



Title: US-Israel Conflict with Iran

Date: 20 March 2026

Risk Level: **CRITICAL**

SUMMARY

On 28 February 2026, the US and Israel launched coordinated attacks against Iran. The move comes following an inconclusive result of indirect talks between the US and Iran on Thursday. In response, Iran has targeted Israel in a series of kinetic attacks. Other countries in the region including Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, and Oman have also been targeted in Iranian strikes.

This ongoing US-Israeli conflict with Iran is a massive escalation in longstanding regional tensions, and there are no signs of a resolution in the short to medium term. The maritime security situation is highly volatile, and vessels continue to face a variety of threats. **All vessels are advised to avoid transit in the Arabian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman, and the Northern Arabian Sea. Spillover events are also expected in the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden, and these areas should also be avoided.**

SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

Kinetic Activity

ARC has now recorded 28 incidents involving vessels and kinetic weapons in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Gulf. Vessels have been hit directly by drones and missiles and hit by fallen debris from intercepted weapons, resulting in casualties and damage. These incidents have largely been reported around the Strait of Hormuz and the eastern Arabian Gulf; however, vessels have also been affected further west in the Arabian Gulf and further east in the Gulf of Oman. The IRGC has openly claimed responsibility for several attacks against vessels in the region due to alleged links to the US and Israel. Not all the vessels targeted by Iran have had explicit links to either country, and therefore all vessels are vulnerable to attack regardless of affiliation. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has also claimed responsibility for several attacks that are not confirmed to have taken place. These false claims are likely to create confusion, reiterate Iran's threat to shipping, and remind the industry of the ongoing blockade in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has ramped up its efforts to target logistic and energy infrastructure in the region in the last week, and these facilities will remain key targets throughout this conflict. Though they fall outside the epicentre of the conflict, Oman's ports of Salalah and Duqm are also likely to be targeted in future strikes due to their strategic significance. Ports in the UAE are particularly vulnerable, as the country's port infrastructure has been targeted more than any others in the region.

The following port-related developments have been reported since our last advisory:

- On 18 March 2026, Iranian media reported that citizens and residents in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar are warned to evacuate and stay away from key oil and gas facilities as they are considered "legitimate targets". The statement mentioned the following facilities:
 - Samref Refinery in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia – this refinery was attacked shortly after Iranian authorities released this statement, but minimal damage was reported and operations continued.
 - Al Hosn Gas Field in the UAE
 - Jubail Petrochemical Complex in Jubail, Saudi Arabia



- Mesaieed Petrochemical Complex and Mesaieed Holding Company in Qatar
- Ras Laffan Refinery in Qatar
- Oman's Port of Salalah resumed operations on 16 March 2026 following a brief suspension of operations. The port suspended operations after several oil tanks were damaged in drone strikes.
- Shuaiba Port in Kuwait has temporarily suspended operations
- Qatar's Al Ruwais port is currently only accepting small vessels in port
- Qatar's Ras Laffan port remains operational following missile strikes on 18 March 2026.
- Operations at Qatar's Al Shaheen and Halul Island terminals remain suspended until further notice

Recommendation: *Kinetic activity is expected to continue in the region in the short to medium term. The threat of incidents involving kinetic weapons – including direct hits and collateral damage – is high in the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, both at ports and in territorial waters. Vessels that are drifting or at anchor are particularly vulnerable in the region. The threat is particularly high in the waters of countries that host US military bases, including the UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar. This applies to all vessels regardless of affiliation. Vessels are advised to continue monitoring this rapidly evolving situation.*

The Strait of Hormuz

Iran's IRGC continues to enforce its blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, having directly targeted a vessel in the waterway on 18 March 2026. There have now been six incidents involving vessels reported in the Strait, with one attack resulting in the death of all crew members on board. The IRGC has still not issued a formal and legal declaration that the Strait is closed, but on 12 March 2026 a statement made on behalf of Iran's supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, affirmed that Iran would continue its blockade of the Strait in retaliation for the attacks by the US and Israel. Given the number of attacks that have occurred in the Strait, Iran's warnings should be taken seriously as an indication that the threat level is extreme.

Sea Mines: On 11 March 2026, major media outlets reported that Iran intends to deploy naval mines in the Strait of Hormuz. This development further increases the threat level in the Strait, as naval mines will inevitably cause substantial damage to vessels and increase the potential for casualties. It is currently unclear whether Iran has already planted mines in the Strait, but the threat should be treated as credible. There is a realistic possibility that Iran will choose to use sea mines as part of their strategy in this conflict.

