



**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 23–24, against the backdrop of US President Trump's five-day postponement of his ultimatum to target Iran's power plants if the Strait of Hormuz is not secured, and his announcement that negotiations will take place during these days. As of the time of writing, the prospects for negotiations remain unclear, with each actor providing conflicting information. On March 23, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf denied that negotiations had been held with the US, stating that assertions that talks had occurred constituted fake news intended to "manipulate the financial and oil markets." On the other hand, President Trump stated that Iran wants to make a deal and that US officials were holding talks with a "respected" Iranian leader, but not Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei. Unconfirmed reports citing Pakistani officials on March 23 indicate that direct talks on ending the war could be held in Islamabad in the coming days. Neither US nor Iranian officials have confirmed such a meeting as of writing.

Even if mediation efforts succeed in facilitating talks, gaps in positions, distrust, and the risk of miscalculation will likely remain extremely high over the coming days. Despite mixed messaging, US reinforcements are being deployed to the region and might arrive as early as March 27.

On March 23, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that Israel would continue military operations in Iran and Lebanon concurrent with discussions around a ceasefire agreement. The US Central Command also reported continued offensive operations as part of Operation Epic Fury on March 23.

### Iranian actions

On March 23, state-affiliated media, citing a military source, reported that Iran "has designed new surprises for the coming days in the war, the execution of which could produce very significant results." Additionally, Iran continued to launch missiles and UAVs toward Gulf states on March 23-24, including against Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait. Debris from interceptions caused power outages in Kuwait.

Besides its attacks on Gulf states, Iran continued to launch missiles toward Israel, causing damage and injuries in several areas of the country. This includes a direct impact of a cluster munition warhead, which authorities believe had a 100kg payload, in central Tel Aviv.

### **Other notable developments**

**Iran-Gulf:** Following the continued attacks on Gulf states, an unconfirmed report on March 23 suggested that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are 'inching toward' joining the conflict against Iran. The report indicates that Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, is eager to re-establish deterrence and is reportedly close to deciding on direct participation in the attacks. This reflects the attacked countries' inclination to retaliate directly against Iran. However, they will likely continue to face a dilemma in this regard, as Iran continues to demonstrate its capacity to target sensitive infrastructures and as Washington appears to be conveying messages that it wishes to end the war.

**Iraq:** Between March 23 and 24, a series of airstrikes targeted several Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) facilities across Iraq. These strikes reportedly resulted in the deaths of at least 14 operatives, including Saad al-Baiji, the PMF's Anbar regional commander. During the same period, Iraqi air defenses successfully intercepted UAVs targeting US assets at Harir Air Base in Erbil. Iran-backed factions in Mosul also reportedly launched an attack against a US-linked base in Syria's Hasakah Province, highlighting the spillover effect on Syria. Iraq's Ministry of Oil stated on March 23 confirming that domestic refineries remain fully operational with sufficient fuel stockpiles to ensure national energy stability.

**Oman:** On March 23, Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi emphasized that Muscat is actively working to secure safe passage arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz. Al-Busaidi asserted that the ongoing conflict, which he claimed was not of Iran's making, has already triggered widespread economic instability that is likely to intensify if hostilities persist. Notably, the US Embassy in Muscat issued a nationwide shelter-in-place advisory on March 23 in response to unspecified "ongoing activity." The advisory instructed US citizens to prepare for potential hazards, including projectile debris. Subsequently, the embassy lifted the measure in the Muscat area, leaving it in place for the rest of the country.

**Israel-Lebanon:** Hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah continued between March 23 and 24. Overnight, Hezbollah launched several barrages of rockets and UAVs toward Israel. On the morning of March 24, Hezbollah fired two volleys consisting of approximately 30 rockets toward the Haifa area. The IDF reported striking Hezbollah infrastructure in Beirut and other regions. Additionally, the IDF reported the destruction of the Al-Dallafa Bridge over the Litani River in southern Lebanon as part of a systematic demolition of such bridges in recent days. Concurrently, on the morning of March 24, the IDF reiterated evacuation notices for several areas in southern Lebanon. The order urges residents to move north of the Zahrani River.

## 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.
- Inclement weather conditions are also reported across the Gulf region, requiring vigilance, extra time for travel, and adherence to authorities' updates.
- 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.
- 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.
- **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. The US Embassy implemented a shelter-in-place procedure
- **Israel** is reducing operations at Ben Gurion International Airport to one departing flight per hour. Arriving flights will not be subject to passenger limits, while outbound flights from Israel will be restricted to a maximum of 50 passengers per flight. Some Israeli carriers have transitioned to operating flights from Jordan's Aqaba and Egypt's Taba due to current constraints.

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