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FEATURED Q&A

Is Mexico Safe for Spectators at the World Cup?



Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has sought to reassure spectators traveling to the country for World Cup matches in June and July. Mexico City's Estadio Azteca, pictured, will host some of the games. // File Photo: a_medvedkov via Adobe Stock.

Q There is “no risk” to fans attending FIFA World Cup matches scheduled to be held in Mexico this year, President Claudia Sheinbaum told reporters on Feb. 24, two days after soldiers’ killing of the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) sparked violent clashes in 20 Mexican states. Guadalajara, which on Feb. 22 saw roadblocks and gunfire on public streets, is set to hold four matches during the opening stages of the World Cup in June. How much of a threat does organized crime-related violence pose to World Cup attendees in Mexico? How does Sheinbaum’s government plan to address insecurity ahead of the event? What is at stake for all three countries hosting the 2026 World Cup?

A Arantza Alonso, senior Americas analyst at Verisk Maplecroft: “The CJNG’s demonstration of firepower and coordination was unlike anything seen before following the arrest of a criminal leader. With this violence, the group’s known territorial reach, financial capacity and brazen tactics, it’s clear that they—as well as some of their rival groups—represent a credible threat to World Cup attendees. This is not because of any direct targeting of fans, but more due to the dangerous conditions that criminal groups can rapidly create. However, security landscapes in Mexico vary significantly across regions. This was demonstrated on Feb. 22, with Guadalajara being among the cities most heavily affected by retaliatory violence, while Mexico City and Monterrey—Mexico’s other two World Cup host cities—were largely spared. Government plans to address insecurity ahead of the event include improving coordination between international intelligence agencies

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TODAY’S NEWS

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Human Rights Watch Details Deaths From Haiti Drone Strikes

Drones operated by Haitian security forces and private contractors have killed more than 1,200 people, including at least 60 civilians, in the 11 months through January, Human Rights Watch said in a report.

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Banco do Brasil Launches Pix in Argentina

Banco do Brasil launched a service to allow Brazilians in Argentina to use the Pix electronic payments system.

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Venezuelan Nat’l Assembly Gives Preliminary OK to Mining Reforms

Venezuela’s National Assembly on Monday advanced a mining reform that acting President Delcy Rodríguez proposed after meeting with the U.S. interior secretary.

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Rodríguez // File Photo: Salvadoran Government via Wikimedia Commons [CCO 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

ECONOMIC NEWS

Venezuela's National Assembly Advances Mining Reforms

Venezuela's National Assembly on Monday advanced legislation to reform the country's mining laws, Reuters reported. Acting President Delcy Rodríguez announced last week after meeting with U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum that she was submitting the legislation to lawmakers. Burgum brought with him to Caracas representatives of more than two dozen mining companies, whom Burgum said could bring billions of dollars in investment to Venezuela. The legislation that the National Assembly advanced on Monday would repeal a 1999 mining law and also allows foreign and domestic companies to exploit Venezuelan deposits of gold, diamonds and rare earth elements, Reuters reported, citing a draft of the legislation, which has not yet been released publicly. It would also extend concessions from 20 to 30 years. Under the measure, mineral deposits would remain state property, but disputes in the sector would be resolved through international arbitration, Reuters reported. The measure was advanced despite abstentions from an opposition party that said it was given a draft of it just before the session started and had no time to review it. National Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez rejected that assertion, saying the entire National Assembly was given the draft at the same time. During the debate, lawmaker Orlando Camacho said the measure "can help increase all the legal guarantees that allow us to give confidence to national and international investment," Agence-France Presse reported. The measure is subject to one more debate in the National Assembly before it can become law. Demand for critical minerals is expected to quadruple by 2040 amid demand for electric vehicles and as clean energy initiatives accelerate, according to a report by the International Energy Agency, Bloomberg News reported. In late January, less than a month after U.S. military forces captured Venezuelan President Nicolás

Maduro and his wife during a raid in Caracas, the National Assembly approved a sweeping reform of the country's main oil law, a move that could encourage investment in the sector. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in last week's issue of the Energy Advisor.]

