

# Weekly Intelligence Brief

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## Polish Government Advances EU Defense Plan Despite Veto

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On 13 MAR, Poland's Prime Minister (PM), Donald Tusk, announced plans to proceed with the European Union's (EU) defense funding program despite President Karol Nawrocki vetoing the proposed loans. The EU's Security Action For Europe (SAFE) program would provide Poland with 43.7 billion euros in defense loans, further enhancing Poland's defensive capabilities. Poland is set to be one of the largest beneficiaries of the SAFE program due to its military modernization efforts and large-scale defense spending. However,

Nawrocki's party has labeled the program as a German plot to meddle with Polish policy, stating that the program would limit Poland's flexibility on arms purchases and leave future generations with significant debt, allowing the EU to infringe on Poland's sovereignty.

This dispute highlights the broader political conflict within Poland between the current pro-EU government and opposition parties following recent elections. Under Poland's constitution, a presidential veto requires the government to either achieve a parliamentary override or propose revised legislation. This comes as PM Tusk's

administration, which oversees executive governance, has prioritized rebuilding relations with the EU after previous administrations' strained Poland's ties to the organization.

We can assess with high confidence it is likely the dispute over the SAFE program will deepen political polarization between Poland's pro-EU and nationalist parties, furthering societal divisions. We can also assess with high confidence it is likely PM Tusk will continue to cooperate with the EU in order to find alternate legal avenues allowing for Poland to access the SAFE programs' funding.

# Iran Conflict Risks Increasing Instability in Afghanistan

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On 01 MAR, the Taliban foreign ministry spokesperson, Abdul Qahar Balkhi, expressed in a statement on social media that the conflict centered on Iran will negatively impact the entire region as the 'open war' between Afghanistan and Pakistan continues. Iran's actions can potentially weaken Afghanistan's border security, along with putting trade routes at risk, increasing diplomatic strain, and putting agencies on alert for mass migration of refugees into Afghanistan.

Iran and Afghanistan have close diplomatic ties as neighboring

countries. Afghanistan primarily relies on Iran for port access to international trade, particularly through Bandar Abbas, a major hub that supplies roughly 40% of Afghanistan's imports. Bandar Abbas is currently blockaded due to the United States (U.S.) and Israeli naval presence off the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has sent more than 1,300 trucks daily, supplying Afghanistan with fuel, raw resources, and construction materials. Afghanistan heavily relies on Iranian imports for food products and fuel, and is preparing for several import shortages, which may trigger further large-scale economic disruption. The ongoing war with Pakistan, the 3.8 million Afghan refugees in Iran, and the potential

Iranian refugees aiming to flee Iran due to the conflict may further contribute to instability.

We can assess with high confidence that Afghanistan will aim to remain neutral in the conflict in Iran, but will continue maintaining economic relations. We can also assess with moderate confidence that there will be an increase in refugees fleeing Iran going into Afghanistan.



# Europe Increases Cyprus Defenses After Hezbollah Drone Strike

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On 09 MAR, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that an attack on Cyprus is an attack on all of Europe. This comes after Hezbollah struck a British airbase on the southern coast of Cyprus with an Iranian Shahed drone. This attack resulted in minor damage and no injuries; however, it prompted responses from multiple countries across the European Union (EU). So far, there have been two major contributors to the defensive aid of Cyprus. France has sent air defense systems and is deploying its sole

aircraft carrier, eight frigates, and two helicopter carriers. The United Kingdom has deployed its Type-45 air defense destroyer with two Wildcat helicopters equipped with anti-drone missiles.

Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, and Greece have also decided to send support to Cyprus following the attack, adding additional naval presence in the Mediterranean or providing air defense systems on the ground in case there is another attack from Hezbollah.

We can assess with high confidence that the support Cyprus is receiving from the EU will likely deter

Hezbollah from attacking Cyprus going forward. We can also assess with moderate confidence that if Hezbollah continues to attack additional EU nations, it is likely that France and the United Kingdom will respond with more assertive measures.



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