

Middle East Update

Information Cut-Off: 1300h (BST), 21 July 2026

Executive Summary

The US military launched a tenth consecutive night of attacks on Iran, targeting missile and drone sites, as well as other military facilities that can threaten the Strait of Hormuz. The Iranian military responded again, hitting US facilities in Kuwait, Jordan and Bahrain, with some civilian infrastructure damaged in Kuwait.

The Houthi group in Yemen has announced its intention to close the Bab al-Mandeb Strait in order to prevent maritime navigation to / from Saudi ports.

The US government has released the identities of the two soldiers killed in Jordan on Friday (17 July), and President Trump has warned that further US military deaths will provoke more attacks on Iran.

Conflict

Yesterday afternoon (20 July), the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said its navy had delivered “heavy blows” to the US military with attacks on US facilities at Al-Sakhir Airport and Salman Port in Bahrain, and at Arifjan base in Kuwait.

The US military announced last night a new round of attacks on Iran that are “designed to further degrade Iranian military capabilities used to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz”. Attacks were reported on Qeshm Island, Chabahar, Konarak, Bandar Abbas, Srik, Bushehr, Shiraz, Tabriz, Bandar Lengeh, Abdanan and Khomein. The Iranian military also reported the interception of a US missile over Kerman.

The Iranian military claimed it had successfully attacked and destroyed US missile systems and facilities at camps Arifjan, Al-Adiri and Al-Jaber in Kuwait, and that it had caused damage to crucial power and desalination infrastructure. It claimed it had destroyed air defence systems and Amazon commercial infrastructure in Bahrain. This morning (21 July), the IRGC claimed it had attacked US military targets in Jordan, specifically a missile defence radar system and a fighter jet in a shelter.

Lebanon

Yesterday afternoon (20 July), the US announced that operations to create the first “pilot zones” in southern Lebanon had begun, in which the Israeli military would conduct a retreat from areas to be taken over by the Lebanese army (which will then oversee the disarmament of Hezbollah). After a delay yesterday evening, this morning the Lebanese army moved into Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh after Israeli withdrawal.

Early this morning, Lebanese media reported that Israeli forces had conducted a large demolition in Kfar Tebnit, and was conducting artillery shelling on the nearby town of Nabatieh al-Fawqa, southern Lebanon.

United States

The US Department of Defence yesterday released the identities of the two soldiers killed in the attack in Jordan on Friday night (17 July), and confirmed that nearly 100 US soldiers have been injured in the war over the last two weeks.

17 US soldiers have now been killed in the war since the end of February. President Trump threatened more attacks on Iran if more US soldiers are killed.

The US State Department has advised Americans worldwide to exercise increased caution based on the tensions in the Middle East.

Iran

It has emerged that two French embassy officials were detained for several hours on Sunday (19 July), prompting an angry response from the French government.

The Iranian interior minister has travelled to Pakistan for official talks with the prime minister and the military chief.

Strait of Hormuz

Two Greek-owned tankers were attacked in the strait yesterday afternoon (20 July). The IRGC confirmed that fires had broken out on two tankers that had tried to pass through the “unsafe southern route” in the strait. Another vessel was hit 17nm east of Fujairah yesterday evening.

A tanker reported having been struck by a projectile about 8nm north-east of Limah (Oman).

The IRGC has once again warned that vessels travelling through the Strait of Hormuz must coordinate with Tehran before crossing, or potentially face attack.

Regional

Yemen

The Houthi group yesterday (20 July) announced it would prevent maritime navigation to Saudi ports, in response to the exchange of missiles last week and the ongoing blockade of Sanaa airport: the group accused Riyadh of besieging Yemen.

If conducted, this would involve a naval blockade of the Bab Al Mandeb Strait, significantly limiting opportunities for Saudi oil exports. Saudi exports have already dropped by 36% over the last two weeks, in the wake of Houthi threats to shipping.

Bahrain

Warning sirens were sounded in Bahrain several times yesterday afternoon. Bahraini authorities said that Iranian drones had attacked air navigation systems, but that operations were unaffected.

Jordan

The Jordanian military confirmed yesterday evening that it had intercepted three Iranian missiles; this morning it confirmed it had intercepted five Iranian drones, and would continue to monitor its airspace.

Kuwait

Yesterday afternoon, the Kuwaiti military said that its air defence was engaging Iranian missiles and drones.

Diplomacy

Reports emerged early this morning (21 July) that mediation efforts are ongoing between Washington and Tehran, which helped to ease oil prices.

Travel

Aviation

AirFrance has suspended flights to Riyadh until 24 July, to Dubai until 27 July, and to Beirut until 02 August.

Advice

- Reconsider all travel to Israel, Iran and Lebanon (especially south of the Litani River, Dahiye in Beirut, and in the Beqaa Valley).
- Be aware that US facilities throughout the Gulf are potential targets for Iranian attacks, and avoid all such sites whenever possible.
- Monitor international media and relevant embassy/diplomatic advisories to remain aware of any fresh developments and to ensure receipt of all attack warnings, and follow all guidelines.
- Ensure awareness of the nearest shelter in the event of air sirens.
- Avoid any demonstrations or gatherings in the region that appears to be linked to the US/Israel – Iran conflict.
- Globally, reconsider travel to any locations with links to Israel or Judaism.
- Aviation travellers should anticipate schedule changes and limited seat availability, should allow additional connection time and should confirm flight status directly with the operating airline before travelling to the airport.
- If you need further support, or wish to discuss options for evacuation, call NGS.

Contact us

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