POLITICAL NEWS

Human Rights Watch Details Deaths From Haiti Drone Strikes

Drones flown by Haitian security forces and private military contractors have killed at least 60 people not believed to be tied to any criminal group in the 11-month period beginning last March, international watchdog group Human Rights Watch said in a report released today. Of those civilians killed in drone strikes, 17 were children, Human Rights Watch said in the report. The death toll in Haiti's drone strikes was 1,243 when also accounting for identified combatants. Drone attacks injured 738 other people between March 2025 and the end of January, 49 of which Human Rights Watch said were believed to be civilians. Haiti's transitional government has authorized new operations in recent months against criminal groups that control some 90 percent of Port-au-Prince, Reuters reported. There were 21 recorded incidents of explosive drone attacks around Port-au-Prince in January, Human Rights Watch found. Haiti's top security contractor in its drone operations has been Vectus Global, a private U.S.-based firm led by Blackwater founder Erik Prince, Human Rights Watch said. Haitian police and military officers, with support from Vectus Global, in the past year have increasingly used explosive "kamikaze" drones to attack suspected gang targets located in dense urban areas of Port-au-Prince, Reuters reported. The U.S. State Department has issued a license to Vectus Global allowing the firm to export explosive ordnance to Haiti to support anti-gang operations there, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires to Haiti Henry T. Wooster told the U.S. Senate last month during televised remarks.

NEWS BRIEFS

Cuba to Withdraw Doctors From Guyana

Cuba's government has decided to end its medical brigade program in Guyana after the South American country said it would pay doctors directly instead of sending payments to Havana, Guyana's health minister announced on Monday, the Associated Press reported. Cuba had operated its medical brigade in Guyana since the 1970s; more than 200 Cuban doctors will leave Guyana, the AP reported. Guyana follows Jamaica and Honduras in ending its Cuban medical mission in recent weeks, according to the wire service.

Brazil Opens 14 New Solar Energy Facilities

Brazilian power firms opened 14 large-scale solar energy facilities in February, adding 677 megawatts in electrical generation capacity to the nation's grid, Renewables Now reported, citing data released Monday by ANEEL, Brazil's federal energy regulatory agency. Brazil added 2.8 gigawatts in utility-scale solar all of last year. Renewable energy—also including hydroelectricity and wind energy—now accounts for 85 percent of Brazil's national grid capacity, ANEEL said, Renewables Now reported.

Banking's Future Depends on Ability to Leverage Tech: Banorte CEO

The future of banking depends on individual financial institutions' abilities to leverage technology in order to streamline processes and innovate to provide better services, the CEO of Mexico's Grupo Financiero Banorte told El Financiero in an interview published Monday. Despite Banorte's decision last year to sell its digital bank, Bineo, Ramírez said Banorte still plans to be "number one in digital banking." [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Jan. 1-14 issue of the biweekly Financial Services Advisor.]

BUSINESS NEWS

Banco do Brasil Launches Expansion of Pix in Argentina

Banco do Brasil on Friday launched a service that allows Brazilians who are in Argentina to make payments through the Brazilian central bank's popular Pix instant payment system, Reuters reported. Banco do Brasil and Argentina-based Banco Patagonia, which Banco do Brasil controls, developed the service. It allows any Pix user, including ones who do not have accounts with the Brazilian state-run bank, to use Pix to pay for purchases in Argentina, Reuters reported. "The launch of Pix abroad strengthens Banco do Brasil's international operations and underscores its commitment to innovation in payment methods," said Felipe Prince, Banco do Brasil's vice president for internal controls and risk management, the wire service reported. Expanding the service to Argentina is an early step in providing Brazilians more payment options under Banco do Brasil's international strategy, said Prince. The initiative is also a step in the direction of regional integration, said Oswaldo Parre, the CEO of Banco Patagonia, Reuters reported. Banco do Brasil added that it is considering the expansion of Pix services to other countries in the Americas, Asia and Europe, the wire service reported. Approximately 900 financial institutions support the Pix payment system. The expansion to Argentina allows Brazilian customers to scan a QR code to complete purchases. Merchants in Argentina are paid in pesos, while customers' accounts are debited in Brazilian reais, Reuters reported. Pix surpassed the number of credit card and debit card transactions in Brazil in 2023. Pix has "strong institutional trust while enabling instant settlement," Marina Gil, a senior consultant at Payments and Commerce Market Intelligence, told the biweekly Financial Services Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published Feb. 25. "This improves the consumer experience through fast, seamless payments via QR codes or copy-and-paste keys—a natural fit for Brazil's mobile-first shopping habits," she added.

