Global Operational and Tactical Medicine SIG Newsletter

October 2026

Dear friends, esteemed colleagues and WADEM members,

Unfortunately, our monthly newsletters keep getting longer.

October has remained a particularly challenging month globally for practitioners. Nature has been ruthless again, and warmer oceans mean tropical storms, hurricanes, and typhoons have more energy, turning moderate systems into major Category 3, 4, or 5 storms in a short time.

The WMO warned that for October-November-December, the seasonal average Niño 3.4 sea surface temperature anomaly is predicted to reach about +3.7°C, peaking in December. This is the highest level ever recorded since observations began and is much stronger than the previous record of +2.6°C in November 2015-January 2016. Parts of the tropical Pacific have crossed 30°C (86°F) for the first time on record and very early in the cycle.

Meanwhile, UN agencies have issued a powerful appeal this month for immediate assistance to help communities already impacted by the strongest El Niño on record.

Various organizations estimate that between 3.3 billion and 3.6 billion people live in areas highly vulnerable to climate change. WHO estimates that we could see 250.000 additional

deaths every year in the next two decades due to related factors such as malnutrition, disease and heat.

The consequences of climate change and the lack of intervention can push an additional 130 million people into extreme poverty.

Understanding the global picture is essential to better plan for future events. In operational medicine, the harsh realities of these projections mean public health, public security, and emergency or relief response will have to rely on fewer resources, strained logistics, and longer timelines.

Sweden has released an updated brochure for citizens on population preparedness. The brochure was developed by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and provides citizens with information on population preparedness in the event of a prolonged crisis or war. It covers a wide range of topics, including warning systems, finding shelter, home preparedness, evacuation, and psychological resilience. Releasing such documents to the public is a stark reminder that the current situation is about to change and that, in a prolonged crisis, immediate emergency response will not always be available.

While medical response systems globally are continuing to cope with ever-growing challenges, human-made crises and problems are not far behind.

A recent publication of the West Point CTC recognizes that we are now at the brink of a new era, where AI and synthetic biology could present to various actors and terrorist groups or individuals with potential new tools to create mass murder. Recent statements from tech CEOs say that AI systems could outperform PhD-level virologists on questions about procedures and highly complex laboratory work. While testing AI models about WMDs, researchers from Tech Against Terrorism found that 15 out of 27 came up with information that exceeded what was publicly available, while a third gave “real assistance” to either create or start a plan on a WMD mass casualty attack.

Halfway around the world, in Georgia, the authorities have arrested a man earlier this month accused of attempting to place uranium-238, the most common isotope of uranium, on the market to a foreign buyer.

As CTC Sentinel Journal notes in its September issue, the famous quote from a 1962 book is: "There is a tendency in our planning to confuse the unfamiliar with the improbable."

In Europe, a wave of attacks in schools reminds us of the dangers of the internet, with similarities between individual attacks in Romania, Poland and France having focused the attention of the investigators on the role of social networks and online communities that glorify murders and extreme violence. A 13-year-old student stabbed and injured a teacher and another student in Romania; a 19-year-old stabbed nine people, including five students and a 15-year-old killed a 37-year-old school employee in Poland. With three attacks in only four days, criminologists warn that accumulated personal hardships, feelings of rejection and exposure to extremist content can contribute to the radicalization of young people.

In France, after weeks of civil unrest and strained emergency services, a gun attack in a Parisian suburb created yet another wave of outrage. Three of those injured, including a 12-year-old girl, remain in serious condition.

In maritime operational medicine, 2026 has been a year of major concern. Maritime analysts believe more than 500 attacks hit commercial ships in the Black Sea alone over the past year. In the latest incident, a drone struck a commercial vessel, sinking the cargo ship, killing one, with 3 more sailors missing. The attack happened just outside Romania's territorial waters.

In the Middle East, the designated FTO Ansarallah, commonly referred to as the *Houthis*, have targeted KSA transport infrastructure, with at least 21 people killed in attacks on Saudi airports since the start of October.

With these in mind, we must recognize that contemporary violent extremism has fractured from organized, predictable command structures into decentralized lone actors, distributed cells, and hybrid kinetic-cyber threats. Nevertheless, they coexist.

Tactical and operational medicine must evolve from a supplementary support function into a strategic pillar of preparedness and response, as more attacks occur across diffuse civilian spaces, including transit hubs and decentralized infrastructure.

Best Regards,

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