Vessel Congestion: AIS data continues to show that vessel traffic through the Strait of Hormuz is still very low, with no more than 19 vessels transiting through over the last week. As transit through the Strait has been deemed unsafe, hundreds of vessels continue to be stranded in the Arabian Gulf and in the Gulf of Oman. This has caused congestion near ports and anchorages in the area, particularly near the entrances to the Strait. There continues to be a risk of collisions due to the congestion.

Recommendation: *It is recommended that vessels do not attempt to transit through the Strait of Hormuz as the risk of attack is very high. This applies to all vessels, but particularly vessels affiliated with the US and/or Israel or carrying cargo from either of these countries. Due to the risk of collision brought on by vessel crowding, vessels that are currently located on either side of the Strait are advised to exercise caution whilst navigating in the area.*

Electronic Interference (No Update)

Vessels continue to experience problems with electronic navigation equipment due to electronic interference in the Arabian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Gulf of Oman. More than 600 reports of interference are reported each day, and the issue has expanded across the region to affect vessels across the Arabian Gulf and into the Northern Arabian Sea. The issue is expected to worsen in the region as the conflict continues.



Electronic interference has been a long-standing problem in the region as a result of elevated tensions, but it has worsened due to this latest escalation. Merchant vessels are not usually the direct target of electronic interference but are typically indirectly affected by efforts to compromise military equipment.

Challenges with navigational equipment pose a serious threat to vessels, elevating the risk of unintended diversions and collisions. This is of particular concern near ports in the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, where congestion is an ongoing problem. Electronic interference is likely to worsen in the Red Sea as well, given the Houthis' intention to resume attacks against vessels.

Recommendation: *Vessels in the Arabian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman, and the Red Sea are advised to monitor all electronic navigational aids for interference. Non-electronic methods of position fixing should be used to confirm positioning, and extra watches are advised*

Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea (No Update)

In response to the attacks against Iran, the Houthis in Yemen have announced that they will immediately resume attacks targeting maritime traffic in the Red Sea. Since the announcement the Red Sea is still quiet, with no reports of any kinetic activity in the area. However, the threat level is still considered high in the region.

The Houthis have not specified a target profile for attacks as they have in previous campaigns against shipping, but it is highly likely that vessels with US and Israeli links will be targeted. Still, the threat of attack applies to all vessels in the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb, and the Gulf of Aden given the Houthis' track record of attacking vessels based on incorrect or outdated information.

Recommendation: *Transits through the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden should be avoided. This applies to all vessels, but particularly vessels affiliated with the US and/or Israel or carrying cargo from either of these countries.*

INCIDENTS

The following incidents were reported in the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman since our last report:

- **16 March 2026. Kinetic Attack. 23nm E of Fujairah, UAE.** A tanker was reportedly hit by falling debris from an intercepted weapon whilst at anchor. The vessel sustained minor structural damage, but the crew was not harmed.
- **18 March 2026. Kinetic Attack. 5nm N of Khasab, Oman.** A containership was hit by an unconfirmed projectile object whilst in the Strait of Hormuz. The impact caused a small fire. The vessel had previously been hit in an attack whilst transiting the Strait of Hormuz on 4 March 2026.
- **18 March 2026. Kinetic Attack. 11nm E of Khor Fakkan, UAE.** A vessel was hit by an unconfirmed projectile object. The impact caused a fire on board. A vessel nearby reportedly rescued 15 crew members who abandoned the vessel in the anchorage area. All crew except for the Master have been accounted for.
- **19 March 2025. Kinetic Attack. 4nm E of Ras Laffan, Qatar.** A vessel was hit by fallen debris from an intercepted vessel. The incident caused damage to the bridge window. The crew were reported safe.

The guidance and advice in reports issued by Africa Risk Compliance Limited are based on information received from sources at the time of publication. Africa Risk Compliance Limited shall not be held liable for any damages, costs or injuries that arise out of the provision of reports, and assumes no liability for the accuracy of the information provided.

Requests for insights and reports can be made at intelligence@arcafrica.com.



Africa Risk Compliance Limited

+44 (0) 203 151 1700

info@arcafrica.com

London | Lomé | Cotonou | Lagos | Port Harcourt