

THE MENA WEEKLY



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Key Takeaways

- Iran – US strikes Iran after military helicopter shot down – **SEVERE**
- Israel/Iran – Netanyahu calls off major Iran strikes after Trump warning – **SEVERE**
- Iraq/UAE – Iraq and UAE push alternative oil routes away from Hormuz – **HIGH**
- Iran/Oman – US strike on sanctioned oil tanker MT Marivex – **HIGH**

Iran — US strikes Iran after military helicopter shot down, Iran retaliates — **SEVERE**

Situation Update

On 08 June 2026, a United States (US) Apache helicopter was [shot](#) down by Iran in the Strait of Hormuz. The two crew members survived and were rescued by an American sea drone. US officials believe Iran used a drone to launch the attack. Following through on US President Donald Trump’s threat to “respond”, US forces carried out a [series](#) of strikes on Iranian military and surveillance sites. Among the targets were air defence systems, ground control stations, and radar sites near the Strait of Hormuz. On 09 June 2026, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said US strikes had damaged a telecommunications tower and two water tanks, and added the US had targeted the cities of Jask and Sirik, as well as Qeshm, an island in the Gulf. US Central Command (CENTCOM) called the strikes “a proportional response” for the Apache helicopter downing; the IRGC called the move “vicious”. In response, the IRGC announced that it had launched strikes on 21 targets at US bases in the region, one in Bahrain and the other in Jordan, while Kuwait's army said it was also intercepting an attack. Since then, Trump has said that the US will [take](#) control of Iran’s oil and gas infrastructure and launch further strikes on Iran.

Assessment/Impact/Business Implications

The flare-up between the US and Iran comes after Israeli forces carried out strikes across southern Lebanon on 09 June 2026. Tehran had warned that Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon would trigger another wave of retaliatory strikes. With Trump subsequently [writing](#) on social media that Iran must “pay the price” for taking too long to negotiate, the state of diplomacy between opposing sides is potentially at its worst since the imposition of the ceasefire agreement on 08 April 2026. Iran’s targeting of Kuwait, Bahrain, and Jordan demonstrates a continuation of Tehran’s strategy of broadening the conflict and punishing other countries in the Gulf. While it remains unclear whether diplomacy can be resumed after the latest intensification, it is important to note that previous escalations and ceasefire breaches have not prevented a subsequent return to negotiations. Whether anything comes of further talks, should they be resumed, remains similarly unclear. With Trump earlier in the week warning Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would be “on your own very soon”, the probability of Trump pulling out without an agreement is increasing. Although the highly undesirable nature of such an outcome means Washington will likely keep trying to find a resolution in the short-term.

Factor	Risk Rating	Factor	Risk Rating
Political	SEVERE	Business	SEVERE
Economic	SEVERE	Conflict	SEVERE
Civil Unrest	HIGH	Environment	HIGH
Crime	HIGH	Legal	SEVERE

Israel/Iran — Netanyahu calls off major Iran strikes after Trump warning — **SEVERE**

Situation Update

On 08 June 2026, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [called](#) off a major strike on Iran after United States (US) President Donald Trump instructed him not to escalate the situation. In an address to the nation, he said the attacks would be halted “for now”, but warned that Israel would strike Iran and Hezbollah if it is attacked again. The development came after fighting erupted between Israel and Iran for the first time since the ceasefire took effect on 08 April 2026. Trump told reporters that he had [warned](#) Netanyahu to “be careful, or you will be on your own very soon”. Trump, who [argued](#) that Washington and Tehran were within days of a breakthrough clearing the way for talks on a long-term nuclear deal, feared that Israel’s actions could jeopardise the process. Iran has repeatedly warned that Israel’s actions would result in a collapse in talks.

Netanyahu finds himself in a difficult position, having been previously [criticised](#) by his election rivals for halting strikes on Beirut on Washington’s request. Even Netanyahu’s allies have taken issue, with National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir [posting](#) on social media: “Mr. Prime Minister, you said that a strong prime minister tells the president of the United States ‘yes’ when possible, and ‘no’ when necessary. This is the time to tell our friend, President Trump, ‘no’”. The criticism underscores growing tensions within Israel’s political system over the extent to which military decisions should be coordinated with its closest ally, the US.

