

2026 Strait of Hormuz crisis

The Strait of Hormuz, a major maritime choke point for global energy trade, has experienced ongoing geopolitical and economic disruption since 28 February 2026, following joint military strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran, which included the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei. In response, Iran launched retaliatory missile and drone attacks on US military bases, Israeli territory, and Gulf states, while its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) issued warnings prohibiting vessel passage through the strait, leading to an effective halt in shipping traffic. US President Donald Trump announced his intent to seize control of the Strait of Hormuz on 9 March and later warned Iran to not lay mines in the body of water. On 19 March 2026, the United States Armed Forces began a military campaign to open the strait.

As of 12 March 2026, Iran has made 21 confirmed attacks on merchant ships. The warnings and subsequent attacks on vessels caused a sharp decline in maritime transit, with tanker traffic dropping first by approximately 70% and over 150 ships anchoring outside the strait to avoid risks.^{[2][3]} Soon afterwards traffic dropped to about zero. This disruption affected about 20% of the world's daily oil supply and significant volumes of liquefied natural gas (LNG), prompting major shipping firms to suspend operations in the area.^{[4][5]} On 27 March, the IRGC announced that the strait is closed to any vessel going "to and from" the ports of the US, Israel, and their allies.^[6]

Amid fears of prolonged supply shortages, oil prices surged faster than during any other conflict in recent history;^[7] Brent crude oil prices surpassed US\$100 per barrel on 8 March 2026 for the first time in four years, rising to US\$126 per barrel at its peak.^{[3][8][9][10]} The closure of the strait has been described as the largest disruption to the energy supply since the 1970s energy crisis,^[11] as well as the largest in the history of the global oil market.^[12] Other commodity markets to suffer supply disruption and price increases from the crisis include aluminum,^[13] fertilizer,^[14] and helium.^{[15][16]}

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Part of the 2026 Iran war and American expansionism under Donald Trump



Satellite image of the Strait

Date	28 February 2026 – present (1 month, 1 week and 3 days)
Location	<u>Strait of Hormuz</u> , <u>Persian Gulf</u> and <u>Gulf of Oman</u>
Cause	<u>2026 Iran war</u>
Participants	<u>Iran</u> , <u>United States</u> , <u>Israel</u> , shipping companies
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global surge of the price of <u>oil</u> and <u>gas</u> <u>2026 Strait of Hormuz campaign</u>

Casualties

1 tug sunk
 At least 16 merchant ships damaged, of which 7 abandoned^[1]
 12 seafarers killed or missing
 1 port worker killed and 2 wounded in Bahrain

Iran's closure of the strait of Hormuz constitutes a violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea by denying transit in a strait used for international navigation.

Background

The strait is 21 miles wide (34 km) at its narrowest point, forming a seaway passage between Iran and Oman. Its two unidirectional sea lanes facilitate the transit of around 20 million barrels of oil per day, representing roughly 20% of global seaborne oil trade, primarily from producers like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, and Qatar.^{[2][18]} In 2024, an estimated 84% of crude oil and condensate shipments through the strait were destined for Asian markets,^[4] with China receiving a third of its oil via the strait, and had about a billion barrels in oil reserve (a few months of supply).^[19] Europe gets 12% to 14% of its LNG from Qatar, through the strait.^[20]

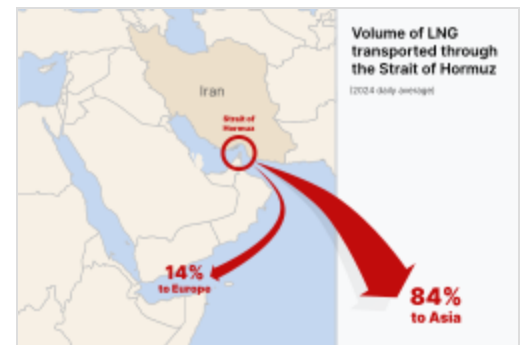


Diagram showing 2024 daily average of LNG transported through the strait^[17]

The Persian Gulf is also a major hub for global fertilizer production and exports. In the 2020s the region has accounted for roughly 30% – 35% of global urea exports and around 20% – 30% of ammonia exports. Overall, up to 30% of internationally traded fertilizers normally transit the Strait of Hormuz.^[21]

Tensions between Iran and the United States resulted in the 1988 Operation Praying Mantis, included some European countries in the 2011–2012 Strait of Hormuz dispute, and again in 2019.^[22]

Tensions between Iran, the United States, and Israel escalated in the lead-up to 2026, stemming from failed nuclear negotiations in Geneva and a prior 12-day air conflict in 2025.^[23] Iran had signaled potential disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz in response to threats, including a temporary partial closure earlier in the month as a warning.^[23] From 15 to 20 February, Iran increased its oil export to three times its normal rate and reduced oil storage to reduce risk of disruptions. Saudi Arabia also attempted similar moves.^[24] In the days before the strikes, war-risk ship insurance premiums for the strait increased from 0.125% to between 0.2% and 0.4% of the ship insurance value per transit. For very large oil tankers, this is an increase of a quarter of a million dollars.^{[25][26]}

