

Maritime Advisory

Date: 20 April 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 – 20 April 2026

UKMTO has received 33 reports of incidents affecting vessels operating in and around the *Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz* and *Gulf of Oman*:

- 20 Attack Reports
- 13 Suspicious Activity Reports

Situational Overview

Over the weekend, the situation in the Strait of Hormuz became increasingly volatile after a brief and confusing reopening. On 17 April, Iran had announced that the strait was fully reopened to commercial shipping as part of a temporary ceasefire, raising hopes that traffic through the strait could pick up. However, the US simultaneously made it clear that its naval blockade of Iranian ports would remain in place. By 18 April, Iran



reversed course and reimposed restrictions, effectively closing the strait again and, in some cases, firing on or deterring vessels attempting to pass through. Tehran explicitly stated that the renewed closure was a response to the ongoing US blockade, stating that transit would remain blocked as long as those measures were in place. This rapid shift – from reopening to closure within roughly a day – created widespread confusion in the global shipping community and raised fears of renewed escalation.

Tensions escalated further on 19 April when US forces seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship attempting to move through the area, marking the first such interception since the blockade began. Iran condemned the seizure and threatened retaliation, putting a fragile ceasefire at risk. At the same time, there were reports of gunfire involving commercial vessels, and many ships either delayed transit or turned back altogether, leaving the waterway technically open but highly dangerous and inconsistent in practice.

The instability has already had global consequences, and even though the strait opened briefly, returning to normal flows will take time, particularly as Iran has reasserted control in response to the blockade. Overall, the key development is that the strait's brief reopening quickly collapsed due to the unresolved standoff – Iran insists it will restrict or close the waterway as long as the US blockade continues, while the US is maintaining

pressure. That dynamic has left the Strait of Hormuz partially shut, heavily militarized, and highly unpredictable, with the risk of further escalation remaining very high.

Key Developments (17 - 20 April 2026)

Confirmed Incidents

- **19 April (Gulf of Oman)** – US forces have intercepted an Iranian-flagged container vessel in the Gulf of Oman. US President Donald Trump stated on social media that the vessel attempted to breach the US blockade of Iranian ports and was given fair warning to stop. The Iranian crewmembers refused to comply, resulting in the US Navy forces disabling the vessel by “blowing a hole in the engine room.” US Marines have since taken full custody of the vessel and are conducting an inspection of the cargo. The vessel is reported to be under US Treasury sanctions due to prior illegal activity.
- **18 April (Strait of Hormuz)** – UKMTO received a report of an incident 3 nautical miles east of Oman. The Master of a Cruise Ship reported sighting a splash in close proximity of the vessel. **Update** – Reports indicate that the projectile struck the water 150m from the vessel. The Master confirmed that they were hailed by the IRGC. No damage was reported and the vessel is proceeding out of the area.
- **18 April (Strait of Hormuz)** – UKMTO has received a report of an incident 25 nautical miles northeast of Oman. The Master reported the vessel was struck by an unidentified projectile above the waterline, which has caused damage to some containers. No fire or environmental impact has been reported. Authorities are investigating the incident.
- **18 April (Strait of Hormuz)** – UKTMO has received a report of an incident 20 nautical miles northeast of Oman. The Master of an India-flagged tanker reported being approached by two IRGC gun boats. No VHF challenge was reported before the tanker was fired upon. Tanker and crewmembers have been reported safe. Authorities are investigating the incident.

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
Khalifa Port	Operations resumed
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 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	Partially resumed operations for CT and GCT

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 resumed, however operations remain limited due to the current situation. BAPCO operations remain suspended. APM Terminals has resumed operations from 9 April at 0600 hrs. 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
- 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 20 April 2026)

The outlook for the Strait of Hormuz over the next few days is likely to remain tense and highly uncertain.

In the short term, the most likely scenario is continued instability rather than a clean resolution. The core problem hasn't changed – Iran is tying access to the strait to the lifting of the US blockade, while the US is maintaining that pressure. This makes more stop-and-go disruptions, shipping delays, and occasional confrontations at sea the most likely outcome over the next several days. Pakistan continues to actively try to broker another round of talks between the US and Iran, with reports indicating on 20 April that Iran is considering attending these talks, though so far no official decision has been made.