



Daily



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MAX - MENA Region Daily Summary - July 20, 2026

The following report reviews current events in the MENA region and their possible effect on business continuity and security.

Highlights of the Day

- **MENA:** US preparing to intensify operations against Iran, keep Israel out of conflict, per Jul 19 report; increases risk of miscalculation
- **Bahrain:** US Embassy on July 20 warns of potential Iranian attacks targeting central Manama; adhere to embassy's directives
- **Iraq:** US energy firm suspends all operations in Iraq, per July 18-19 reports; indicates impact of spillover of tensions on energy sector
- **Jordan, Israel & Iran:** Multiple Iranian missiles target Aqaba on July 19; anticipate additional attacks against city
- **Syria:** Al-Sharaa reshuffles security, intelligence leadership, per July 19 reports; highlights efforts to restore confidence in state security

Actionable Items

Strait of Hormuz: UKMTO reports vessel on fire in Strait of Hormuz on July 19; continue to avoid all travel

Current Situation - The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) announced that it had received a report of a vessel on fire approximately 15km northwest of Oman's Kumzar in the Strait of Hormuz during the late evening hours on July 19. Meanwhile, the IRGC Navy (IRGC-N) stated that it had identified four vessels attempting to transit the Strait of Hormuz under US escort via the southern route through Omani territorial waters. The IRGC-N claimed that two vessels "had an accident and were forced to stop," while the other two were deterred from proceeding.

Assessments & Forecast - Given recent precedent, there is a credible possibility that the vessel fire was linked to IRGC-N's attempted interception or an attack, although this remains unconfirmed. Collectively, these incidents underscore the continued volatility of maritime transit through the Strait of Hormuz as Iran seeks to enforce its own maritime framework, particularly amid the escalating trajectory of the US-Iran hostilities. These developments will reinforce concerns among commercial shipping operators and may potentially deter them from transiting the Strait of Hormuz, even under US escort, as similar Iranian attacks or interceptions remain plausible over the coming days.

Recommendations - Avoid all travel to the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, and the Strait of Hormuz due to heightened tensions and elevated security risks across these waterways. Remain apprised of UKMTO and US DOT Maritime Administration-issued notices, as well as being aware of NATO Shipping Center alerts.

Source: [UKMTO](#); [IRNA](#)

Bahrain: US Embassy on July 20 warns of potential Iranian attacks targeting central Manama; adhere to embassy's directives

Current Situation - The US Embassy in Manama issued a warning that, based on intelligence, Iran may target unspecified locations in central Manama. The Embassy urged Americans to remain vigilant.

Assessments & Forecast - This follows the US State Department's July 18 advisory urging US nationals across the region to exercise increased caution. In this context, the latest location-specific warning lends credibility to the possibility of an imminent Iranian attack targeting central Manama. Such an attack would represent an expansion of Iran's target set beyond sites on the outskirts of the capital, such as the US Navy's Fifth Fleet Headquarters in Juffair, which has been repeatedly targeted and is in close proximity to central Manama. This suggests that Iran may be seeking to target strategic or civilian infrastructure within central Manama, potentially to maximize the psychological and economic impact of its retaliatory campaign. The credibility of the warning is further

reinforced by the US Embassy in Amman's July 19 advisory regarding a "specific and credible threat" targeting Jordan's Aqaba, which was followed by an Iranian attack on the city, indicating that recent US diplomatic security alerts are based on credible intelligence.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in central Manama are advised to remain cognizant of potential Iranian threats, adhere to the embassy's directives, and continue to avoid all travel to US-linked sites.

Source: [US Embassy](#)

Iraq: Shutdown of KRG's Khor Mor gas field affecting electricity production, water supply, per July 18-19 reports; take precautions

Current Situation - Iraq's state news agency reported on July 18 that the [suspension of operations at the Khor Mor gas field](#) had resulted in a 2,500-megawatt reduction in electricity generation and that the Iraqi Federal Government decided to dispatch household cooking gas supplies to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). A July 19 report citing the director of the Erbil Water Directorate stated that the reduced electricity supply had also caused a 30 percent decline in water supply, affecting some neighborhoods of Erbil city.