Escalation

On 28 February 2026, the United States and Israel initiated coordinated airstrikes on Iran under Operation Epic Fury, targeting military facilities, nuclear sites, and leadership, resulting in the death of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.^{[9][26]} Iran responded with missile barrages on Israeli cities and US bases in the Gulf, including in the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain, causing casualties and infrastructure damage.^{[27][28]} The conflict expanded to Lebanon, where Iran-backed Hezbollah launched rockets into Israel, prompting Israeli counterstrikes.^[29] On 9 March, Iran declared that they would bring more security passage to the countries that expels US and Israel ambassadors.^[30] By 9 March, shipping insurance rates for the Strait were reported to have increased by four to six times over the previous week, and the U.S. government began to offer help to insurers under the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act,^[31] while continuing to warn commercial shipping against the area.^[32] The same day, Trump expressed his intent to seize control of the strait from Iran to keep it open for commercial activity.^[33]

Closure of the strait

List of ships attacked by Iran

List of ships attacked by Iran

#	Date	Name	Flag	Type	Result	Sources
1	1 March 2026	MT <i>Skylight</i>	 Palau	Oil tanker	Abandoned; 2 crew killed, including captain	[34][35][36]
2	1 March 2026	MKD <i>VYOM</i>	 Marshall Islands	Oil tanker	Abandoned; 1 crew killed	[37][38]
–	1 March 2026	<i>Sea La Donna</i> ^[a]	 Liberia	Oil/chemical tanker	Unknown	[39]
3	1 March 2026	MT <i>Hercules Star</i>	 Gibraltar	Oil tanker	Minor damage	[40]
4	1 March 2026	<i>Ocean Electra</i>	 Liberia	Tanker	Minor damage	[41]
5	1–2 March 2026	LCT <i>Ayeh</i>	 United Arab Emirates	Oil tanker	Damaged	[42][43]
6	2 March 2026	<i>Stena Imperative</i>	 United States	Products tanker	Damaged	[44]
7	2 March 2026	<i>Athe Nova</i>	 Honduras	Bitumen tanker	Damaged	[45]
8	2 March 2026	<i>Gold Oak</i>	 Panama	Bulk carrier	Minor damage	[46][47]
9	3 March 2026	<i>Pelagia</i>	 Malta	Bulk carrier	Unharmed	[48]
10	3 March 2026	<i>Libra Trader</i>	 Marshall Islands	Crude oil tanker	Minor damage	[46][47]
11	4 March 2026	MSC <i>Grace</i>	 Liberia	Container ship	Unharmed	[46]
12	4 March 2026	<i>Safeen Prestige</i>	 Malta	Container ship	Abandoned	[49]
13	4 March 2026	<i>Sonangol Namibe</i>	 Bahamas	Oil tanker	Damaged	[50]
14	6 March 2026	<i>Mussafah 2</i>	 United Arab Emirates	Tugboat	Sank; 4 crew dead	[51][52][53]
–	7 March 2026	<i>Prima</i> ^[b]	 Malta	Oil/chemical tanker	Unknown	[54]
–	7 March 2026	<i>Louis P</i> ^[b]	 Marshall Islands	Oil tanker	Unknown	[55]
15	10 March 2026	Unknown	N/A	Bulk carrier	Unharmed	[56]
16	11 March 2026	MV <i>Mayuree Naree</i>	 Thailand	Bulk carrier	Aground; 3 crew missing	[57][58]
17	11 March 2026	<i>One Majesty</i>	 Japan	Container ship	Minor damage	[57]

#	Date	Name	Flag	Type	Result	Sources
18	11 March 2026	<i>Star Gwyneth</i>	 Marshall Islands	Bulk carrier	Damaged	[59]
–	11 March 2026	<i>Express Rome</i> ^[b]	 Liberia	Container ship	Unknown	[60]
19	11 March 2026	<i>Safesea Vishnu</i>	 Marshall Islands	Oil tanker	Set ablaze; abandoned; 1 crew killed	[61][62]
20	11 March 2026	<i>Zefyros</i>	 Malta	Oil tanker	Set ablaze; abandoned	[61]
21	12 March 2026	<i>Source Blessing</i>	 Liberia	Container ship	Minor damage	[63]
22	17 March 2026	<i>Gas Al Ahmadiyah</i>	 Kuwait	Tanker	Minor damage	[64]
23	18 March 2026	<i>Parimal</i>	 Palau	Chemical tanker	Abandoned; captain missing	[65][66]
24	19 March 2026	<i>Halul 69</i>	 Qatar	Offshore vessel	Minor damage	[66]
25	21 March 2026	Unknown	N/A	Bulk carrier	Unknown	[67]
26	30 March 2026	<i>Express Rome</i>	 Liberia	Container ship	Unharmed	[68]
27	31 March 2026	<i>Al Salmi</i>	 Kuwait	Oil tanker	Damaged	[69]
28	1 April 2026	<i>Aqua 1</i>	 Panama	Oil tanker	Damaged	[70]
–	4 April 2026	<i>MSC Ishyka</i> ^[b]	 Liberia	Container ship	Unknown	[71][72]

