have led to three deaths and more than 500 injuries. Talks between Sharif's government and opposition leaders are expected to continue this week. In addition to the Chinese cancellation, Sri Lankan officials were also forced to cancel an official visit last month as a result of the ongoing political situation in Pakistan. Both the Chinese and Pakistani governments have emphasised their continuing efforts to reschedule Xi's visit.

**North Korea launched three short-range missiles on 6 September.** The missiles were launched from a military location of the southeastern city of Wonsan on Saturday morning. South Korean intelligence suggests these missiles are a new type of tactical missile designed to have a longer range than the existing KN-02 short-range missiles, which have a range of about 170 kilometres. The three missiles launched on 6 September flew roughly 210 kilometres before landing in the Sea of Japan. It is believed that these are the same type of missiles that were launched on 14 August and 1 September. The launches took place just ahead of a traditional harvest holiday in South Korea that begins on 8 September and lasts for three days.

**Thailand's Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha announced this week that martial law would not be lifted in the near future.** Prayuth Chan-ocha is also the chief of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), the organisation currently controlling Thailand. In an official statement by the NCPO, the prime minister indicated that the tenuous political situation in the country meant that martial law was still necessary, but that they would continue to monitor the need for martial law in the coming months. Sources in Thailand indicate that regional army areas are continuing to investigate the political situation in north and northeast Thailand. In particular, the Second and Third Army areas in these regions have indicated their belief that underground groups continue to actively campaign against the NCPO. At the same time, reports from Tokyo, Japan, indicate that Red Shirt activists, who oppose the NCPO, have gathered outside Japan's foreign ministry. These demonstrators have also accused the NCPO of engaging in torture in their enforcement of martial law.

### **On the radar**

- **One of North Korea's top diplomats will visit Belgium, Switzerland and several other European countries** this week.
- **Myanmar's parliament speaker, U Shwe Mann, will continue an official visit to Vietnam this week** in an effort to boost political and economic relations.
- **The United States is expected to finalise a military assistance deal with South Korea** to upgrade more than 130 South Korean F-16 fighter jets.
- **A top Chinese government official stated that the country's ongoing anti-corruption campaign will continue for at least five years.**

## **Europe**

### **Ceasefire signed between Ukrainian forces and rebels, while West warns Russia of further sanctions should peace deal fail**

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko announced a 12-point ceasefire between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists at the NATO summit on 4 September in Wales. Ukrainian officials and pro-Russian rebels signed the ceasefire deal on 5 September in Minsk, Belarus, in the presence of Russian observers and Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) representatives. The agreement came into effect on the same day at 15:00 GMT. The signatories also agreed to withdraw heavy weaponry, to release all prisoners and to permit the delivery of humanitarian aid into the afflicted region.

In response to the announcement of a ceasefire, Barack Obama claimed that the United States was hopeful that the ceasefire would hold, yet sceptical that the rebels would obey the conditions set in the deal or that Russia would cease violating Ukraine's territorial integrity. The previous 10-day ceasefire in June failed to stall the rapidly escalating crisis or to produce significant results during negotiations between Russia, Ukraine and the separatist rebels. Despite the agreement, Andriy Lysenko, the spokesman for the Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council, reported on 6 September that the rebels had already fired on government forces in eastern Ukraine on 10 occasions since the ceasefire was put in place. Similarly, Vladimir Makovich, a parliamentary member of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, claimed that Ukrainian units had launched several missiles towards rebel strongholds.

At the NATO summit, the European Union and the United States confirmed that further sanctions against Russia had been drawn up to deter Moscow from further attempting to escalate the fighting in eastern Ukraine. It is highly likely that if the current ceasefire fails to alleviate the fighting in eastern Ukraine the United States and the European Union will enforce additional sanctions on the Russian economy. At the NATO summit, President Barack Obama emphasised that the West should continue to place pressure on Russia with increasing sanctions in order to ensure that the success of the ceasefire. The new sanctions, approved on 5 September, could be implemented by as early as 9 September, and are likely to target Moscow's access to trade in defence and arms technology and dual-use and sensitive technology, as well as Russian access to capital markets. Russia has warned that it will respond duly to further sanctions placed on the country by the West.

