

Maritime Advisory

Date: 24 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 – 24 April 2026

UKMTO has received 36 reports of incidents affecting vessels operating in and around the *Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman*:

- 22 Attack Reports
- 14 Suspicious Activity Reports

Situational Overview

Over the course of this week, the Strait of Hormuz experienced a continued deterioration in maritime security, with active confrontation between the US and Iran continuing to impact most commercial shipping through the waterway. Reports during this period indicate incidents of gunfire directed at merchant vessels, the seizure by Iran of two container ships, and the suspected deployment of naval mines, prompting warnings that clearance operations could take months. Additionally, the US is continuing to enforce a naval blockade of Iranian ports.



At the same time, two piracy-related incidents were reported off the coast of Somalia this week, highlighting a renewed risk in the Western Indian Ocean. While neither attack resulted in a successful hijacking, they suggest a potential resurgence of opportunistic piracy, likely exacerbated by shifting shipping patterns as vessels reroute away from the Gulf, increasing exposure to historically high-risk waters off East Africa. The region is currently between monsoon seasons, and therefore there is a peak window of opportunity for Somali pirates to launch attacks against commercial shipping. The southwest monsoon season typically begins by May and runs until October. Consequently, vessels operating in this region in the coming weeks are advised to increase vigilance, particularly within 150 nautical miles of the Somali coast, with reports indicating that currently the greatest danger is between Mogadishu and Hafun to the north in Somalia.

Key Developments (21 - 24 April 2026)

Confirmed Incidents

- **22 April (Strait of Hormuz)** – UKMTO has received a report of an incident 8 nautical miles west of Iran. A master of an outbound cargo ship has reported that the vessel was fired upon and is now stopped in the water. Crewmembers have been reported safe and accounted for. There have been no reports of damage to the vessel. Reports indicate that the vessel involved is the Panama-flagged container vessel **MSC FRANCESCA** and that three small craft with up to three armed persons onboard each craft approached the vessel and opened fire. **Update** – Iran is reporting to have seized this vessel.
- **22 April (Strait of Hormuz)** – UKMTO has received a report of an incident 15 nautical miles northeast of Oman. The Master of a container ship reported that the vessel was approached by 1 IRGC gun boat. No VHF challenge was reported, with the vessel then fired upon, causing heavy damage to the bridge. No fires or environmental impact have been reported. All crewmembers have been reported safe. Reports indicate that the vessel involved is the Liberia-flagged **EPAMINONDAS**. **Update** – Iran is reporting to have seized this vessel.
- **22 April (Strait of Hormuz)** – Reports indicate an attack involving the Panama-flagged container ship **EUPHORIA**. Reports state that the vessel was fired upon by IRGC naval units while transiting outbound through the strait. Unconfirmed reports indicate that the vessel was forced to stop in the water after the attack. No casualties were reported and the crew has been accounted for and reported safe. No significant damage to the vessel itself has been confirmed. **Update** – This vessel has not been seized.

Additional Regional Reporting

- **24 April (Strait of Hormuz)** – US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth stated on Friday that Iran laying more mines in the Strait of Hormuz would violate the fragile ceasefire that is in place with the US, telling reporters at a briefing, “if there’s attempts to recklessly and irresponsibly lay more mines, we’re going to deal with that.” When asked about a Washington Post report that the Pentagon has estimated to lawmakers that it could take up to six months to fully sweep the Strait of Hormuz for Iranian-laid mines, Hegseth did not deny the assessment. This comes after US President Trump on Thursday warned that the US Navy would “shoot and kill” any Iranian boat caught trying to drop more mines in the strait. The USS CHIEF and USS PIONEER minesweepers, as well as the USS TULSA, which also boats mine countermeasure capabilities, have been ordered to head to the region to help clear the strait. Reports indicate that underwater drones are also being used by the US military.
- **23 April (Indian Ocean)** – The Pentagon has announced that US forces have boarded another tanker linked to Iran – the second tanker confirmed to have been boarded this week. The Pentagon identified the crude oil tanker as the **MAJESTIC X**, reporting that it was transporting oil from Iran. It said that the interdiction occurred in the Indian Ocean. Separately, CENTCOM has reported that a total of 31 tankers have now been ordered around or return to port as part of the US blockade of Iranian ports and shipping.
- **22 April (Indian Ocean)** – US forces have boarded an oil tanker previously sanctioned for smuggling Iranian crude oil in Asia, the Pentagon stated on Tuesday, as it puts into place a global warning to track down vessels tied to Tehran. In a social media post, the Pentagon said that US forces “conducted a right-of-visit maritime interdiction” of the M/T **TIFANI** “without incident.” The tanker was captured in the Bay of Bengal and it was carrying Iranian oil, according to a US defence official, who stated that the military will decide in the next four days what to do with the vessel, such as tow it back to the US or turn it over to another country. The Pentagon on social media described the **TIFANI** as “stateless” despite it being a Botswana-flagged vessel. It also said in an announcement that “as we have made clear, we will pursue global maritime enforcement efforts to disrupt illicit networks and interdict sanctioned vessels providing

material support to Iran – anywhere they operate,” echoing previous statements from Trump administration officials.

