

Week commencing 21 September 2026

COVERAGE

7 – 20 September
2026

AUDIENCE

Executive leadership · Technology, defence and security decision-makers

HANDLING

Internal use — not for onward distribution

IF YOU JUST REMEMBER ONE THING FROM THIS BRIEFING...

NATO caught Russia rehearsing to sever the undersea cables that carry the West's data, in the same fortnight Polish and Baltic skies saw fresh drone incursions.

Britain, Norway and the US tracked Russian submarines simulating an attack on Arctic cables carrying satellite downlink traffic, while Poland reinforced its Ukraine border and Lithuania downed its first explosive-laden drone. Grey-zone activity is diversifying from airspace to seabed. Ask your providers which physical routes carry your critical data.

FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

Geopolitics, defence and security

PRIORITY

10 SEP

NATO allies foil Russian rehearsal to sabotage Arctic subsea cables

Britain, Norway and the US tracked and confronted Russian GUGI submarines simulating an attack on the two subsea cables linking Svalbard to mainland Norway, reported 10 September. The cables carry SvalSat's satellite downlink traffic, the world's largest ground station.

So what: seabed cables and satellite ground stations are now a rehearsed target — map which of your data links transit routes GUGI has surveyed.

PRIORITY

15–17 SEP

Poland reinforces Ukraine border as Lithuania downs its first explosive drone

Poland's defence ministry reinforced checkpoints on its Ukraine border from 15 September after drone strikes landed near crossings. Lithuania shot down a Russian-type drone carrying an explosive device in its own airspace for the first time on 16 September, and Romania scrambled jets amid the same wave.

So what: incursions are shifting from overflight to explosive payloads on NATO soil — confirm eastern-flank sites have drone-detection, not only cyber, protocols.

PRIORITY

8–18 SEP

Kyiv strikes resume as Russia and Ukraine edge toward October talks

Russia relaunched missile and drone strikes on Kyiv on 8 September, hours after a 72-hour pause during US envoys' visits to Moscow and Kyiv. Ukraine's intelligence chief said Kyiv is preparing for renewed trilateral US-Russia-Ukraine talks, expected in the UAE in October, with no date or Russian attendance confirmed.

So what: treat strike pauses as diplomatic courtesy, not ceasefire — plan around a prolonged conflict, not near-term settlement.

WATCH

7 SEP–

Russia and North Korea open first road bridge as troop and munitions flows deepen

Moscow and Pyongyang opened their first road bridge across the Tumen River on 7 September. Seoul estimates North Korea has sent over 16,000 personnel and thousands of containers of munitions to Russia since 2024, with reports Kim may be asked for up to 50,000 more troops.

So what: this is a maturing defence-industrial partnership — screen defence supply chains for North Korea-linked components.

WATCH LIST

Developments to track this fortnight

DEVELOPMENT	REGION	SECTOR AFFECTED	WHAT TO WATCH NEXT
Subsea cable sabotage rehearsal	Arctic / Norway	Technology, security	Whether NATO or cable owners announce new seabed-protection measures.
Eastern-flank drone incursions	Poland, Lithuania, Romania	Defence, security	Whether a further incident triggers an Article 4 consultation.
Trilateral Ukraine talks sought for October	Russia / Ukraine / US	Defence, security	Whether a date and Russian attendance level are confirmed.
North Korea–Russia bridge and troop flows	Russia / North Korea	Defence, supply chain	Whether a Putin–Kim meeting confirms new troop commitments.
EU 21st sanctions countermeasures	EU / Russia	Technology, supply chain	25 October wind-down deadline for pre-existing metals contracts.

This is a watch list, not a task list — track these for consequence, not remediation, and confirm before acting.

REGULATORY AND SECTOR WATCH

What changed, and what is coming

In force now

- EU's 21st sanctions package: bank transaction ban extended 13 August; metals import restrictions wind down by 25 October.
- China's rare-earth and critical-minerals licensing regime remains active; European approval rates reported below 25 per cent.

Approaching

- Trilateral Ukraine-Russia-US talks proposed for October in the UAE; no confirmed date or Russian seniority yet.
- Commerce's draft rule on Chinese remote access to US chip compute remains pending Senate action on RASA.

Standing watch — NATO eastern-flank drone and airspace incidents. Incursions across Poland, the Baltic states, Romania and the Black Sea continue under Eastern Sentry with no sign of reduction. Treat further incidents as expected, not exceptional.

RECOMMENDED

Three things to do before the next edition

- Map which data, cloud or satellite links transit subsea routes near Svalbard or the Baltic that GUGI has surveyed.
- Screen defence and dual-use supply chains for North Korea-linked components given deepening munitions flows.
- Confirm crisis and continuity plans assume a prolonged conflict, not an imminent ceasefire.

OUTLOOK — NEXT FORTNIGHT

We assess it is likely that further NATO eastern-flank drone or airspace incidents occur before the next edition, and a realistic possibility that a trilateral Ukraine-Russia-US meeting is confirmed for October without producing a ceasefire. Renewed Kyiv strikes make a durable ceasefire unlikely soon.

NEXT EDITION

Monday 5 October 2026. Send additions, corrections or sector intelligence to your ClearPath engagement lead.

