



World Cup 2026 – Rolling Risk Brief

Issue: 01 Date/Time: 22 April 2026 | 09:00 ET Coverage Period: 08–22 April 2026 Classification: Client Use

1. Executive Snapshot

Overall Posture: Elevated. The tournament itself does not begin until 11 June 2026, so there are no match-specific flashpoints in this reporting window; however, the operating environment is being shaped by airport/immigration friction in the U.S., protest activity in major cities, security issues in Mexico, and broader geopolitical spillover affecting travel confidence and cost.

Highest-attention cities (next 14 days): Mexico City, New York / New Jersey, Miami, and Chicago. Mexico City is drawing renewed scrutiny after the April 20 Teotihuacan shooting; New York / New Jersey and Miami remain likely pressure points because of their transport, hospitality, and visibility profiles; Chicago is notable because airport enforcement and protest activity are converging there.

Highest-attention fixtures: None in this period. The tournament schedule published by FIFA begins on 11 June 2026.

Key external factors: ongoing ICE/TSA airport enforcement, “No Kings” protest activity, U.S. security-planning friction linked to the DHS shutdown, the Teotihuacan shooting near Mexico City, and the ongoing Iran conflict, which is pushing up aviation fuel costs and may affect travel sentiment and pricing.

2. Analyst View

The operating environment for this period is assessed as elevated but stable, with current pressures driven more by perception, sentiment, and early-stage movement patterns than by incidents indicative of prolonged escalation.

Three additional factors are increasingly relevant:

Anti-U.S. sentiment and policy sensitivity: The current geopolitical environment, combined with heightened visibility of domestic enforcement measures, is contributing to a more sensitive and, in some cases, polarised perception of the United States as a travel destination. While not directly translating to the threat environment, this dynamic is influencing traveller confidence, behaviour at points of entry, and the likelihood of protest or activist activity in major urban centres, particularly in high-visibility locations.

Cost and economic pressure: The Iran conflict is driving higher aviation fuel costs, increased airfares, and broader economic uncertainty, with evidence of rising ticket prices and pressure on global travel demand. This is likely to impact travel volume, timing decisions, and program cost in the lead-up to the tournament.

Geographic scale of the tournament: The three-country, multi-city structure of the 2026 World Cup amplifies exposure to infrastructure strain, cross-border travel friction, and uneven operating conditions. Unlike single-host tournaments, organizations must manage simultaneous, distributed risk environments, rather than a single peak location.

Overall, a small number of issues - U.S. airport dynamics, protest activity, and perception of security conditions in Mexico - are likely to shape traveller experience and organizational decision-making in the near term.

The priority for organizations should be clarity, consistency, and proportionate response, maintaining focus on preparedness while avoiding overcorrection.



3. What's Changed (Since Last Issue) New developments

U.S. airport friction has become more material. Open-source media reported that TSA shared more than 31,000 traveller records with ICE and that ICE made more than 800 arrests following TSA tips, increasing concern over questioning, detention risk, and traveller confidence at airports.

ICE deployments at airports appear set to continue. U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said ICE agents would remain in airports "as long as needed," reinforcing the likelihood of continued visibility of immigration enforcement in the traveller experience ahead of and potentially during the tournament.

Large-scale protest activity remains relevant to major U.S. cities. Open-source media reported more than 3,200 "No Kings" events across all 50 states on 28 March, with large turnouts in cities including New York, Dallas and Philadelphia, plus isolated clashes in cities such as Los Angeles and Dallas. While outside this exact reporting window, the scale and geographic spread keep protest re-emergence relevant as a planning watchpoint. Organizers of the "No Kings" demonstrations have not yet announced additional events.

Mexico security perception has worsened after a high-visibility tourist-site attack. On 20 April, a gunman killed a Canadian woman and injured 13 others at the Teotihuacan ruins, a major tourist and UNESCO heritage site near Mexico City. The incident prompted renewed scrutiny of safety controls at high-profile tourist locations and broader concerns surrounding security in Mexico ahead of the tournament, in conjunction with the widespread cartel backlash after the killing of CJNG leader El Mencho on February 22. International SOS assesses that the highly unusual incident at Teotihuacan is not reflective of a trend nor burgeoning risk for visitors to Mexico.

U.S. World Cup security planning has been affected by the DHS shutdown. A Homeland Security official told a Senate hearing that although security funds had been released, the prolonged shutdown had affected planning and coordination.

De-escalations / stabilising factors

No tournament-specific incident pattern is evident in this window. The current issues are shaping perception, access, and planning, rather than indicating an event-targeted threat stream tied directly to World Cup activity. This is an inference from the current reporting environment rather than a direct official statement.

Atlantic Hurricane Season begins on June 1. NOAA's National Hurricane Center confirms that there are no tropical cyclones in the Atlantic at this time, and routine outlook issuance resumes on 15 May unless needed sooner.