Assessment/Impact/Business Implications

Although Netanyahu called off the strike on Iran, he has approved of further attacks on southern Lebanon, which are likely to antagonise Tehran. On 09 June 2026, the Israeli Defence Forces carried out strikes on the southern Lebanese city of Tyre. With Iran [warning](#) that it could hit Israel again if it did not stop attacks in Lebanon, while Israel has vowed to continue its campaign against Hezbollah, a cyclical spiral of escalation and temporary pauses could be set in motion in the short-term. While Trump has confirmed his anger with Netanyahu, he remains unable to fully control Israel’s military actions. Despite Netanyahu having acquiesced to previous requests, with domestic criticism growing over such decisions, Netanyahu may feel it necessary to project an image of strength. With elections scheduled for October 2026 and Netanyahu [performing](#) poorly in the polls, such political considerations are only likely to become stronger in the coming weeks.

Factor	Risk Rating	Factor	Risk Rating
Political	SEVERE	Business	SEVERE
Economic	SEVERE	Conflict	SEVERE
Civil Unrest	HIGH	Environment	HIGH
Crime	HIGH	Legal	SEVERE

Iraq/UAE — Iraq and UAE push alternative oil routes away from Hormuz — HIGH

Situation Update

Iraq and the UAE are intensifying efforts to build or [expand](#) alternative oil routes that bypass the Strait of Hormuz, as the war with Iran continues to choke one of the world’s most important energy corridors. The shift reflects a growing recognition that even if traffic through Hormuz eventually resumes, Gulf producers and exporters can no longer treat the strait as a reliable single outlet. Iraq is reviving discussions around a long-delayed pipeline to the Turkish Mediterranean coast and exploring overland export options through neighbouring states. The UAE, which already has some bypass capacity through the Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline to Fujairah, is examining how far that infrastructure can be used to protect exports and sustain confidence during prolonged disruption. A broader [assessment](#) of the current crisis notes that the pressure to diversify export routes has become far more urgent as shipping through Hormuz remains severely constrained.

The significance of this development lies in the limits of the alternatives. Existing bypass routes were not built to absorb the full scale of Gulf export demand and some are themselves exposed to regional instability. Saudi Arabia’s East-West pipeline has already faced attack risk during the current war, while Iraq’s pipeline options remain dependent on political agreement, funding, and infrastructure rehabilitation. That means the scramble for alternatives is strategically important but unlikely to offer a complete near-term solution. At the same time, OPEC+ has [continued](#) with largely symbolic quota increases, even though many producers cannot fully use those quotas while the strait remains impaired. Together, these developments underline that the region’s export system is now under structural stress rather than temporary pressure.

Assessment/Impact/Business Implications

For businesses, the main issue is not merely whether alternative pipelines exist, but whether they can provide meaningful resilience at scale. For Iraq, new or expanded routes would take time and remain exposed to political and security constraints. For the UAE, existing bypass infrastructure offers a stronger starting point, but not enough to eliminate vulnerability to broader Gulf disruption. That means oil traders, refiners, shipping firms, insurers, and downstream industries should continue to expect elevated uncertainty around volumes, timing, freight, and pricing. The push for alternative routes is strategically rational, but it does not remove the immediate risk created by the effective partial closure of Hormuz and the wider militarisation of Gulf energy infrastructure.

The overall risk is high because the response shows the region is trying to adapt, but under severe physical and geopolitical constraints. Iraq and the UAE are not facing identical vulnerabilities, yet both are being pushed into costly long-term adjustments by a conflict that has exposed the fragility of Gulf export geography. For energy markets and regional planners, the key implication is that bypass capacity is becoming a strategic necessity rather than an optional supplement.

Factor	Risk Rating	Factor	Risk Rating
Political	HIGH	Business	SEVERE
Economic	SEVERE	Conflict	SEVERE
Civil Unrest	MODERATE	Environment	LOW
Crime	MODERATE	Legal	LOW

Israel — UK and allies sanction networks enabling settler violence — HIGH

Situation Update

The United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, France, Norway, and New Zealand have imposed coordinated [sanctions](#) on individuals and organisations accused of financing, enabling, or participating in violent settler activity in the occupied West Bank. The measures were announced as part of a broader effort to respond to what the participating governments described as a sharp rise in settler violence and the continuing expansion of settlements and outposts. The UK said it was targeting six entities and one individual, including organisations accused of supporting settler farms, outposts, and construction activity linked to the seizure or destruction of Palestinian land and property. France also barred Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich from entering the country, citing his role in promoting annexation and settlement expansion. A wider report on the move noted that the sanctions stop short of a trade or arms embargo but still mark one of the clearest recent signals of coordinated Western frustration over West Bank policy.