- **22 April (Arabian Gulf)** – The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is working on an evacuation plan for hundreds of vessels that have been stuck in the Arabian Gulf since the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran more than seven weeks ago. According to Secretary General Arsenio Dominguez, the plan can only be put into action when there are clear signs of de-escalation, adding that the UN agency will also need to ascertain if mines had been laid in the strait before sending ships through. Dominguez further stated that details of the evacuation plan being discussed include an order of departure for vessels, depending on the length of time the crew has been stranded, amongst other factors, adding that any transits would follow the long-established route – the Traffic Separation Scheme that was proposed by Iran and Orm and adopted by the IMO in 1968. Reports indicate that around 800 vessels remain stuck in the Arabian Gulf after traffic through the Strait of Hormuz slowed to a trickle following the outbreak of the war.
- **22 April (Strait of Hormuz)** – Iran on Wednesday seized two ships in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran’s semi-official Tasnim news agency reported that the Revolutionary Guards had seized two vessels for maritime violations and escorted them to Iranian shores. They have accused the seized ships – the Panama-flagged **MSC FRANCESCA** and the Liberia-flagged **EPAMINONDAS** - of operating without required permits and tampering with their navigation systems. The Greek-operation **EPAMINONDAS** reported being fired upon about 20 nautical miles off Oman. It said that it had sustained damage to its bridge after being hit by gunfire and that no one was injured in the incident. So far, neither Greece nor the company have confirmed the seizure of the vessel. This is the first time that Iran has seized ships since the war began at the end of February. Tasnim reported that the Revolutionary Guards had also warned that any disruption to order and safety in the strait would be considered a “red line.” **Update (23 April)** – According to sources, the two container ships seized by Iran with about 40 crewmembers aboard have been taken towards the port of Bandar Abbas. A relative of one of the seafarers involved has stated that “some 20 Iranians armed to the teeth stormed the ship. Sailors are under Iranians’ control, their movements on the ship are limited, but the Iranians are treating them well.” Montenegro’s minister of maritime affairs, Filip Radulovi, told state broadcaster RTCG that “the ship is anchored nine nautical miles from the Iranian coast. Negotiations between MSC and Iran are ongoing, our sailors are fine.” Four sailors onboard the **MSC FRANCESCA** including its captain are from Montenegro, according to the minister. Two Croatians are also aboard, Croatia’s foreign ministry confirmed. Meanwhile the **EPAMINONDAS** has a crew of 21 members made up of Ukrainians and Filipinos, according to the Greek coast guard. The vessel had been bound for India. Both crews were reported safe, however authorities in their home countries said that they were seeking information about the well-being of the seafarers and working on their release. There has been no information released about what, if any, cargo the ships were carrying.

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 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	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 24 April 2026)

As of 24 April, the Strait of Hormuz is not formally closed however it is operationally non-viable for most commercial shipping, with persistent kinetic threats, unclear ceasefire conditions, and a high likelihood of prolonged disruption. The near-term outlook for the Strait of Hormuz remains tense and uncertain, with a high risk of continued disruption to commercial shipping. The suspected presence of naval mines and the ongoing military standoff effectively mean that traffic through the strait is unlikely to return to normal levels quickly, with shipping companies remaining cautious. In parallel, the incidents in waters off Somalia suggest a fragile security environment in the Western Indian Ocean. If naval resources remain concentrated in the Gulf and shipping continues to reroute around Africa, piracy risks could rise in the coming weeks, especially during calmer seas in the lead up to the next monsoon season. Overall, maritime security across both regions is likely to remain strained, with elevated risks for commercial operators in the short term. For the Red Sea and Bab el Mandeb Strait, no incidents have been reported in these waters, however, Yemen's Houthis continue to warn of a potential closure of the strait, with reports emerging that the group is possibly looking into imposing a 'tollbooth' model, though to date nothing has been confirmed. Additionally while there have been no attacks targeting vessels, the Houthi movement has the capability and intent to target merchant vessels using missiles, drones and small boats, effectively creating an additional layer of risk for vessels rerouting away from the Gulf.