4. Forward Look (Next 14 Days)

4.1 High-attention fixtures

None in this period. FIFA's published schedule shows the opening match on 11 June 2026, so this brief should remain focused on pre-event conditions, traveller experience, and readiness signals rather than fixture-specific flashpoints.

CONCACAF Champions Cup Matches on April 29 (BMO Stadium in Los Angeles) and **May 5** (Estadio Universitario in Mexico City) will merit monitoring by security teams for points of friction ahead of the tournament proper in June.

4.2 City Pressure Outlook

Mexico City: Elevated attention driven by the Teotihuacan shooting, existing travel-advisory caution on Mexico, and the likelihood that isolated but high-visibility incidents continue to influence traveller and client perception disproportionately.

New York / New Jersey: Remains a likely pressure node because of its role as a major host market, large transport footprint, and exposure to wider U.S. protest and airport-policy dynamics. FIFA's schedule confirms the region will host major matches later in the tournament, making it a natural focal point for early planning and travel demand.

Miami: Likely to remain a high-attention city given its hospitality density, gateway role, and eventual World Cup hosting duties. More broadly, any increase in aviation cost and disruption tied to the Iran conflict will matter for internationally exposed travel markets such as Miami.

Chicago: Not a host city, but relevant as a U.S. aviation and enforcement indicator. Reuters reporting on both airport protests at O'Hare and the TSA/ICE data-sharing story makes Chicago a useful proxy for how U.S. airport friction may affect traveller sentiment more broadly.

4.3 Emerging Watchpoints

Airport enforcement and traveller confidence: The combination of ICE deployments, TSA information-sharing, and resulting protests is likely to remain a key watchpoint for inbound international travellers to the U.S.

Protest resurgence in major urban centres: The scale of the March "No Kings" actions across all 50 states, rising fuel prices and approaching November midterm elections suggest that underlying conditions are conducive to further protest mobilisation in major cities should a galvanizing trigger event take place.

Mexico perception vs reality: Mexico remains under an "exercise increased caution" / "high degree of caution" travel-advisory posture from the U.S. and Canada respectively, and the Teotihuacan shooting is likely to reinforce risk perception even though it was an unusual attack at a major tourist site rather than evidence of tournament-specific targeting. International SOS continues to assess Mexico City to be a MEDIUM risk location.

Travel cost and aviation strain from the Iran conflict: Reuters reported on 8–9 April that aviation executives did not expect quick relief from the jet-fuel supply crunch even with a ceasefire, and on 21 April reported additional fuel-cost impacts for long-haul travel. This matters more for international traveller confidence and cost than for immediate North American disruption, but it is a relevant planning factor.



5. City Spotlight – Mexico City

Current Posture: Elevated. Mexico City remains one of the most important World Cup locations, but current attention is being driven less by tournament-specific dynamics than by perception-sensitive security developments and existing cautionary travel guidance.

Key pressure points:

- The April 20 Teotihuacan shooting has materially sharpened attention on visitor safety and screening at major public attractions near the capital.
- Mexico remains under elevated official travel-advisory language from both the U.S. State Department and the Government of Canada because of crime and kidnapping concerns.
- Canada's dedicated World Cup travel page for Mexico advises travellers to book accommodation early in host cities, reinforcing the expectation of elevated demand and logistics friction closer to the event.
- The February 22 cartel backlash following the killing of CJNG leader El Mencho placed additional international spotlight on Mexican security preparations ahead of the tournament.

Implications: Travel to Mexico City remains viable, but clients should be prepared for higher sensitivity to security developments, more questions from travellers and leadership, and a need for tighter messaging on routing, accommodation, and local movement. This is especially true for organizations with international visitors or high-visibility activity. The judgement here is analytical, based on the convergence of the above reporting and advisory context.

6. Implications for Organizations

Travel: Build in greater flexibility for U.S. airport arrivals and departures, especially for international travellers who may face increased questioning or uncertainty around enforcement presence.

Executive movement: Reassess the visibility, routing and messaging around trips into Mexico City and other high-attention locations, particularly where itineraries include tourism or hospitality components outside tightly controlled environments.

Events / meetings: In major U.S. urban centres, carefully monitor indicators of potential protest re-emergence and allow additional time for access and movement on politically sensitive dates.

Budget / planning: For internationally mobile programs, factor in the possibility of higher aviation costs and schedule volatility linked to the ongoing Iran-related fuel squeeze.

Program management: Keep this period focused on readiness, not reaction. Current developments matter, but most are still better understood as environment-shaping factors rather than direct tournament flashpoints. This is an analytical judgement based on current open-source reporting.

7. Methodology Note

This rolling brief applies the same baseline risk and Fan Tension Index (FTI) methodology used in the World Cup 2026 Risk Outlook, updated here to reflect current developments and their likely implications for organizations operating across host markets.