The development is significant because it links settler violence more directly to organised support structures rather than treating incidents as isolated acts by individuals. The states involved argued that violent settlers had operated for too long with near impunity and that some attacks had taken place under the protection of Israeli security forces. The sanctions also come amid evidence of sharply rising violence. The United Nations documented 1,835 settler attacks in 2025 that caused casualties or property damage across around 280 Palestinian communities, while recent [coverage](#) said the UK had also updated official guidance to advise businesses against economic and financial activity in illegal settlements. Israel condemned the measures as politically motivated and anti-Israeli, arguing that they were disguised attempts to challenge the right of Jews to settle in the land.

Assessment/Impact/Business Implications

For businesses, the sanctions are important because they increase the legal, reputational, and compliance risks around any activity linked to settlements in the occupied West Bank. This applies not only to direct investment, but also to construction, logistics, agriculture, security services, financing, and supply relationships that may connect in

some way to sanctioned individuals or organisations. The UK’s revised business guidance is especially significant because it moves beyond political criticism and places more explicit emphasis on commercial exposure. The overall risk is high because the issue now sits at the intersection of violence, sanctions policy, diplomatic pressure, and settlement expansion. For firms with any Israel or West Bank exposure, the practical implication is that activity connected to settlements is becoming more scrutinised, more politically sensitive, and more vulnerable to regulatory and reputational consequences.

Factor	Risk Rating	Factor	Risk Rating
Political	HIGH	Business	HIGH
Economic	MODERATE	Conflict	HIGH
Civil Unrest	HIGH	Environment	LOW
Crime	MODERATE	Legal	HIGH

Iran/Oman — US strike on sanctioned oil tanker MT Marivex — SEVERE

Situation Update

On 08 June 2026, the F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jet from the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln [opened](#) fire on the unladen, Palau-flagged oil tanker MT Marivex while it was in international waters in the Gulf of Oman, on its way to Iran. The attack, conducted by US Central Command (CENTCOM), struck the ship’s engineering and steering spaces with the aim of preventing it from violating the US blockade against Iran, after the crew had repeatedly ignored instructions issued by US forces. The military action caused a fire on board and forced the 24 Indian crew members to carry out an immediate evacuation, which was completed safely thanks to a joint helicopter rescue operation conducted by the Omani Navy and the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre of Mumbai. The attack targeted a vessel already [sanctioned](#) by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) due to its alleged involvement in the trade of Iranian oil and petrochemical products into the Persian Gulf. In a context in which 134 vessels have been rerouted and 42 ships have been authorised to transit for the delivery of humanitarian aid, the strike on MT Marivex [represents](#) the seventh military operation conducted by CENTCOM against non-compliant vessels since the beginning of the blockade on 13 April 2026.

Assessment/Impact/Business Implications

The attack on MT Marivex represents a kinetic military action conducted in international waters within the context of the conflict between the US and Israel on one side and Iran on the other. As shown by CENTCOM’s operation on 10 June 2026, which [disabled](#) the Palau-flagged oil tanker M/T Settebello in the Gulf of Oman, the attack on MT Marivex is not an isolated incident but points to a heightened risk of further similar operations. Operations that do not directly involve the domestic sphere carry significant international implications, both in legal and geopolitical terms. The MT Marivex tanker, already sanctioned for its alleged involvement in a transnational organised criminal network, is at the centre of a dispute concerning international waters. Indeed, according to Article 90 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, “every state has the right to [sail](#) ships flying its flag on the high seas”. This could, with a high degree of probability, generate diplomatic tensions and frictions.

