

Middle East Situation

Information Cut-Off: 1200h (BST), 13 May 2026

Executive Summary

The deadlock in negotiations between Iran and the US has continued, while President Trump has travelled to Beijing to meet Chairman Xi to discuss trade.

US media have increased their coverage over the levels of spending that have been committed to the war, with Defence Secretary Hegseth having faced increased questions in the Senate.

International plans are progressing for the constitution of an international operation that will secure the Strait of Hormuz after the war is concluded. More than 40 countries are now supporting the arrangement.

Conflict between Hezbollah and the Israeli military in southern Lebanon is continuing.

Unverified media reports have claimed that both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates conducted undeclared air strikes on Iran when the conflict was ongoing.

Diplomacy

There have been no public developments in the negotiations, although the ceasefire remains in place. The US administration is switching its focus towards President Trump's summit with the Chinese government in Beijing today (13 May). The US delegation will focus its discussions on global trade, but will reportedly spend a short period of time discussing the conflict.

The Chinese foreign minister has called on the Pakistani government to intensify its mediation efforts between Iran and the US, and to assist in the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

A United Nations resolution calling for freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz (that also aims to preserve global economic and trade stability while ensuring the security of vessels), has now received support from as many as 112 member states. It could go to a Security Council vote later this week.

United States

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth is due to face more questions from Senate subcommittees about defence spending and the legality of the conflict.

A senior Pentagon official revealed yesterday (12 May) that the war has cost USD29bn so far (in munitions and equipment alone). Some economists have commented that the actual cost to the economy could be between USD630bn and USD1tn.

Yesterday afternoon, Republican senator Chuck Schumer urged his party members to support a Democrat motion to end the war.

Iran

The IRGC claimed yesterday (12 May) that it had disrupted five Israel-linked weapons smuggling networks, according to Iranian state broadcasting. It accused Mossad agents of having infiltrated Iranian demonstrators, suggesting that it is expecting more unrest.

State media reported that a man found guilty of espionage and intelligence cooperation with Israel has been executed by hanging this morning (13 May).

Israel

A Hezbollah drone exploded in northern Israel yesterday afternoon (12 May), according to the Israeli military. No casualties have been reported.

Strait of Hormuz

The United Kingdom said yesterday (12 May) that it will contribute a warship, Typhoon fighter jets and mine-hunting equipment as part of a multinational defensive operation to secure the strait. The planned post-war mission to the strait, led by the UK and France, has now received the support of more than 40 countries, including Australia and Italy; some nations, such as Japan, have not yet confirmed their involvement.

South Korea is considering supporting any future US efforts to guarantee transit through the strait, after one of its ships was attacked last week.

The US military said yesterday that its recent naval blockade against Iranian ports had resulted in the total redirection of 65 commercial vessels and the disablement of four.

Tehran has stated that the Strait of Hormuz remains open to commercial vessels as long as they coordinate with the IRGC Navy and Iranian authorities.

Ship-tracking monitor systems appear to demonstrate that a Chinese crude oil supertanker is currently (13 May) sailing out of the Strait of Hormuz.

Regional

Bahrain

Three people have been sentenced to life imprisonment for collaboration with the IRGC (in the form of disseminating statements and filming), with 20 others sentenced up to 10 years in prison.

Kuwait

The Kuwaiti government released a statement yesterday (12 May) about four alleged members of the IRGC who attempted to enter Kuwait by sea via Bubiyan Island in order to carry out “hostile acts against Kuwait” before clashing with the armed forces and subsequently being imprisoned. The Kuwaiti government has summoned the Iranian ambassador to explain the incident. The Iranian government rejected claims that it was planning any hostile actions against Kuwait, explaining their entry into Kuwaiti waters as the result of problems with their navigation system.

Lebanon

Yesterday afternoon the Israeli Air Force conducted further strikes across southern Lebanon. The Israeli military is facing increased accusations that it is conducting “double-tap” attacks in the area, deliberately targeting emergency services responding to an initial strike.

This morning (13 May), the Israeli military issued evacuation orders for residents of six more Lebanese towns in southern Lebanon.

Yesterday, Hezbollah claimed to have conducted an attack on an Israeli main battle tank in the Nabatieh region. In the evening, it claimed to have launched a series of drone attacks at Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia

Reuters reported last night that the Saudi Air Force conducted numerous, unpublicised strikes on Iran in late March in retaliation for Iranian attacks on Saudi Arabia.

United Arab Emirates

The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday that the UAE also conducted military strikes on Iran in early April, including an attack on an Iranian refinery.

Travel

Aviation

Philippine Airlines has extended the suspension of several Middle East flights, including services to Dubai and Doha; flights to Riyadh will continue for now.

Advice

- Do not travel to Lebanon, especially south of the Litani River, Dahiye in Beirut, and in the Beqaa Valley.
- Reconsider travel to the Middle East, especially Israel, Iran and Iraq, but also the wider Gulf region.
- Remain aware of ongoing tensions, given the possibility of a sudden resumption in fighting.
- Monitor instructions from local authorities and any national embassy guidelines.
- Avoid any demonstrations or gatherings in the region.
- Globally, reconsider travel to any locations with links to Israel or Judaism.
- If you need further support, or wish to discuss options for evacuation, call NGS.



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