Footnotes:

- a. Attack unverified
- b. Claimed by Iran/IRGC

Tools for closure

Iran uses 4 methods of restricting traffic in the Strait. Attacks from boats, missiles and drones are the physical way of keeping ships away.^[73] Iran has laid mines as a hidden threat which could be anywhere.^{[74][75]} Satellite spoofing and GNSS jamming makes navigation harder.^[25] These 3 methods are easy to use and difficult to oppose, and drastically increase insurance cost,^[76] preventing most shipowners from taking the risk of sailing through for a long time.^[73]

Timeline

Within hours of the strikes, the IRGC transmitted warnings via VHF radio to vessels in the strait, stating that no ships would be permitted to pass.^{[4][3][77]} Although the closure is not legally binding as Iran did not formally declare a blockade, military and industry sources say that safety cannot be guaranteed, and several ships stayed in port or turned back.^[78] The threats led to a partial closure, with ship-tracking data first showing a 70% reduction in traffic.^[2]

On 1 March, the oil tanker *Skylight* was struck by a projectile north of Khasab, Oman, killing two Indian crew members and injuring three others. The rest of its 20 crew evacuated. It was sanctioned by the US Department of Treasury for links to the Iranian shadow fleet. The *MKD VYOM* was struck by a drone boat, sparking a fire and an explosion in its engine room. An Indian sailor was killed, and its 21 crew evacuated on the Panama-flagged MV *SAND*.^[37] Another Indian was critically wounded on the *LCT Ayeh*.^{[34][35]}

On 2 March 2026, a senior official in the IRGC officially confirmed that the strait was closed, subsequently threatening any ship that passed through it.^[79] The US-flagged *Stena Imperative* was struck twice at the port of Bahrain, causing a fire.^[44] A port worker was killed and two others were hurt in the attack, although the ship's crew were unharmed.^[80] The *Athe Nova*, which has links to Iran, was struck by two drones after attempting to illegally cross the Strait of Hormuz, according to the IRGC-linked Tasnim News Agency.^[45]

Just after midnight on 2 March, no tankers in the strait broadcast automatic identification system signals, indicating low or no traffic,^[76] however, with unreliable data and satellite navigation device basis.^{[25][81]} Protection and indemnity insurance is critical for shipping. Its war risk was removed for 5 March, making the economic risk too high for ship owners to use the strait. The strait was declared a high-risk zone, yielding extra pay and the right of refusal for the crew. The strait remained technically open, but effectively closed.^[76]

On 4 March, the IRGC claimed that they had achieved complete control of the strait.^[82] By then, at least eight vessels had been damaged. A Malta-flagged ship, *Safeen Prestige*, was struck, forcing its crew to evacuate. Meanwhile, the *Pola*, which had earlier turned its AIS transponder off, managed to pass through the strait and deliver its cargo to the UAE, despite the blockade.^[47] In the late night, a large explosion caused by a sea drone^[83] struck the oil tanker *Sonangol Namibe*, which was anchored near Mubarak Al Kabeer Port in Kuwait more than 800 kilometres (500 mi) from the Strait, representing a significant expansion of the conflict. The attack caused an oil spill that posed an environmental risk. A small vessel was observed leaving the scene following the attack.^{[50][84]} The IRGC said that it hit a US oil tanker.^[85] On 6 March, a tugboat dispatched to assist the *Safeen Prestige* was struck by two missiles and later sank, leaving at least three crew members missing.^{[51][52]} On 7 March, the IRGC claimed that it hit the oil tanker *Prima* with a drone in the Persian Gulf,^[54] and a US oil tanker, the *Louis P*, with a drone in the Strait of Hormuz.^[55]

On 10 March, a bulk carrier reported a nearby splash followed by an explosion 36 nautical miles (67 km; 41 mi) off Abu Dhabi, in the first reported maritime incident in days.^[86] Also that day, US military intelligence sources reported that Iran had begun planting naval mines in the Strait of Hormuz. Following the reports, US president Donald Trump demanded that Iran should immediately remove any mines it had planted, and the US military said it destroyed 16 Iranian minelayers.^{[74][87]} A large wave of attacks on ships was carried out on 11 March, with at least three vessels sustaining damage.^[57] Twenty crew members of the Thailand-flagged *Mayuree Naree* were rescued by the Royal Navy of Oman after the vessel caught fire, while three others were missing.^[88] An unverified attack was also claimed by the IRGC on the *Express Rome*.^[60] Later that day, two oil tankers were attacked by an Iranian drone boat off the Port of Basra, Iraq, setting them on fire and killing at least one crew member. The State Company for Iraqi Ports rescued 38 crew members aboard both vessels.^[89]