Attacks on commercial vessels increase the risk of fires and fuel spills, with consequent disruption of the underwater environment and negative effects on the economic system. The volatility of the global energy market, the heightened vulnerability of supply chains, and the rapid rise in war risk insurance premiums ([increased](#) by 200–300% in the Strait of Hormuz alone) represent some of the main risks that companies have to face. To these are added persistent threats to crew safety.

Factor	Risk Rating	Factor	Risk Rating
Political	SEVERE	Business	SEVERE
Economic	HIGH	Conflict	SEVERE
Civil Unrest	LOW	Environment	HIGH
Crime	MODERATE	Legal	SEVERE

Tunisia — Press freedom crackdown intensifies with journalist sentencing — HIGH

Situation Update

On 09 June 2026, Tunisian journalist Khaoula Boukrim [stated](#) that she had been sentenced in absentia to four years in prison by a Tunisian court. Having fled to Paris in December 2025, Boukrim was forced to leave the French capital after security officers visited her mother’s home in Tunis on 02 June 2026 to inquire about her whereabouts, at which point she became aware of charges that had been [filed](#) against her on 26 February 2026. Although neither notification of the proceedings nor the verdict had been delivered to her or her lawyer in the intervening months, the journalist was sentenced to two separate prison terms of two years each in two distinct cases under Decree-Law 54 on cybercrime, which imposes severe penalties for online publication offences. The founder of the independent news outlet TUMEDIA maintains that the sentence was imposed because of her critical positions towards Tunisian President Kaïs Saïed and those around him. This recent court ruling is not a one-time event; instead, it is the newest step in a continuous effort by the Tunisian government to target reporters, which has already seen well-known journalists like Zied el-Heni, Mourad Zghidi, and Borhen Bsaies sent to prison since the start of 2026.

Assessment/Impact/Business Implications

The sentence against Khaoula Boukrim sheds light on Tunisia’s political-judicial apparatus, which appears increasingly oriented towards silencing critical voices and restricting freedom of expression that could challenge Tunisian President Kais Saïed. The application of Decree-Law 54 on cybercrime, often used for suppressing dissent, is considered in tension with the gains of the 2011 Arab Spring and Article 37 of the Tunisian Constitution, which [states](#) that “freedom of opinion, thought, expression, information, and publication are guaranteed” and that “no prior censorship may be exercised over these freedoms”. In a context of rule by decree established in 2021 by Saïed, the neutralisation of political opposition — as in the [case](#) of Ennahda leader Rached Ghannouchi — and a weakening of the separation of powers, the lack of regular notification in legal proceedings further heightens concerns.

Despite the repressive climate, the event also carries social significance and could trigger a wave of protests in the country, particularly supported by the media sector. This would not be unprecedented but would recall the opposition [expressed](#) in March 2024 by the National Union of Tunisian Journalists, when it rejected the withdrawal of Boukrim’s accreditation during her coverage of the presidential elections. Although the economic impact remains limited, the restrictive atmosphere could discourage foreign direct investment and, in this context, businesses may face reputational risks linked to the country’s democratic backsliding, with certain sectors — such as media, publishing, and international organisations — more exposed to heightened scrutiny.

Factor	Risk Rating	Factor	Risk Rating
Political	SEVERE	Business	MODERATE
Economic	MODERATE	Conflict	LOW
Civil Unrest	MODERATE	Environment	MINIMAL
Crime	LOW	Legal	SEVERE

Morocco — 11 arrested in Morocco after European countries send warrants — MODERATE

Situation Update

On 08 June 2026, Moroccan police [arrested](#) 11 people on drug trafficking and money laundering allegations. Warrants for their arrest had been issued by France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, leading to Interpol Red Notices for 10 of the suspects, meaning they could be potentially extradited. During the operation, the police [seized](#) several luxury watches, cars, motorcycles, cash, bank cards, mobile phones, drugs, and various identity documents. The arrested individuals included six French-Moroccans, three Belgian-Moroccans, a French national, and a Dutch-Moroccan. Arrested in the cities of Marrakech and Tangier, they now face charges of international drug trafficking, money laundering, and fraud.