### **Other developments**

**On 3 September, France announced the suspension of the delivery of the first of two Mistral assault ships to Russia.** France had received fierce criticism from its allies, including the United Kingdom and the United States, for refusing to call off the sale of the ships to Russia in light of the Kremlin's role in the Ukrainian conflict. In 2011, France agreed to build and sell two advanced helicopter assault ships to Russia for €1.2 billion. The first was originally scheduled for delivery in October 2014 and the second in 2015. On 3 September, Francois Hollande's office announced that the French president had decided to postpone the shipment until November, and would not deliver the ships until a ceasefire was put into place in Ukraine. If France decides to cancel the contract with Russia, it would have to reimburse the €1 billion Russia has already paid, and it could be liable for an additional €251 million penalty payment.

**On 5 September, the Estonian foreign ministry summoned the Russian ambassador following reports of the abduction of an Estonian security official by unidentified Russian individuals on the border between the two countries.** A statement released by the ministry reported that the official working for the Estonian Internal Security Service (Kapo) was abducted near the Luhamaa border checkpoint. The FSB, Russia's intelligence agency, reported to Russian news agencies that Eston Kohver, a Kapo official, had been detained on Russian territory on suspicion of spying. An eavesdropping device, a firearm and €5,000 in cash, were allegedly found on Kohver at the time of his arrest.

**On 5 September, during the second day of the NATO Summit in Wales, NATO announced several reassurance measures for eastern NATO members.** One of the measures is the creation of a new spearhead force capable of rapid deployment. Sources claim that the force would number up to 4,000 troops, and would include air, naval and special forces support. British Prime Minister David Cameron has confirmed that Britain will contribute 1,000 troops to the force. NATO will also send supplies and equipment to be pre-positioned in eastern NATO member states. The alliance also adopted a Readiness Action Plan to respond to growing threats on NATO members' borders from both Russia and the Middle East.

## On the radar

- **The European Parliament President Martin Schulz will travel to Ukraine to meet Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and President Petro Poroshenko** on 11-12 September.
- **The Yalta European Strategy Conference will be held in Kiev, Ukraine,** on 12 September.
- **European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton will visit Washington** on 9-10 September.
- **Air France pilots to take industrial action and strike** from 15-22 September.

## Middle East

### **Clashes between government supporters and Houthi rebels continue to escalate in Yemen**

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, after Friday prayers on 5 September. Pro-government supporters rallied against counter-protests by Shi'ite Houthi rebels who denounce the current government amid claims of corruption and lack of Shia representation. Beyond the capital, clashes between Houthi rebels and tribesmen supported by the Muslim Brotherhood's Al-Islah party claimed the lives of at least 40 people in the country's northern al-Jawf province.

Initially the Houthi had demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Mohammed Basindawa and the reinstatement of fuel subsidies. On 4 September, President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi proposed replacing Basindawa and reducing fuel prices. However, rebel groups have since denounced Hadi's overtures, and raised their demands to include the resignation of the whole government. Houthi leader, Sheik Sayyid Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, called for increased pressure to be placed on the government, and for rallies to continue and escalate throughout the capital.

The challenge remains that much of the country's political turmoil is the result of economic affairs, though the government's recent reinstatement of fuel subsidies may create greater room for leverage with Houthi groups. However, in order to be successful, the government must gain the support of unilateral donors and institutions such as the International Monetary Fund in order to manage the current crisis – something it has not yet managed to do. The Yemeni economy relies heavily on oil and gas production, and the recent targeting of essential infrastructure by rebels threatens to undermine international financial investment, compounding domestic challenges. Protests are set to continue, with no clear governmental strategy announced and no clear indication of the concessions acceptable to the rebels.

### **Other developments**

**US airstrikes hit sites near the Haditha Dam, 240 kilometres northwest of Baghdad, Iraq, on 7 September.** The airstrikes were the first to target the Sunni Anbar province since counter-offensives began in August. The US defence secretary announced that the attacks were launched at the request of Iraqi forces. The air campaigns aim to protect a number of Iraq's strategic assets, including dams. Islamic State (ISIS) fighters seized control of the Fallujah dam in April, flooding many rural areas and displacing thousands. Militants then seized the Mosul dam in August, before being forced out by US strikes and Kurdish armed forces. It is believed a number of local Sunni tribesmen have joined the offensive against the Islamic State within Haditha, a positive indication of regional pro-government support.



**Syrian airstrikes targeted Islamic State strongholds in Raqqa province on 6 September.** The latest strikes targeted a training camp and an ISIS-run bakery in Raqqa city, killing at least 12 civilians and nine militants. Raqqa remains a strategic stronghold for the Islamic State, which took control of a major government airbase in the province in late August and now controls much of the city's vital services and infrastructure. The latest ISIS offensives represent a challenge to the Assad government as the provincial capital is home to some 500,000 Sunni civilians, and airstrikes risk large numbers of non-combatant casualties. Assad has called for Western support in the fight against the Islamic State; however, support has been muted because of the ongoing civil war and human rights abuses by the government. While the United States has approved surveillance flights and intelligence gathering in Syria, any cooperation with Damascus from the international community appears unlikely.

