

# Get your facts Strait

## Strait Of Hormuz Under Siege, Threatening Global Energy Security

Harshil Bedi, XII B & Shambhavi Sharma, XII F, AIS Pushp Vihar

Long simmering tensions between Iran, the United States, and Israel has pushed one of the world's most critical maritime passages - the Strait of Hormuz - into the global spotlight. A series of coordinated US-Israel airstrikes were carried out on Iranian military and nuclear targets between February 14-18, 2026, with the confrontation reaching a breaking point on February 21, when Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was assassinated in a targeted strike. In retaliation, Iranian authorities announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to 'enemy vessels' on March 2, severely disrupting global shipping. US President Donald Trump demanded the reopening of the strait, warning of consequences. Despite this, closure continued - tankers got stalled, insurance costs surged, and oil markets reacted sharply.

### The importance of geography

The Strait of Hormuz lies between Iran to the north and Oman's Musandam Peninsula to the south, stretching roughly 167 km in length and varying between 35 and 97 km in width. Despite appearing broad on maps, safe navigation occurs through narrow shipping lanes only a few km wide. The region experiences an intensely hot and dry climate, accompanied by haze,

dusty winds, and frequent morning fog that reduces visibility for vessels. These weather conditions further complicate navigation and heighten risks during periods of military tension. The close proximity of the Iranian and Omani coasts to the shipping lanes gives the two nations a strategic edge in monitoring passing vessels and potentially controlling the strait.

### The economics of oil

Approximately 20 million barrels of oil pass through the strait each day, accounting for nearly one-fifth of global petroleum consumption and a major share of seaborne energy trade. Under normal circumstances, more than 100 ships transit the strait daily, transporting oil and LPG that power economies from India to Japan and beyond. Asia depends heavily on this route: Japan sources over 90% of its crude oil imports from the Gulf region, while India relies on the strait for nearly half of its oil imports. Europe and other global markets also remain indirectly tied to its stability through energy pricing. Saudi Arabia and the UAE operate pipelines

that bypass the strait, but their combined capacity handles only a fraction of daily exports and cannot transport large volumes of natural gas. Alternative routes are longer, costlier, and vulnerable to security risks, making full avoidance virtually impossible for most energy traders.

### The picture from ground zero

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the waterway guarantees transit passage for all nations. Nevertheless, Iran exerts substantial influence through its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy and military installations on nearby islands. The United States has countered Iranian dominance through its Fifth Fleet, headquartered in Bahrain, alongside missile interceptions and coordinated operations from regional bases in Qatar and the UAE. Recent military exchanges intensified naval patrols across the Gulf. To facilitate its closure of the strait, Iran adopted the tactics of sea mines, ship seizures, and radio warnings, which discouraged commercial traffic, reportedly reducing vessel movement through the strait by 70 percent.

### The current state of Strait

Nearly 88% of India's crude oil is imported, with about half transiting through the Strait of Hormuz. Supply disruptions triggered an acute LPG shortage, raising commercial gas prices to 195.50 INR for a 19-kg cylinder, while domestic rates remained unchanged. But India was able to breathe a sigh of relief when Iran on March 24 announced that it will allow 'non-hostile' ships to pass safely through the strait. As of March 31, Indian authorities reported that 18 Indian-flagged vessels remained stranded, while eight had safely crossed. But the biggest relief for all has come in the form of the announcement of a two-week ceasefire agreed between Iran and the US. The US' demand is that shipping traffic be allowed to move through the strait. Iran, on the other hand, has called for a halt to all attacks against it. The ceasefire, however, is not without conditions, and its stability will depend on negotiations over a 10-point proposal put forward by Iran, which includes the removal of sanctions against it and the withdrawal of US military from the region. Israel, meanwhile, has said it supports Trump's move to suspend strikes on Iran but insists that the ceasefire does not include Lebanon. Whether this interlude is a turning point towards normalised shipping lanes or merely a prelude to renewed hostilities remains to be seen, as the world monitors with bated breath.