Assessments & Forecast - This underscores the vulnerability of the KRG's electricity supply to the current escalatory trajectory of regional hostilities, particularly amid the recent increase in [UAV attacks](#) targeting US-linked assets in the KRG. Should Khor Mor's operations continue to remain suspended over the coming days or weeks, it is liable to place additional strain on Iraq's national power grid beyond the KRG-administered territories. This was highlighted by the Iraqi Oil Ministry's July 16 warning. This risk is further amplified by increased electricity demand during the ongoing summer. As such, the risk of power and water outages will remain elevated in the coming days, particularly within the KRG-administered territories.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Iraq, including in KRG-administered territories on July 20 and over the coming days are advised to take necessary precautions to secure business continuity in the event of power cuts or shortages.

Source: [INA](#); [Rudaw](#)

Jordan, Israel & Iran: Multiple Iranian missiles target Aqaba on July 19; anticipate additional attacks against city

Current Situation - The Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) intercepted three Iranian ballistic missiles, while a fourth missile landed in an unpopulated area in southern Jordan without causing casualties or damage. During the incident, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched interceptors against missile debris, with fragments subsequently identified in an

open area near Eilat.

Assessments & Forecast - This marked the first confirmed Iranian attack targeting Aqaba during the current regional escalatory dynamic. Iran's decision possibly stems from Tehran's assessment that, following successful attacks on Muwaffaq Salti and Prince Hassan air bases, the US military may have begun using Aqaba Airport as an alternative logistical hub. Aqaba is also strategically significant amid broader regional efforts to bypass the Strait of Hormuz, as reflected in recent discussions between Iraq and Jordan to revive the Basra-Aqaba oil pipeline. Iran's attack on Aqaba was possibly intended to signal Tehran's opposition to such plans. Overall, further Iranian attacks targeting the city should be anticipated. Moreover, although Iran did not directly target Israel, the subsequent impact of missile fragments near Eilat highlights the potential spillover effects that attacks on Aqaba are liable to have on Israel's southeastern areas.

Recommendations - Avoid nonessential travel to Jordan. Those operating in the country are advised to avoid all travel to military installations in the country and conduct timely and specific risk assessments before traveling to and operating through Aqaba, including maritime and air travel operations.

Source: [Petra](#)

Kuwait: Iranian attacks target power generation, water desalination plant on July 19; attacks on civilian infrastructure to recur

Current Situation - Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy announced that an Iranian strike targeted a power generation and water desalination plant, causing a fire to break out in parts of the facility and affecting several power generation units. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Armed Forces engaged multiple Iranian UAVs during the overnight and morning hours (local time) of July 20.

Assessments & Forecast - This marks the second attack on one of Kuwait's power generation and water desalination plants in two days, following an earlier strike on [July 18](#). These consecutive attacks underscore Iran's growing willingness to target critical civilian infrastructure as part of its retaliation against ongoing US strikes and the broader expansion of hostilities. By targeting such facilities, Iran is likely seeking to impose greater economic and societal costs on Gulf states perceived to be supporting Washington. Although the full extent of the damage remains unclear, sustained attacks against this type of critical infrastructure could generate cascading effects, including disruptions to freshwater production and increased pressure on Kuwait's power generation capacity. Given the current escalatory trajectory of the conflict, further Iranian strikes targeting civilian infrastructure in Kuwait and other Gulf states are likely.

Recommendations - Avoid nonessential travel to Kuwait and other Gulf states at the current juncture. Avoid all travel to military installations, major energy and heavy industry facilities, and major ports due to the continued threat to such infrastructure posed by Iran.

Source: [KUNA](#) ; [Kuwait Army](#)

Notable Events

MENA: US preparing to intensify operations against Iran, keep Israel out of conflict, per Jul 19 report; increases risk of miscalculation

Current Situation - Israel's public broadcaster reported that the US is preparing to intensify operations against Iran while seeking to keep Israel sidelined. Meanwhile, US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced the completion of the ninth consecutive night of strikes against Iran on July 20. This included attacks on Iranian military command centers and strikes in Tabriz, located approximately 1,560km from the Strait of Hormuz. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced on July 19 that it was reviewing reports of a US strike targeting the construction site of the planned Darkhovin Nuclear Power Plant.

