



**IT'S A TOUGH WORLD.**

# **MENA Executive SITREP**

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**MAX  
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## Executive Brief: US – Israeli Operations Against Iran and Regional Implications

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**Explainer:** This daily report provides an executive summary of major developments related to the ongoing war in the Middle East. It complements MAX Security's more in-depth Situation Update reports. If you haven't yet received our situation updates and other reporting amid the current escalation, or would like to receive more details, join our [WhatsApp community](#). For operational support, please contact our Protection Division at [operations@max-security.com](mailto:operations@max-security.com).

### Operational Overview

The Israeli-US aerial campaign against Iran continued on March 19-20. On March 19, Israeli PM Netanyahu stated that Iran does not have the capacity to enrich uranium or produce new ballistic missiles anymore. This needs further corroboration, but it represents the extent of the effort to deny Iran long-term capabilities, with a stated aim to disrupt satellite industries that support these two projects. Israel also continued to try to undermine Iran's leadership, Basij, and internal security forces. On March 20, it claimed to have killed Esmail Ahmadi, the Head of the Basij's Intelligence Division. The IDF also announced the killing of Ali Mohammad Naini, the IRGC Spokesperson.

US CENTCOM also announced the continuation of the military campaign, with further damage to Iran's military capabilities. This includes destroying Iran's surface-to-surface missile plant in Karaj. In a press conference on March 19, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth further indicated that US capabilities are increasing while Iran's are decreasing. He also indicated that the US Air Force is penetrating new areas of Iran.

### Iranian actions

Iran reiterated threats to expand attacks against Gulf energy infrastructure "until complete destruction" if its own facilities are targeted again, framing its recent strikes on Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait as proportional retaliation for Israel's attack on its critical South Pars Gas Complex. Iran also signaled its intent to sustain the campaign of missile, UAV, and maritime attacks, reiterating its strategy of exerting economic pressure on adversaries through energy and shipping disruption. Iran continued to target Israel and the Gulf states as of March 19-20. On March 20, UAVs targeted the Kuwaiti Mina al-Ahmadi refinery. On March 19, Saudi forces intercepted a ballistic missile targeting the Yanbu Port, and during the overnight hours on March 19-20, intercepted at least 33 UAVS targeting the Eastern Province.

Iran continued to launch cluster-munition ballistic missiles toward Israel, which have led to several casualties. Shrapnel damaged the strategic Bazan oil refinery in Haifa on March 19, which, according to Iran, was a retribution for the Israeli attack on the South Pars Complex. Bazan reported damage that will

be fixed in days. Power outages were subsequently reported in the Haifa area. Minister of Energy Eli Cohen stated that damage to the electricity grid was limited.

### **Other notable developments**

**Qatar-Iran:** A report citing the CEO of QatarEnergy, the state-owned oil and gas company, stated that Iranian attacks have destroyed 17 percent of Qatar's LNG export capacity, causing an estimated 20 billion USD loss in annual revenue. The repairs are estimated to defer 12.8 million tons of LNG per year for the next three to five years. This highlighted Iran's ability to inflict serious damage in escalatory moves, which is aimed at deterring Israel and the US from repeating strikes against its South Pars Gas Complex. As per the latest statements from Israeli PM Netanyahu, US President Trump requested that Israel refrain from such attacks in the future.

**UAE:** On March 20, the Emirati authorities dismantled a terrorist network and arrested at least five operatives linked to Hezbollah and Iran. The network was involved in money laundering, financing terrorism, and threatening national security, and operated within the country under the guise of a fictitious business. This is the second time such reports have surfaced about Iran-linked operatives operating on Emirati soil, as well as at least one reported occurrence in Qatar and Kuwait, respectively. This underscores the risk vector emanating from Iran's clandestine operations in Gulf states.

**Israel-Lebanon:** Israel continued its operation against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The IDF stated that over 570 Hezbollah militants were killed, and many targets were struck. Israeli forces reportedly impacted a power substation in southern Lebanon's Bint Jbeil area, causing outages in and around the town. Israeli forces continue to operate on the ground with a stated objective of solidifying better defensive postures and dismantling militant infrastructures in areas close to the border.

**Syria-Israel:** a flare-up of violence between Druze and government-linked factions in southern Syria's as-Suweida Province prompted Israel to target Syrian military positions in southern Syria on March 20. Israel's Defense Minister, Israel Katz, stated that Jerusalem would not allow attacks against Syria's Druze population. This is part of the cyclical rounds of violence that occur in as-Suweida. Damascus condemned Israel for the strikes. This is not an unprecedented occurrence, and it is currently unlikely to lead to direct flare-ups between the Syrian and Israeli militaries.

**Maritime domain:** On March 19, a state-affiliated media outlet indicated that Iranian parliamentarians are pursuing a plan in parliament, according to which, if the Strait of Hormuz enjoys security, countries will be obligated to pay duties and taxes to Iran.

Meanwhile, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Japan released a joint statement condemning Iran's "de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz" and its attacks on civilian infrastructure. The statement expressed "readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait" and welcomed the "commitment of nations who are engaging in preparatory planning." This is



likely a result of US President Trump's pressure on allies to contribute to securing the State of Hormuz, which will continue to be a challenge as Iran aims to continue destabilizing ships' movement.

### Travel & Security Aspects

- Regional travel conditions remain highly volatile, with most states in the region exposed to extreme risk due to repeated and unpredictable missile and UAV attacks.
- Airspace restrictions and sudden closures continue to disrupt travel across the region. Risks to travelers also remain high despite **Gulf** authorities' eagerness to facilitate commercial flight operations. Continued UAV penetration into Gulf airspaces and attacks against airports continue to underscore the threat, especially in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Saudi's Eastern Province.
- Evacuations outside of the country and safe havens within countries should be considered as part of contingency planning.
- Extraction routes are still most viable through **Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt**. Despite not releasing formal statistics, Saudi Arabia appears to be increasingly impacted by Iranian attacks.
- Risks in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, especially around its oil and gas infrastructures in Jubail and Dhahran, will be heightened, posing risks to those evacuating from Bahrain into eastern Saudi Arabia.
- **Egypt and Turkey broadly** remain outside direct hostilities and are assessed as medium-risk environments compared with other regional states. Turkey is exposed to risks in its southeastern border areas near Iran and around its NATO bases, as tensions increase.
- Oman remains comparatively less affected and continues to function as a key transit point for evacuations and regional travel adjustments.
- **Israel** is still allowing commercial flights with foreigners departing from the Ben Gurion International Airport. El Al has cancelled flights to multiple destinations, including Boston, London, Budapest, Zurich, Barcelona, Berlin, Frankfurt, Prague, and Vienna. The airline stated that the decision follows further reductions in operations at Ben Gurion Airport (TLV) as well as new Home Front Command restrictions. Meanwhile, an Israeli media outlet stated that the number of passengers departing Israel will be reduced due to an increase in missile launches and impacts near TLV. Three private jets were impacted by debris, one of them catching fire at the airport. This underscores persistent risks to assets on the ground and aviation in general, amid continued Iranian attempts to launch missiles.

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