

Maritime Advisory

Date: 16 March 2026

Areas of Concern: Arabian/Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Northern Arabian Sea & adjacent waters; wider region including Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden; eastern Mediterranean Sea

Threat Level: **Severe**

28 February – 16 March 2026

UKMTO has received 20 reports of incidents affecting vessels operating in and around the *Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman*:

- 16 Attack Reports
- 4 Suspicious Activity Reports

Situational Overview

The operational situation in the Strait of Hormuz remains **highly volatile**. Commercial traffic continues to be severely disrupted, with numerous shipping companies suspending transits due to the elevated security risks. **The operational situation remains fluid and carries a high risk of further attacks on merchant shipping.**



Developments (13 - 16 March 2026)

Confirmed Incidents

- While no major attacks have been reported for the last 72 hours, maritime security in the Arabian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz remains highly volatile, and further incidents are likely to occur in the coming days. Since the beginning of hostilities on 28 February, at least 20 maritime incidents involving commercial vessels and offshore infrastructure have been reported across the Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman. Mariners in the region continue to report severe GNSS/GPS spoofing, AIS anomalies, and electronic interference impacting navigation and communications reliability.

Other Developments

- As of 16 March, several countries, including Italy, the UK, Germany and Greece, have reacted cautiously to US President Trump's demand that allies help open the Strait of Hormuz. Trump's call for countries, including the UK and France, to send warships to help unblock the strait have been met with a cool

response, despite governments globally being hit by surging energy prices. Any military involvement would see such countries being dragged into the escalating war.

- Speaking at a press conference in Tehran, Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters that the Strait of Hormuz is only cut off for vessels of the US, Israel and their allies, stating that “from our perspective it is open.”
- Ship-tracking data indicates that a Pakistan-bound oil tanker passed through the Strait of Hormuz over the weekend. MarineTraffic said in a post on X that the Aframax tanker *KARACHI* was “the first non-Iranian cargo to transit the chokepoint while broadcasting its AIS signal, suggesting that select shipments may be receiving negotiated safe passage.” The tanker transited around 15 March after loading crude at Das Island in Abu Dhabi. It is expected to arrive at Karachi on 17 March. Separately, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stated Monday that the US believed that some Indian and Chinese as well as Iranian fuel tankers had passed through the strait.

Risk Assessment

1. Arabian/Persian Gulf & Strait of Hormuz

Current Status – Effective Commercial Disruption

- Merchant traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has significantly reduced
- Multiple commercial vessels have been struck by projectiles in Gulf waters
- Heightened naval deployments from regional and international forces are ongoing
- GPS/AIS interference and electronic warfare activity have increased significantly
- Large numbers of tankers and container vessels remain anchored off UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi ports awaiting security clarity
- War-risk premiums have risen sharply, and some underwriters are restricting coverage in high risk-zones

Primary Threats

- Missile and drone strikes
- Naval engagements and collateral damage
- Electronic interference (jamming/spoofing)
- Naval mines in the Strait of Hormuz
- Boarding/seizure risks
- Cyber-attacks targeting ship companies and port operators

2. Gulf of Oman & Northern Arabian Sea

- Elevated surveillance and naval operations
- Risk of spillover kinetic activity
- Increased maritime interdictions and monitoring

3. Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb & Gulf of Aden

Risks remain elevated in - Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden

Yemen’s Houthi movement has signalled a possible renewed campaign targeting commercial shipping in this region.

Threat Profile:

- Anti-ship missiles
- Armed drones
- Small boat swarm tactics
- Targeting linked to vessel nationality or ownership

International naval missions remain present, however vessels should not assume universal protection coverage.

4. Eastern Mediterranean Sea

Heightened awareness is advised in waters off - Cyprus, Israel, Lebanon, Syria

Risk Factors:

- Air defence engagements over maritime zones
- Missile interception debris hazards
- Naval deployments
- Port disruptions linked to military posture shifts

Commercial traffic continues in the Mediterranean Sea, however the Eastern basin should be treated as a heightened alert zone.

Port Operations

Middle East Ports

United Arab Emirates

PORT	OPERATIONAL STATUS
Hamriyah Port	All terminal port operations are normal
Sharjah Port	All terminal port operations are normal
Jebel Ali Port	All terminal port operations are normal
Fujairah and Khor Fakkan	No alerts issued at this time; navigational warning No. 01/2026 disseminated addressed reported incidents of intermittent GPS signal spoofing and jamming in offshore areas of Fujairah
Ras al Khaimah Ports	Open and operating normally
Ruwais & Abu Dhabi Petroleum Ports	Operational; Ruwais PPA (ISPS Level 2); Abu Dhabi Ports (ISPS Level 1)