**On 6 September, images emerged on social media of the beheading of a Lebanese soldier held captive by Islamic State.** Abbas Medlej is the second Lebanese soldier to be killed by ISIS following the capture of 19 security officials during a cross-border raid in August. This raid highlights the security challenges faced by Lebanon because of the well-equipped Islamic State rebels in neighbouring Syria. Such attacks have served to inflame sectarian tensions within Lebanon in a spillover from the Syrian crisis, with Shia and Hezbollah in support of Assad and Sunnis largely sympathetic towards rebel groups. Negotiations are underway to secure the release of the remaining captive troops, and the United States has delivered weapons and ammunition to the Lebanese Army.

#### **On the radar**

- **US President Barack Obama to address congress on the Islamic State** on 10 September.
- **Israeli intelligence minister Yuval Steinitz to travel to Washington on 10 September** to lobby delegation officials ahead of the renewed Iranian nuclear talks on 18 September.
- **Increased risk of terrorist activity and separatist unrest on September Revolution Day in Yemen on 26 September.**

## **Polar Regions**

### **Russian ships depart to reopen Arctic naval base on New Siberian Islands**

Six vessels from Russia's northern fleet have departed from a naval base in Severomorsk, heading for the eastern New Siberian Islands. Russian news agency RT has reported that the vessels, which include two amphibious crafts and an anti-submarine ship, will remain permanently at a military base on the islands. Previously abandoned in 1993, the base will undergo reconstruction, and is expected to start functioning later this year. In addition to the naval fleet, the base will be equipped with military personnel, heavy armaments and air support.

The move comes after a recent escalation in rhetoric between Arctic states, with Canadian foreign minister John Baird declaring to Denmark's *Berlingske* newspaper last week that Canada was 'determined to promote and defend the sovereignty of Canada in the Arctic'. The strain on Arctic relations is due in part to Western reactions to Russia's advances on Ukraine, as well as competing national interests towards the region's abundant natural resources, drawing the attention of multiple energy companies to the region.

Russia's actions are set to heighten tensions among Arctic states, with Norway having already appealed to NATO in May of this year to remain watchful over its Arctic member states as well as its Central and Eastern European members. Both Norwegian foreign minister Ine Eriksen Sørreide and Baird have urged the international community to remain vigilant in its approach to Russia and to keep Arctic geopolitics in mind when confronting Russian aggression in Ukraine.

### **Other developments**

**Shell plans to continue its exploration of Alaska's Chukchi Sea in 2015.** Submitting documents to the US government last week, Shell has detailed its intentions to further explore the Arctic. As Shell have yet to decide whether to pursue a drilling campaign in the Arctic due to past safety oversights and operative failures, it appears as though decisions will likely be made ahead of the next round of prospecting, which could take place as early as summer 2015. The US coastguard and the US department of the interior have previously expressed criticisms of Shell's risk management protocol and contractor oversight in the Arctic.

**A joint expedition between Norway and Russia has begun to explore the potentially hazardous presence of a sunken nuclear submarine in the Barents Sea.** Soviet submarine K-159, which sank in 2003 while being towed for scrapping, is currently being analysed by 15 researchers from Norway and Russia in order to ascertain the potential threat posed to the environment from radioactive waste aboard the vessel. Sinking with 800 kilograms of spent uranium fuel, the submarine is feared to be affecting local fish populations around the mouth of the Murmansk Fjord, where the vessel lies. The expedition follows a 2012 report from the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority detailing nuclear waste in the Kara Sea, including 19 ships containing nuclear waste, two nuclear submarines, 14 nuclear reactors, 735 pieces of radioactive machinery and 17,000 containers of radioactive waste.

**Researchers from the University of Alaska Fairbanks have briefed NATO delegates on Arctic security challenges.** A group of 20 elected officials from 14 NATO member states travelled to the university to be briefed on an array of technological security concerns raised by key researchers in the region. The primary topic covered at the conference, which took place on the 4 September, related to the expansion of shipping lanes in the Arctic due to melting ice. Delegates were briefed on security concerns relating to the environmental impact of increased traffic in the region and the coordination challenges it raises.

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