By 12 March, the UKMTO had received reports of 16 attacks on shipping and four 'suspicious incidents' in the Persian Gulf since the start of hostilities.^[90] On 17 March, Kuwait-flagged liquified petroleum tanker *Gas Al Ahmadiyah* was hit by a projectile while anchored east of Fujairah, causing minor damage.^[64] The following day, Palau-flagged chemical tanker *Parimal* was struck east of Khor Fakkan, sparking a fire.^{[91][65]} Fifteen of its crew were evacuated onto a Cook Islands-flagged tanker, although the captain was reported missing. On 19

March, Qatar-flagged offshore vessel *Halul 69* was hit by debris off Ras Laffan Industrial City, damaging the bridge window.^[66] On 21 March, a projectile exploded in the vicinity of an unidentified bulk carrier 15 nautical miles north of Sharjah, although no injuries were reported.^[67]

On 26 March, Israeli defense minister Israel Katz said that Iranian navy commander Alireza Tangsiri was killed in an airstrike, accusing him of being directly responsible for the Strait of Hormuz closure.^[92]

On 27 March, *Mayuree Naree* went aground on Qeshm Island.^[93] The IRGC Navy also turned away three container ships from passing through the strait. The IRGC announced that movement through the strait for any vessel going "to and from" the ports of the US, Israel, and their allies is prohibited.^[6] On 30 March, the Liberia-flagged container ship *Express Rome* reported that two projectiles splashed in the water nearby the ship within one hour, 22 nautical miles northeast of Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia. No injuries or damage were reported.^{[68][94]} Early on 31 March, Kuwaiti Very Large Crude Carrier *Al Salmi* was struck by an Iranian drone while anchored at the Port of Dubai, causing a fire. The vessel was at full capacity at the time, and the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation warned of an oil spill.^{[69][95]} The fire was later contained, and no oil leak was reported.^[96]

On 1 April, QatarEnergy owned oil tanker *Aqua 1* was attacked by two projectiles north of Doha, causing a fire that was extinguished.^[70] The IRGC claimed that the tanker was Israeli.^[97] On 4 April, the IRGC claimed that it attacked the *MSC Ishyka* with a drone in the Strait of Hormuz, claiming it was linked to Israel. The attack was not verified.^[72]

Exceptions to the blockade

On 4 March, reports emerged that Iran would allow only Chinese vessels to pass through the strait, citing China's supportive stance towards Iran since the conflict intensified. China is the largest buyer of Iranian oil, and had stressed the importance of protecting global shipping routes.^{[98][99]} Subsequently, on 5 March, the bulk carrier *Iron Maiden*, operated by Cetus Maritime Shanghai Ltd., transited the strait while signalling "CHINA OWNER". Earlier, the LPG tanker *Bogazici* had broadcast that it was a Muslim-owned and Turkish-operated vessel, and successfully passed through.^[100] On 7 March, another bulk carrier, the Liberia-flagged *Sino Ocean*, broadcast its Chinese-owned-and-operated status to transit the strait after picking up its cargo from the UAE's Mina Saqr port.^[101]

On 5 March, the IRGC announced that Iran would keep the Strait of Hormuz closed only to ships from the US, Israel and their Western allies. This was confirmed again on 8 March.^{[102][103]} On 13 March, Turkish transport minister Abdulkadir Uraloğlu said that Iran approved the passage of a Turkish ship through the strait.^[104] It was also reported that two Indian-flagged gas carriers and a Saudi oil tanker with 1 million barrels for India^[105] were allowed to pass, as were several other ships.^{[106][107]}

Between 14 and 24 March 5 Indian-flagged LPG carriers were evacuated from the Strait of Hormuz in three different occasions. They were escorted by Indian Navy warships through the Gulf of Oman after they crossed Hormuz under Operation Sankalp.^{[108][109][110]}

On 26 March, the Foreign Minister of Iran, Abbas Araghchi, announced that ships owned by five nations, including China, Russia, India, Iraq and Pakistan, would be allowed to transit the Strait of Hormuz.^[111] In addition, Malaysian and Thailand vessels were granted access through the strait after successful talks with the President of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian and Iran's ambassador to Thailand respectively.^[112] Iran also agreed to a

request by the UN to allow humanitarian and fertilizer shipments through the strait on 27 March, to address the disruption to the fertilizer supply during the spring planting season.^[113] On 2 April, Iran said it will allow Philippine-flagged vessels and Filipino seafarers to cross the strait following talks.^{[114][115]}

