2026 Strait of Hormuz crisis

(Redirected from 2026 Iran war)

The Strait of Hormuz, a vital maritime choke point for global energy trade, has experienced ongoing geopolitical and economic disruption since February 28, 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 Israel-linked and US military bases in 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.

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,[1][2] and soon traffic would fall 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.[3][4] Oil and gas prices surged, with Brent crude rising by up to 13% to US$82 per barrel, amid fears of prolonged supply shortages that could push prices toward $100 per barrel.[5][6][7]

2026 Strait of Hormuz crisis
Part of the 2026 Iran war
Satellite image of the Strait

Date	February 28, 2026 – present
Location	Strait of Hormuz
Cause	US–Israel strikes on Iran and Iranian retaliation
Participants	Iran, United States, Israel, shipping companies
Outcome	Ongoing
Casualties	
4 seafarers killed and three tankers damaged[8]	

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Background [edit]

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.[9][10] In 2024, an estimated 84% of crude oil and condensate shipments through the strait were destined for Asian markets.[4] Europe gets 12% to 14% of its LNG from Qatar, through the strait.[3]

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 war conflict in 2025.[11] 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.[7][5]

During February 15 to 20, Iran increased its oil export to 3 times normal rate and reduced oil storage, to reduce risk of disruptions, and Saudi Arabia attempted similar moves.[11]

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.[12][13]

Escalation [edit]

On February 28, 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 Ali Khamenei.[7][13] Iran responded with missile and drone barrages on Israeli cities and US bases in the Gulf, including in the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain, causing casualties and infrastructure damage.[14][15] The conflict expanded to Lebanon, where Iran-backed Hezbollah launched rockets into Israel, prompting Israeli counterstrikes.[16]

Closure of the strait [edit]

List of ships attacked by Iran [edit]

#	Date	Vessel attacked			Result	Sources
		Name	Flag	Type		
1	01-03-26	*Skylight*	Palau	Oil tanker	Damaged	[17][18]
2	01-03-26	*MKD VYOM*	Marshall Islands	Oil tanker	Damaged	[19]
3	01-03-26	*Sea La Donna*	Liberia	Oil/chemical tanker	Unknown	[20]
4	01-03-26	*MT Hercules Star*	Gibraltar	Oil tanker	Minor damage	[21]
5	01-03-26	*Ocean Electra*	Liberia	Tanker	Minor damage	[22]
6	01/02-03-26	*LCT Ayeh*	United Arab Emirates	Oil tanker	Damaged	[23][24]
7	02-03-26	*Stena Imperative*	United States	Products tanker	Damaged	[25]
8	02-03-26	*Athe Nova*	Honduras	Bitumen tanker	Damaged	[26]
9	02-03-26	*Gold Oak*	Panama	Bulk carrier	Minor damage	[27][28]
10	03-03-26	*Pelagia*	Malta	Bulk carrier	Unharmed	[29]
11	03-03-26	*Libra Trader*	Marshall Islands	Crude oil tanker	Minor damage	[27][28]
12	04-03-26	*MSC Grace*	Liberia	Container ship	Unharmed	[27]
13	04-03-26	*Safeen Prestige*	Malta	Container ship	Damaged	[30]
14	04-03-26	*Sonangol Namibe*	Bahamas	Oil tanker	Damaged	[31]

Timeline [edit]

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.[32][33][34] Although the closure is not legally binding as Iran did not formally declare a blockade, military and industry analysts described the strait as effectively closed, and several ships stayed in port or turned back.[35] 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. It was operated 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. Another Indian was critically wounded on the *LCT Ayeh*.[17][19]

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.[36] The US-flagged *Stena Imperative* was struck twice at the port of Bahrain, causing a fire.[25] A Panamanian vessel was killed and two others were hurt in the attack, although the ship's crew were unharmed.[26] 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.[26]

Just after midnight 2 March, no tankers in the strait broadcast automatic identification system signals, indicating low or no traffic,[37] however with unreliable data and satellite navigation device basis.[12][37] Protection and indemnity insurance was removed for March 5, 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 right of refusal for crewmembers. The strait remained technically open, but effectively closed.[38]

On 4 March, the IRGC claimed complete control of the strait.[39] 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.[40] In the late night, a large explosion struck the oil tanker *Sonangol Namibe*, which was anchored near Mubarak Al Kabeer Port, Kuwait, causing an oil spill that posed an environmental risk. A small vessel was observed leaving the scene following the attack.[31][28] The IRGC said that it hit a US oil tanker,[40]

Impacts [edit]

Late on 28 February, outgoing traffic through the Strait of Hormuz was heavy, while ingoing traffic was light.[41] At least three tankers were struck near the strait, including one off Oman's coast.[42][28] At least 17 oil carriers continued travelling through the strait.[43] On 1 and 2 March, no ships appeared in the strait.[35]

Major container shipping companies, including Maersk, CMA CGM and Hapag-Lloyd, suspended transits through the strait, while Israeli-owned ZIM Integrated Shipping Services and Rhodes-controlled Yemen announced on 28 February (2026) that it would resume attacks on Israel and commercial ships in the Red Sea.[44] Forcing Suez Canal traffic to be rerouted around Africa's Cape of Good Hope. This added weeks to transit times and increased shipping costs. This crisis disrupted global energy supplies and stranding tankers in the Persian Gulf.[47]

The crisis sent shockwaves through global energy markets and raised security concerns; 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.[48][49][4] The spike in prices is especially problematic in Asia, where major importers like China and India could face supply shortages and price volatility.[50] Natural gas prices in Europe also surged, rising more than €30/MWh the past week, to €46/MWh on Monday March 2,[51] peaking above €60/MWh on Tuesday March 3 (nearly double from previous week),[51] before decreasing again to €48/MWh on Wednesday, March 4.[52]

OPEC+ pledged to increase oil output by 206,000 barrels per day to mitigate shortages.[6] The disruptions also raised concerns over inflation and potential economic downturns in oil-importing nations.[53]

Analysts from institutions like Barclays and Goldman Sachs highlighted risks of sustained high oil prices if the strait is restricted over a longer period.[7][37]

Cruise ships reduced activity in the Persian Gulf and stopped using the strait.[54] On 3 March, *Bloomberg* reported that Iraq started shutting down operations at the Rumaila oil field due to lack of storage space, as tankers were unable to leave the strait.[55]

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 Yanbu's Red Sea port, with Saudi providing assurances and arranging at least one crude shipment to bypass the closed strait. Saudi authorities were also reportedly considering diverting some of their own crude exports via Yanbu to reduce the impact of the disruption.[56]

See also [edit]

- Economic impact of the 2026 Iran conflict
- Tanker war
- Red Sea crisis

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