Assessment/Impact/Business Implications

Morocco has been continually collaborating with international partners to fight transnational crime, mainly by maintaining a close relationship with intelligence communities. The European Union (EU) and Morocco have extensive cooperative [frameworks](#) in jointly fighting organised crime and terrorism. Morocco serves a strategic role in anti-drug and counter-terrorism efforts and works closely with certain European countries in terms of intelligence sharing and liaison. However, very few legal frameworks exist and the majority of joint operations rely on and reinforce mutual trust and a convergence of EU-Moroccan judicial and political agendas.

Some legal and political frameworks exist: the EU-Morocco Association Agreement, the European Neighbourhood Policy, marginal Eurojust and Europol policies, and the EuroMed Justice and Police programmes. However, the majority of legal agreements decide on extradition and mutual legal assistance policies and fall short in regulating cooperation mechanisms for organised crime and terrorism. As such, international initiatives such as these 11 drug-related arrests are a result of mutual trust, political instruments, and collaboration between intelligence agencies. Future avenues of collaboration on transnational crime networks are likely to include judicial [mechanisms](#), particularly regarding legal assistance for gathering evidence, extradition, and improving detection and interception, as well as knowledge sharing, and first-responder cooperation.

Perhaps the most current and noticeable symptom of EU-Morocco drug and crime cooperation is the implementation of the Entry/Exit System ([EES](#)) and the designation of Morocco as a “safe” country. Indeed, what may be perceived as longer airport lines can instead be understood as increased multilateral cooperation on containing and preventing irregular [migration](#) from Morocco. As a key migrant route for Sub-Saharan migrants and refugees, this form of cooperation works to outsource policies in the reception, protection, and integration for forced migrants, externalising the EU’s migration strategy.

Factor	Risk Rating	Factor	Risk Rating
Political	MODERATE	Business	LOW
Economic	MODERATE	Conflict	LOW
Civil Unrest	LOW	Environment	LOW
Crime	HIGH	Legal	MODERATE

Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia and Turkey sign deals on railway services — LOW

Situation Update

On 09 June 2026, Turkey and Saudi Arabia [signed](#) two separate memoranda of understanding committing to cooperate on railways and connectivity services between both countries. The agreement allows Saudi Arabia to

become the latest country to indirectly revive the historic Hejaz railway, connecting Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and, now, Saudi Arabia. During the official signing ceremony in Riyadh, the Turkish Transportation Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu stated that during this “sensitive time our region is going through, the uninterrupted functioning of trade and the logistics chain has become more critical than ever. In this period, removing the obstacles facing the transportation sector is a strategic necessity”. In the long term, Uraloglu claimed that Ankara aims to establish transport routes through Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, potentially extending further to Oman and the Indian Ocean. Overall, the realisation of this road would enable cross-border transport across various modes of transport (road, rail, maritime, air, etc.), and contribute to a diversity of sectors and industries such as infrastructure development, technical standardisation, digitalisation, capacity-building, and private sector contributions.

Assessment/Impact/Business Implications

The realisation of the Hejaz railway’s revival has gained momentum in recent months due to the belief that it could serve as an alternative trade corridor to the Strait of Hormuz. For Saudi Arabia and other countries participating in the project, they could be part of a wider transit hub between the Gulf and Europe, a spoke in vast energy and trade corridors, and serve as a railway logistics base. This prospect is significant for Saudi strategy as Middle Eastern economies tend to [depend](#) on road freight for food, medicine, and goods when maritime routes are disrupted. As the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea see increased [conflict](#) and insecurities, bypassing projects such as the Hejaz railway revival are considered primordial.

The project could also benefit the freight trucking market, essential to moving goods between ports, airports, and door-to-door. Rising public infrastructure projects, cross-border trade, and a growing e-commerce sector are likely to raise the value of this industry in the long-term. These memorandums of understanding also reflect the growth of Saudi Arabia as a global logistics [hub](#). Growing state investments in infrastructure, digital customs systems, and intermodal transport networks leverage regional businesses’ interest in growing trade routes.

Factor	Risk Rating	Factor	Risk Rating
Political	MODERATE	Business	MODERATE
Economic	MODERATE	Conflict	LOW
Civil Unrest	LOW	Environment	LOW
Crime	LOW	Legal	LOW

Global SA Risk Methodology

THREAT LEVEL RATING	
SCORE	LEVEL
5	SEVERE
4	HIGH
3	MODERATE
2	LOW
1	MINIMAL



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