As of 7 April, many Asian countries made deals with Iran on passing their ships through the Strait.^[116]

Bypassing and escorting

The Iranian area of the strait is theoretically avoidable through the territorial waters of Oman and the UAE on the south. In particular, Oman's deep-water ports of Duqm, Salalah and Sohar in the Arabian Sea outside the strait allow tankers to bypass the choke point.^[117] However, in March 2026 several drones struck Duqm and Salalah, with at least one fuel storage tank in Duqm damaged.^[117] Sohar, in turn, fell within an insurer's war risk area, potentially increasing charter and insurance costs for ships.^[117] The Joint War Committee of the London insurance market included waters around Oman into its list of high-risk maritime areas.^[117]

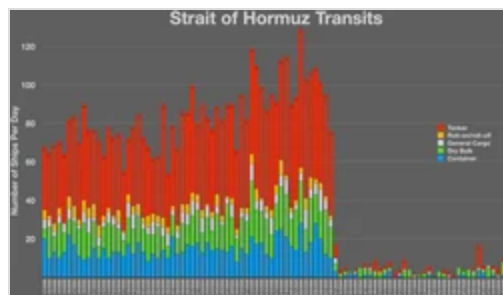
India and Pakistan sent destroyers to escort tankers in the Gulf of Oman, although not in the Strait of Hormuz.^[118] In the short term, it is possible to escort 3–4 commercial ships a day with 7–8 destroyers providing air cover, depending on the risk from Iranian midget submarines,^[119] however, doing so sustainably for months requires more resources.^[120] As of 10 March, Saudi Arabia increasingly diverted oil to the Red Sea port of Yanbu via the East–West Crude Oil Pipeline, which runs from the eastern oil fields, while the UAE diverted oil via the Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline to the port of Fujairah on the Arabian Sea.^{[121][122]} Iraq has an alternative route in the form of the Kirkuk–Ceyhan Oil Pipeline, going to the Mediterranean coast through Turkey.^[123] The capacity of these pipelines is unable to match the amount of oil shipped through the strait, a combined 9 million barrels per day compared to 20 million,^{[124][123]} and the Red Sea route is vulnerable to potential attacks by the Houthis.^[121]

The Indian Navy is executing Operation Urja Suraksha as of 25 March under which over five frontline warships, including destroyers and frigates, were deployed to the region to escort over 20 Indian flagged cargo ships that are on the west of Hormuz.^{[125][126]}

Impacts

Passage through the Strait of Hormuz

Late on 28 February, outgoing traffic through the Strait of Hormuz was heavy, while incoming traffic was light.^[128] At least three tankers were struck near the strait, including one off Oman that was set ablaze.^{[8][129]} At least 17 oil tankers continued travelling through the strait.^[130] On 1 and 2 March, no ships appeared in the strait.^[76] Major container shipping companies, including Maersk, CMA CGM, and Hapag-Lloyd, suspended transits through the strait and related routes such as the Red Sea.^{[131][132]} Houthi-controlled Yemen announced on 28 February that it would resume attacks on



Strait of Hormuz Transits^[127]

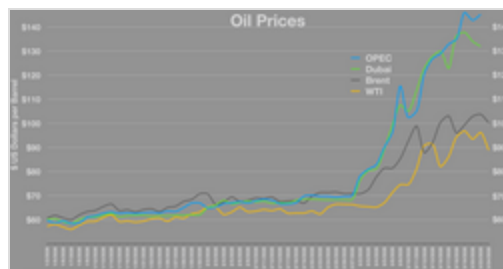
Israel and commercial ships in the Red Sea,^[133] forcing Suez Canal traffic to be rerouted around Africa's Cape of Good Hope. This added weeks to transit times and increased shipping costs. The crisis disrupted global energy supplies and stranded tankers in the Persian Gulf.^[134]

Cruise ships reduced activity in the Persian Gulf and stopped using the strait,^[135] stranding 15,000 passengers on at least six major cruise ships: Saudi-based cruise line Aroya Cruises' eponymous *Aroya*; two ships owned by Celestyal Cruises, *Celestyal Discovery* and *Celestyal Journey*; *MSC Euribia* of MSC Cruises; and two TUI Cruises ships, *Mein Schiff 4* and *Mein Schiff 5*.^[136] On 15 March, an Iranian commander said that Iran would continue to use the Strait of Hormuz as a pressure point.^[137] Several ships have passed the strait during the conflict, mostly petroleum ships bound for China and India.^[107] On 16 March, a Pakistani oil tanker crossed the Strait of Hormuz with Iranian permission.^[138] Iran set up its own shipping channel, north of Larak Island rather than the main channel south of the island. One ship paid \$2 million to use Iran's channel.^[139] Unaffected by the war, 20 Iranian vessels per day used the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.^[140] On 26 March, Malaysia said that Iran allowed its ships to pass through the strait.^[141] According to Lloyd's List, payments were being assessed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Chinese yuan.^[142]