Kuwait

PORT	OPERATIONAL STATUS
Shuwaikh Port	Port operating normally; Security Level 2 protocols
Shuaiba Port	Port operating normally; Security Level 2 protocols
Minal Al Ahmadi Port	Port operating normally; Security Level risen to Level 2
Mina Al Zour Port	Port operating normally; Security Level risen to Level 2

Oman

PORT	OPERATIONAL STATUS
Asyad Drydock - Duqm	Port operating normally

Port of Duqum	Port operating normally ; vessels calling at port must submit an official letter stating that they are not carrying any dangerous goods on board.
Port Sultan Qaboos	Port operating normally
Muscat	Port operating normally; ISPS Level 3
Mina Al Fahal	Port operating normally; ISPS Level 3
Port of Sohar	Port operating normally
Qalhat LNG Terminal – Sur	Port operating normally ; ISPS Level 3
OMIFCO Terminal – Sur	Port operating normally
Port of Salalah	Resumed operations however liquid cargo ops remain suspended

Saudi Arabia – No alerts or warnings issued by the local port authorities; all operational activities are functioning at full capacity.

Bahrain – Vessel movements in Bahrain have gradually resumed, however operations remain limited due to the restricted availability of pilots. BAPCO operations remain suspended. APM Terminals has resumed operations. ISPS security level remains at Level 1.

Qatar – The official security status remains at Security Level 1, however as a proactive measure, all vessels are requested to exercise heightened caution and vigilance

PORT	OPERATIONAL STATUS
Hamad Port	Normal port operations and vessel movement; Activity levels are lower than pre-conflict
Doha Port	Normal port operations and vessel movement; Activity levels are lower than pre-conflict
Al Ruwais Port	Normal port operations; port is restricted to small craft only, including dhows and barges; Activity levels are lower than pre-conflict
Mesaieed Port	Port operations ongoing
Ras Laffan Port	Port operations ongoing
Al Shaheen Offshore Terminal	Operations suspended until further notice
Halul Island Offshore Terminal	Operations suspended until further notice

Egypt – The Suez Canal and all Egyptian ports remain fully operational; ISPS Level remains at Level 1

Jordan – All operations remain normal at Aqaba Port; terminal, marine services, cargo handling and gate operations are functioning without disruptions. Maritime navigation and cargo operations are proceeding smoothly and without delay.

Pakistan – All ports remain fully operational; ISPS Level remains at Level 1

Iraq – Ports of Umm Qasr and Khor Al Zubair are fully operational; no further port restrictions or emergency measures in place; Basra Oil Terminal and SPM Somo Terminal have ceased export operations.

Mediterranean Sea Ports

Cyprus – All ports remain fully operational. ISPS level remains at Level 1

Lebanon – All ports remain operational, with no alerts or warnings issued by the local port authorities. South of Lebanon remains in an unstable operational situation. ISPS Level remains at Level 1

Israel – Eilat, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Hedera, and Haifa are fully open for business and functioning at full capacity.

Recommendations

Voyage Planning

- Conduct risk assessments immediately prior to transit
- Closely monitor official advisories from flag states and maritime security centres
- Do not rely on anticipated naval escort operations unless formally confirmed
- Minimise loitering near territorial waters of high-risk states
- Consider alternative routing via the Cape of Good Hope where commercially viable
- Assess war-risk insurance implications before entering designated high-risk areas

Transit Procedures (if entering high-risk areas)

- Maintain maximum safe speed during transit of chokepoints
- Avoid unnecessary deviation towards military or energy infrastructure
- Increase bridge water levels and radar vigilance
- Minimise deck crew exposure
- Prepare for GPS/AIS disruptions with alternative navigation methods
- Conduct drills for: Missile/drone alerts, Emergency manoeuvring, Fire response. Casualty/injury managements
- Maintain continuous monitoring of VHF Channel 16 and naval broadcast frequencies
- Ensure Ship Security Plans are fully implemented at the highest appropriate security level

Port Planning

- Confirm port operational status directly with agents prior to arrival
- Anticipate berth congestion and extended anchorage delays
- Factor potential pilotage suspension into passage plans
- Reconfirm war-risk insurance coverage for port calls

Reporting & Coordinating

- Register movements with UKMTO and relevant maritime security centres
- Use Voluntary Reporting Schemes where applicable
- Immediately report any suspicious activity, projectile sightings or electronic interference

Outlook (As of 16 March 2026)

Maritime security conditions in and around the Strait of Hormuz remain highly volatile despite the absence of confirmed attacks on commercial vessels in the last 72 hours. Limited transits through the strait have been reported, however overall traffic remains significantly reduced as shipowners continue to reassess risk exposure. The presence of naval escorts and increased regional military activity indicates ongoing concern over potential threats, including mines, explosive boats, and missile or drone strikes. In the near term, sporadic incidents targeting commercial shipping or maritime infrastructure in the region cannot be ruled out, and operators are likely to maintain heightened security measures and cautious routing decisions.