

Maritime Advisory

Date: 27 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 – 27 March 2026

UKMTO has received 23 reports of incidents affecting vessels operating in and around the *Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz* and *Gulf of Oman*:

- 16 Attack Reports
- 7 Suspicious Activity Reports

Situational Overview

Maritime conditions in the Strait of Hormuz and wider Gulf region remain highly volatile. While between 23 – 26 March there were no confirmed reports of incidents occurring in this region, traffic through the strait continues to be severely disrupted and conditions may change quickly and at short notice.

In parallel, a notable development in the wider regional threat picture is the hijacking of an Iranian-flagged dhow by suspected



Somali pirates on 25 March. The incident occurred approximately 400 nautical miles to the east of Mogadishu, Somalia, highlighting the increased range of pirate groups. Maritime Security Centre Indian Ocean (MSCIO) is “strongly advising” all vessels to avoid transiting within a 200 nautical mile radius of the reported position. While maritime activity in waters off Somalia has remained low in recent weeks, with the last reported incident in the region occurring on 26 February, the threat level for this area is assessed as moderate. Vessels transiting this region are advised to exercise heightened vigilance and adopt BMP measures.

The re-emergence of dhow-based piracy operations introduces an additional layer of risk to maritime traffic transiting between the Gulf region and the Indian Ocean, particularly at a time when naval assets remain heavily concentrated on the Strait of Hormuz and adjacent theatres. This convergence of state-based conflict dynamics and opportunistic non-state threats is likely to sustain a complex and elevated maritime risk environment in the near term. Overall the current situation across the region reflects a highly dynamic and multi-layered threatened landscape, with continued potential for rapid escalation, sustained disruption to commercial shipping, and spillover effects across critical maritime chokepoints.

Key Developments (24 - 26 March 2026)

Confirmed Incidents

- No confirmed incidents reported over the last few days in the Strait of Hormuz and wider Gulf regions; last confirmed incidents occurred on 21 March, 15 nautical miles north of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.
- **25 March (Somalia)** – MSCIO has reported that an Iranian-flagged dhow, identified as *AL WASEEMI 786*, has been hijacked by possible pirates whilst operating approximately 400 nautical miles east of Mogadishu, Somalia. The MSCIO has reported that it is “highly likely” that the dhow was being used a mothership.

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	Fujairah Oil Tanker Terminal is partially operational; Khor Fakkan Terminal no disruption reported
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 has temporarily suspended operations
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 Duqm	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	Fully resumed operations

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; terminals, 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; 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

- Minimize 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 27 March 2026)

As of 27 March, maritime security conditions in and around the Strait of Hormuz remain highly unstable and effectively constrained by the ongoing conflict linked to the US-Israel war with Iran. While no activity was reported in this region between 23 – 26 March, the threat of further attacks remains high and overall, Iran's campaign of drone, missile and mine attacks, combined with warnings that transit is "not allowed," continues to result in low levels of shipping traffic in the strait. At the same time, the risk picture is expanding beyond the Gulf region, with Iran-aligned Houthi forces reiterating their readiness to resume attacks in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb, threatening a second major maritime chokepoint and compounding disruptions already seen during earlier campaigns. Further adding to regional instability, the reported hijacking of an Iranian-flagged dhow by suspected pirates off Somalia on 25 March highlights a parallel resurgence of opportunistic piracy in the wider Indian Ocean, likely enabled by the diversion of naval resources towards the Strait of Hormuz. Collectively, these developments point to a multi-theatre maritime security breakdown, with elevated risks, rising insurance costs, and limited capacity for international forces to secure key global shipping lanes.