Assessments & Forecast - US preparations to escalate are plausible given Iran's continued belligerence. This is reinforced by the sustained US military buildup in recent days, as well as the expansion of strikes over the past 24 hours, including against the Darkhovin Nuclear Power Plant construction site and targets in Tabriz. The apparent desire to keep Jerusalem sidelined currently is also plausible, allowing the country to serve as a logistical hub for US assets while remaining less exposed to Iranian retaliation than US bases in the Gulf. However, the continued expansion of hostilities will increase miscalculation risks, potentially drawing Israel directly into the conflict.

Source: [Kan](#)

Iraq: US energy firm suspends all operations in Iraq, per July 18-19 reports; indicates impact of spillover of tensions on energy sector

Current Situation - An official from HKN Energy reportedly confirmed that the company has shut down all operations in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)-administered territories. Meanwhile, another report citing the KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources stated that the company has suspended all its operations in Iraq and the KRG-administered territories due to "escalating tensions."

Assessments & Forecast - UAE-based Dana Gas suspended its operations at the Khor Mor gas field in Sulaymaniyah Province last week. Collectively, these developments highlight the growing impact of Iraq's deteriorating security environment, driven by the spillover effects of the ongoing US-Iran hostilities, on the country's energy sector. Such risks are elevated by Iran-backed Iraqi militias' resolve and capability to conduct UAV attacks against US and Western-linked sites, as well as the potential threat of abducting Western nationals, as evidenced by the kidnapping of a US journalist in [March](#) amid the hostilities. Security concerns are likely further reinforced by the

militias' rejection of US economic presence in Iraq, underscored by Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba's (HHN) threats on [July 15](#). Consequently, similar temporary or permanent shutdowns of operations by Western companies cannot be ruled out.

Source: [Rudaw](#)

Syria: Al-Sharaa reshuffles security, intelligence leadership, per July 19 reports; highlights efforts to restore confidence in state security

Current Situation - Syrian state media reported that President Ahmed al-Sharaa announced a series of leadership changes across the government's security institutions. Interior Minister Anas Khattab was appointed head of the National Security Office while retaining his ministerial post. Additional appointments included a deputy head of the National Security Office, an assistant interior minister for security affairs, and a new head of the General Intelligence Service.

Assessments & Forecast - The appointments follow a series of serious security incidents in Damascus in [early July](#) and were likely intended to reinforce confidence in the government's security apparatus. Khattab's appointment as head of the National Security Office significantly consolidates his authority by placing intelligence gathering, threat assessment, and counterterrorism under his oversight while he retains control of the Interior Ministry. The consolidation of these responsibilities likely reflects efforts to centralize Syria's security apparatus, improve coordination between intelligence and law enforcement, and demonstrate the government's ability to maintain stability following President Trump's decision to [remove Syria's designation](#) as a "State Sponsor of Terrorism". Al-Sharaa's government will likely continue reforms in Syria's security institutions and expand counterterrorism operations to prevent further militant attacks and reinforce perceptions of state authority.

Source: [SANA](#)

Other Developments

- **Iraq:** In a July 20 statement, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI) reaffirmed its readiness to return to direct engagement with the US should Washington expand its attacks against Iran. It pledged to target "all American interests and bases in the country and region with full force."
- **Israel & Syria:** During the evening hours (local time) of July 19, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced that it had shot down a UAV identified near the Syria-Israel border. The incident did not trigger Color Red sirens in Israeli communities.
- **Syria & Iran:** Iranian state news announced a "surprise attack" on a US command center in Syria's al-Tanf region on July 20 in retaliation for the deaths of Iranian soldiers in Iranshahr. Syrian authorities have not issued any official statements on an aerial attack or reports of impacts at the time of writing.

Notable Dates

22 JUL	Israel Holiday: Tisha B'Av
23 JUL	Egypt Holiday: Revolution Day
25 JUL	Tunisia Holiday: Republic Day
30 JUL	Morocco Holiday: Throne Day
31 JUL	MENA Travel: Anniversary of the assassination of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh
31 JUL	Iraq (KRG) Holiday: Yazidi Peak of Summer