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and federal, state and local law enforcement, and increasing the presence of security forces in and around host cities. However, the cancellation of the Diving World Cup in the Guadalajara metropolitan area shortly after El Mencho's capture signals that Sheinbaum's efforts to portray the violence as circumstantial rather than a systemic threat have not convinced everybody. For all three host countries, their reputation as places where the law is enforced—and where citizens and visitors can be kept safe—is at stake. Verisk Maplecroft's data shows that venues in Mexico are the most exposed to security risks, that those in the United States face the highest terrorism risk and that the hospitality and service sectors across all three host countries perform poorly when compared to other industries in upholding workers' rights."

A Raúl Benítez Manaut, professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM): "The violent death of the country's most dangerous criminal, 'El Mencho,' who was captured by the Mexican army with intelligence assistance from the United States, sparked a debate about the safety of fans and teams competing in the World Cup. In revenge, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) carried out major violent actions in 22 of Mexico's 32 states. The World Cup will be held in Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara. Four matches will be played in Guadalajara, the criminal stronghold of the CJNG. Still, a week after El Mencho's killing, the country returned to calm. President Sheinbaum's government promised FIFA that security would be guaranteed for tourists and soccer teams from around the world. There were no acts of violence in Mexico City or Monterrey related to El Mencho's killing, and Mexican security forces and police, FIFA security forces, international police agencies such as Interpol and Europol, and the FBI from the United States are all working in coordination. World Cups have been

held in the past in cities with security problems, such as Rio de Janeiro and Johannesburg, and there were no problems involving fans during these tournaments. The Mexican government is working intensively with all

“The Mexican government is working intensively with all police and intelligence services...”

— Raúl Benítez Manaut

police and intelligence services—this will reinforce security in the city of Guadalajara. Overall, recent developments in Mexico have served as an important wake-up call for the Mexican government to find a strategy that can successfully combat criminal groups."

A Vanda Felbab-Brown, senior fellow for foreign policy at the Brookings Institution: "Even though violence over succession within the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) and with its rivals may last for months or years, it is unlikely that Mexican criminal groups would purposefully attack the FIFA World Cup venues in Mexico. In fact, criminal groups in Mexico have long sponsored local soccer events, donating money to build local football fields and hold soccer-related fiestas. Even CJNG, which principally rules through brazen brutality rather than by cultivating political capital with local populations, would think twice about undermining the immense joy and pride with which many Mexicans see the World Cup. The greater risk is that tourists on Mexican streets and highways or at major tourist venues could end up caught in crossfire between CJNG and other criminal groups. That is, however, a daily risk in Mexico, even though it tends to be smaller and more hidden in major tourist venues like Cancún or Oaxaca. Mexican authorities

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have, however, devoted significant resources into building security measures for the World Cup, since any major security incident would carry grave consequences for Mexico's image, tourism and the economy overall. The World Cup in Rio de Janeiro in 2014 and the Olympics there in 2016 provide prime examples of major international sports events proceeding without any large security incidents in a very violent city. Indeed, the 2014 World Cup was meant to highlight internationally the security improvements in the city, as several previously highly violent favelas saw a large decrease in violence under a law enforcement effort known as the Pacification Program. But by 2016, violence in Rio began spiking again as Brazilian government authorities lost interest in the Pacification Program, the creation of community policy units stalled and money for both law enforcement measures and anti-crime social services in the favelas dried up. Still, the events went off without a hitch, even though Rio's violence greatly intensified subsequently."

A Nicolás Mariscal, member of the Advisor board and chairman of Grupo Marhnos in Mexico City: "That the 2026 World Cup will be celebrated in North America is the best proof that there is no serious security threat, including in Mexico. Moreover, the

killing of one of the world's most notorious criminal leaders by Mexico's armed forces illustrates deeper coordination between the U.S. and Mexican security agencies, as well as the growing professionalism of our security institutions. FIFA authorities have consistently declared their trust in Mexico; FIFA's president, Gianni Infantino, recently declared his 'full confidence' in Mexico. Let us remember that Mexico will host 13 World Cup games across three cities, including Guadalajara. Just recently, FIFA officials met with Mexican authorities to review security protocols. Among those who attended was Omar García Harfuch, Mexico's public security secretary. There is currently no plan to cancel or reschedule game matches in any Mexican city. It is also true that some countries have shown concern following the violent events that have happened in Mexico. Nevertheless, what is being done is to augment coordination and implement stricter protocols. What is certainly true is that people from all over the world will have the opportunity to travel and explore three different countries and cultures that are also part of a region that, for all its issues, has grown closer and more competitive over the last three decades."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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