— BRIEFING / 028 · SEPTEMBER 2026

A GROWTH INDUSTRY

The clearest statement of where kidnapping is headed arrived this summer in aggregate form: five years of data, one direction, and an honest admission that the true number is higher than anything recorded.

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— 01 / THE TREND LINE

THE TREND LINE

Analysis published in July, drawing on Control Risks incident data, puts the five-year picture plainly. Recorded kidnappings worldwide rose roughly 60 percent between 2020 and 2025. The increase holds across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, with Asia-Pacific the lone exception. Mass kidnappings, incidents taking multiple victims at once, grew more than 150 percent over the same window. Analysts underline the structural undercount: a meaningful share of cases are resolved privately by families and employers and never enter any statistic. The recorded line is the floor, not the ceiling.

+60% RECORDED KIDNAPPINGS, 2020 TO 2025

+154% MASS KIDNAPPING INCIDENTS OVER THE PERIOD

1 OF 5 REGIONS BUCKING THE TREND: ASIA-PACIFIC ALONE

— 02 / THE ECONOMIC DRIVER

THE ECONOMIC DRIVER

The first driver identified in the analysis is inequality. Widening gaps concentrate visible wealth against increasingly strained backdrops, and visibility against desperation is the oldest targeting equation in the category. This matters for prevention because it locates the risk in perception rather than net worth: an executive's watch, vehicle, lodging choice, or published role can constitute wealth in the local frame regardless of how the executive reads it. Calibration to the local frame, not the home one, is the first discipline of travel in elevated-risk settings.

— 03 / THE DIVERSIFICATION DRIVER

THE DIVERSIFICATION DRIVER

The second driver is tactical spread. The category label now covers profoundly different incidents. At one end, express abductions measured in hours, engineered around instant payment rails and ATM cycles, common across Latin American metros. At the other, industrialized regional markets, most visibly in parts of West Africa, where kidnapping functions as a standing revenue and financing mechanism with its own labor market. Between them sit targeted, intelligence-led operations against specific families, the type dominating the digital asset caseload. Each typology has different selection logic, different duration, different resolution dynamics, and different survival behaviors. A program that trains and plans for one prepares its people for the wrong incident somewhere.

— 04 / PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

Three follow directly. Travel risk assessment must carry current, country-specific kidnap typologies, because the useful question is never whether kidnapping is elevated but which kind, by whom, against whom, and how it ends. Prevention training for at-risk executives and families remains the highest-leverage spend, since every typology is cheapest to defeat at selection and approach, and trained behavior is what operates at those stages. And response architecture, insurance, retained responders, family decision protocols, communication trees, must exist before travel; the first day of a case is the worst possible time to design any of it.

— 05 / THE READ

THE READ

Five years, one direction, every region but one. The data does not argue for alarm; it argues for treating kidnap preparedness as a standing program element rather than a destination-specific add-on. Growth industries reward early customers of the defense.

— 06 / SOURCES AND METHOD

SOURCES AND METHOD

This briefing draws on July 2026 analysis of Control Risks data published by ASIS Security Management, with regional context from ACLED reporting. We publish aggregates only, narrate no incidents, and offer no resolution guidance in public channels. That work happens elsewhere, deliberately.