On 3 April, a French ship crossed the Strait of Hurmuz.^[143]

Global economy

The restriction of shipments by more than 90% (around 10 million barrels per day of oil production) raised energy and agricultural input costs worldwide.^[145] Roughly 20% of the world's oil and natural gas normally passes through the strait, and the disruptions caused Brent crude prices to jump 10–13% in early trading, with analysts warning they could reach \$100 per barrel or higher if disruptions persist.^{[146][8][147]} The spike in prices is especially problematic in Asia, where major importers like China and India could face supply shortages and price volatility.^[148] Natural gas prices in Europe also surged, rising from €30/MWh the past week, to €46/MWh on Monday, 2 March,^[20] peaking above €60/MWh on Tuesday, 3 March (nearly double from previous week),^[149] before decreasing again to €48/MWh on Wednesday, 4 March.^{[150][151]} The shipping disruption contributed to volatility in United Kingdom energy markets, with analysts warning that wholesale gas price increases could raise household energy bills and expose the country's reliance on global fuel markets.^[152]



Oil prices

- OPEC Reference Basket
- Dubai Crude
- Brent Crude
- West Texas Intermediate

The crisis has been described as the largest disruption to the energy supply since the 1970s oil crises^[11] and the largest in the history of the global oil market.^[12] Analysts from institutions like Barclays and Goldman Sachs highlighted risks of sustained high oil prices if the strait is restricted over a longer period.^{[26][9]} The disruptions also raised concerns over inflation and potential economic downturns in oil-importing nations.^[153]

OPEC+ pledged to increase oil output by 206,000 barrels per day to mitigate shortages.^[8] Due to rising tensions in the Middle East, Japanese refiners have asked the government to release some of their stockpiled oil. The refiners obtain about 95% of their crude oil from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. About 70% of this Middle Eastern oil is delivered to Japan by ships that pass through the Strait of Hormuz.^[154]

On 4 March, Pakistan, a country reliant on imported oil that was looking for alternative shipment routes due to the closure, officially requested that Saudi Arabia reroute oil supplies through port of Yanbu on the Red Sea, with Saudi Arabia providing assurances and arranging at least one crude shipment to bypass the closed strait. Saudi authorities also diverted some of their own crude exports via Yanbu to reduce the impact.^[155]

On 3 March, Iraq started shutting down operations at the Rumaila oil field due to a lack of storage space, as tankers were unable to leave the strait.^[156] On 6 March, Qatari Energy Minister Saad Sherida al-Kaabi warned that if the war continues, other Gulf energy producers may be forced to halt exports and declare *force majeure*, and that "this will bring down economies of the world". QatarEnergy had already stopped gas production on 2 March and declared *force majeure* on gas contracts on 4 March.^{[157][158]} On 7 March, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation declared *force majeure* and announced that it would be cutting its oil production.^{[159][124]} Bahrain's Bapco Energies declared *force majeure*^[124] and the United Arab Emirates lowered its oil production.^[10] As of 8 March, production at the three main oil fields in southern Iraq had dropped by 70% since the start of the war, from 4.3 million barrels per day to 1.3 million.^[10] As of 12 March the Gulf Arab states cut their production by at least 10 million barrels per day. On 13 March, Saudi Arabia reduced its oil production by 20%, from 10 million barrels per day to 8 million, after the shutdown of two of Saudi Aramco's offshore fields, including Safaniya.^[160] The missing oil is mostly Medium and Heavy grades, which some Asian refineries depend on and cannot easily switch to lighter grades.^[161] Oil exports from the region were 25 million barrels per day before the war, dropping 60% to around 10 million by 15 March.^[162] Iraq declared *force majeure* on "all oilfields developed by foreign oil companies" on 17 March.^[163]

On 8 March, crude oil prices surpassed US\$100 per barrel for the first time in four years, since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, and reached a high of \$126.^[10] The price surge was faster than during any other conflict in recent history, such as the Ukraine war, the Gulf War, or the Iraq War.^[7] On 11 March, the 32 International Energy Agency member states unanimously agreed to release 400 million barrels of oil, representing about four days worth of global consumption, from their emergency reserves.^{[164][145]} The U.S. enacted a suspension of the embargo of Russian oil during the Russo-Ukrainian war until 11 April for 30 Russia-connected petroleum tankers in Asia, carrying 19 million barrels of oil.^[165] The crisis has also led to a slight increase in the number of ships traversing the Panama Canal.^[166] In the second week of March, California's gasoline prices exceeded \$5 per gallon due to the United States' conflict with Iran.^[167] On 19 March, Dubai crude oil prices reached US\$166, their highest on record.^[168] On 23 March, in response to President Trump's comments on U.S.-Iranian negotiations, Brent crude prices fell from US\$114 to US\$102 per barrel.^[169] On 27 March, Brent crude increased to US\$114 per barrel, after negotiations did not produce a ceasefire and the IRGC declared the strait to be closed.^{[170][171]}



A Bangchak petrol station in Thailand closing with a sign stating "out of diesel" on 22 March 2026 as the country was hit by a fuel shortage due to its reliance on shipping via the Strait of Hormuz^[144]



Oil delivery shipping lines and approximate delivery time from the Strait of Hormuz

International responses

On 3 March, U.S. president Donald Trump said that the U.S. Navy would begin to escort tankers through the strait "as soon as possible".^[172] On 22 March, Trump threatened to 'obliterate' Iranian power plants if they do not completely open the strait within 48 hours.^[173] In response, the Iranian defense council threatened to lay mines throughout the Persian Gulf.^[174] On 23 March, Trump postponed the ultimatum, citing "very good and productive conversations" with Iran.^[175] On 30 March, Trump threatened to strike Iranian energy infrastructure if they do not reopen the Strait.^[176] On 31 March, Trump told countries that were having trouble getting fuel due to the closer to fend for themselves, saying that the US would not help them.^[177] On 4 April, Trump reasserted the ultimatum, giving Iran another 48 hours to open the Strait or "face hell."^[178] Trump later extended the ultimatum by one day, until 7 April at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time.^[179]

Iran denied having conducted any negotiations with Trump.^[175] The state affiliated Tasnim news agency insisted that the strait would not return to pre-war levels of travel,^[180] and it also suggested that the negotiations were an effort to sow discord within Iran.^[181] At the same time, the Iranian Foreign Ministry acknowledged that it was reviewing a proposal it received from the United States.^[182] According to an analysis in *Iran International*, Trump's statements succeeding in lowering oil prices while also "fracturing" the Iranian regime.^[183]

On 7 March, the Indian Government proposed to deploy the Indian Navy to safeguard the oil supplies it receives.^[184] On 9 March, French president Emmanuel Macron announced that France and several other states are setting up a "purely defensive, purely support" escort mission for merchant ships transiting the strait, in the framework of Operation Aspides, and that France is sending a dozen ships to the wider Middle East. The French Navy vowed to send two frigates to escort vessels through the strait.^{[185][186]} As of 10 March, Britain, along with Germany and Italy, are working to support commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.^[187] Also on that day, U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Caine said that the U.S. military was looking at a "range of options" for restoring tanker traffic.^[188] The US sent the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit to the region, where they are expected to try to secure the Strait of Hormuz.^[189]

On 11 March, the G7 nations agreed to look into the possibility of escorting ships through the strait.^[190] U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright on 12 March said that the U.S. Navy may be able to start escorting ships through the strait by the end of March, with the military still focused on "destroying Iran's offensive capabilities and the manufacturing industry that supplies their offensive capabilities."^[172] On 15 March, British energy secretary Ed Miliband said that the UK was considering "any options" to secure the Strait of Hormuz.^[191] Later that day, British prime minister Keir Starmer held phone conversations with US president Donald Trump and Canadian prime minister Mark Carney to discuss the possibility of opening the Strait of Hormuz.^[192] British finance minister Rachel Reeves said that the lack of a plan for opening the Strait is "frustrating."^[193]



The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit is expected to lead maritime security operations in the Strait of Hormuz.

On 16 March, an Australian government minister stated that Australia would not send ships to the Strait.^[194] On the same day, Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi also ruled out any current plans to send Japanese Navy ships to help escort oil tankers through the strait.^{[194][195]} European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said

that the EU was exploring the possibility of expanding the scope of its existing naval missions, *Aspides* and *Atalanta*, or establishing a framework for the strait similar to the *Black Sea Grain Initiative*.^[196] She called for a diplomatic solution to the crisis.^[197] Several EU members ruled out military involvement in the crisis: Germany,^[198] Italy, Luxembourg, Romania,^[196] Spain,^[199] and the United Kingdom.^[196] France emphasized that a naval escort mission would only take place when the war is over, with French officials saying that Greece, Italy and the Netherlands have shown interest in such a mission.^[198] Also on 16 March, U.S. Treasury Secretary *Scott Bessent* said that for now the United States is happy with the increasing number of ships crossing the Strait.^[200]

On 17 March, the Iraqi oil minister said that they are in contact with Iran to negotiate allowing ships to pass.^[201] On 19 March, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Japan announced in a joint statement that they are ready to participate in efforts to reopen the strait. On the same day, a meeting of EU leaders failed to reach an agreement on the subject, with a lack of support for expanding the European Union Naval Force in the Red Sea to cover the strait.^{[202][203]} The joint statement on securing the strait was joined by other countries by 21 March, including: the UAE, Bahrain, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, Denmark, Latvia, Slovenia, Estonia, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Czech Republic, Romania, Lithuania, and Australia.^{[204][205]}

On 21 March, UN Secretary General *António Guterres* called for the strait to be opened, and suggested that the UN could help secure it.^[206] China stated that the war should not have started, and criticised Iran for attacking other countries in the area.^[207]

On 29 March, Pakistan hosted a meeting with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, to discuss reopening the Strait of Hormuz.^[208] On 30 March, US treasury secretary *Scott Bessent* said that the US would gradually "take control" over the Strait of Hormuz.^[209]

On 30 March, Volodymyr Zelensky offered Ukraine's expertise to unblock the Strait. Ukraine has managed to keep its ports open by creating a safe corridor through the Black Sea despite constant Russian attacks. Ukrainian strategy includes sharing insurance costs with providers as well as using a combination of armed surface drones, coastal artillery, and air force to repel Russian attacks.^{[210][211]}

On 4 April 2026, the vote on Bahrain's proposal at the UN Security Council is uncertain because of divisions among major powers. While many countries support keeping the Strait of Hormuz open for global shipping, countries like Russia and China are concerned the resolution could justify military action near Iran and risk escalation, even though Bahrain had already weakened the proposal by removing stronger language that allowed force. The disagreement remains as Russia and China have veto power.^{[212][213]}

On 5 April 2026, French president *Emmanuel Macron* and South Korean president *Lee Jae Myung* agreed to work together towards opening the Strait of Hormuz.^[214] Also on 5 April, the UAE said that it would support a US military operation to take control of the Strait of Hormuz.^[215]

Industry

The US defense industry is affected by "near total" disruption of critical minerals supply, in particular *sulfur*, through the Strait.^[216] Aluminum prices experienced a slight increase, as the Gulf states account of 20% of raw aluminum exports and 8% of aluminum production.^[14] Roughly one-third of the world's *helium* production is

impacted by the crisis, due to both the disruption of natural gas production in Qatar and the very time-sensitive nature of helium transportation. Helium distributors are rationing deliveries as of early April.^[15]

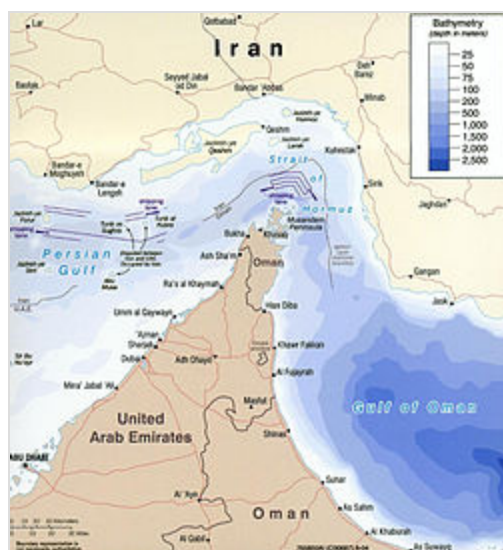
The Gulf region also produces nearly half of the world's urea and 30% of ammonia, with about one-third of the world's fertilizer passing through the strait.^[14] Urea prices increased by 50% since the start of the war, as of late March 2026,^[14] while other fertilizer prices, such as diammonium phosphate, also rose.^[21] The LNG disruption is also a problem for the production of fertilizer, impacting the agriculture industry in the Northern Hemisphere. The price shock and the shortage of fertilizer during the spring planting season could reduce the planting and yields of corn in the US—the main feed stock for US beef, poultry, and dairy—and potentially increase global food prices into 2027.^[14] Unlike oil, the fertilizer sector does not have internationally coordinated strategic reserves, making supply disruptions more difficult to manage. It is estimated that global fertilizer prices could average 15–20% higher during the first half of 2026 if the crisis continues.^[21]

International law

The potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz is, according to some analysts, a violation of international law. According to Majid Rafizadeh, the blocking of the strait by Iran amounts to a violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), since it violates the right to transit passage through a "strait used for international navigation".^{[217][218]} The placement of sea mines in the strait by Iran is seen by Just Security as a violation of the law of the sea, violating the Hague VIII convention.^[219]

The UNCLOS regime of innocent passage through territorial waters prohibits imposing a fee on passing ships, unless they receive specific services.^[220]

Both Iran and the United States signed but neither ratified UNCLOS. The internationally recognized shipping lanes are in the territorial waters of Oman.



International political boundaries in the Strait of Hormuz (2004)

See also

- Closure of the Suez Canal (1967–1975)
- Economic impact of the 2026 Iran war
- Elphinstone Inlet
- European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz
- Red Sea crisis
- Tanker war
- American expansionism under Donald Trump

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External links

- Strait of Hormuz disruptions: Implications for global trade and development (<https://unctad.org/publication/strait-hormuz-disruptions-implications-global-trade-and-development>) overview by UN Trade and Development

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