

# Carriers 'stand ready' to cut Persian Gulf calls as security threat escalates



*The UAE port of Jebel Ali, which handled 15.5 million TEUs in 2024, has become the region's leading transshipment hub. Photo credit: Druid007 / Shutterstock.com.*

**Greg Knowler, Senior Editor Europe | Jun 23, 2025, 12:13 PM EDT**

Ocean carriers are poised to adjust schedules and omit key Persian Gulf transshipment hubs should Tehran carry out its threat to close the Strait of Hormuz to international shipping following the US bombing raids on Iranian nuclear facilities on Sunday.

A series of customer advisories were issued by carriers on Monday, emphasizing the safety of crew, vessels and cargo as the shipping companies closely monitor a rapidly deteriorating security situation.

“We are actively evaluating potential risks and stand ready to adjust our operations should conditions change,” Hapag-Lloyd said in an advisory. “At present, our vessels

continue to transit the Strait of Hormuz. The safety and well-being of our crews and ships remain our highest priority.”

The US launched airstrikes on three of Iran’s nuclear sites at Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan early Sunday in a dramatic escalation of the war between Iran and Israel. Iran’s parliament voted on June 22 in support of closing the Strait of Hormuz, although the final decision will be made by the Supreme Leader in consultation with the Supreme National Security Council. As of Monday, the only entrance to the Persian Gulf remained open to shipping.

Lars Jensen, CEO of consultant Vespucci Maritime and a *Journal of Commerce* analyst, said how and where Iran would retaliate against US interests in the region was being closely monitored.

“But for commercial shipping, the question is not whether or not vessels are attacked — the question is whether or not the risk itself is sufficient to cause a change in vessel deployment to reduce traffic through the Strait of Hormuz,” Jensen wrote in a LinkedIn post.

In a country risk report Monday, S&P Global Maritime Intelligence noted that Iran’s leadership now almost certainly perceives a severe threat to its survival, whether direct or indirect, and that is likely to heavily influence decision making.

“We expect Iran’s response to first remain focused on continued ballistic missile and [drone] attacks on Israel [and] being likely to attempt to impede transit through the Strait of Hormuz,” the report noted. Disrupting ship transits could include vessel seizures, GPS/AIS spoofing and the use of military boats to harass vessels, it added.

CMA CGM said in its customer advisory that “the geopolitical context is evolving.”

“At this stage, we confirm that shipping activities are proceeding as normal in the area, and that our operations and logistics chains remain unchanged,” the carrier stated. “We continue to ensure full service coverage across all routes and ports of call.”

However, ocean visibility provider eeSea noted that CMA CGM’s CMA-LMX service has been renamed and rerouted. The Europe-Middle East service that has been operating in the Persian Gulf since September 2024 has dropped calls to Jebel Ali, Abu Dhabi and Jubail in the Gulf and has added an additional call to the Turkish port of Ambarli near Istanbul.

The service is now advertised under the name CMA-LRX (Levant Red Sea Express) and will see a reduction of three slots and a total roundtrip time cut in half from 42 to 21

days.

## Hormuz closure would impact key transshipment hub

Any closure of the Strait of Hormuz will be felt first in the energy markets. According to Platts, a sister company of the *Journal of Commerce* within S&P Global, more than 17 million barrels of crude oil each day move through Hormuz, coming not just from Iran, but from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar. That is more than 20% of daily global crude production.

But container traffic would face significant disruption as well, with 4% of global volume passing through the strait in 2024, primarily destined for the United Arab Emirates' transshipment hubs of Jebel Ali and Khalifa, and for the ports of Dammam in Saudi Arabia and Doha in Qatar.

Jebel Ali, which handled 15.5 million TEUs in 2024, has become the region's leading transshipment hub with feeder services connecting ports across the Persian Gulf, South Asia and East Africa. A blockade of Hormuz would see calls diverted to neighboring Indian, Omani and East African ports, where a surge in transshipment demand could lead to congestion and delays, a report from S&P Global Market Intelligence noted.

Multipurpose carrier AAL Shipping said in a statement Monday it was "deeply concerned" with the war between Israel and Iran and its impact on shipping in the region.

"While our normal trade lane schedules currently remain unaffected, we are monitoring the situation and taking all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of our crew and cargo as we trade regional waters for our customers," AAL said.

But the carrier warned that there was also a rising cost element to the deteriorating situation in the Middle East.

"We would highlight that such evolving threats can lead to increased insurance premiums and other security-related costs, affecting operational considerations for all parties," it said.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the war, Maersk announced it was cutting calls to the Israeli port of Haifa in the Mediterranean.

"After carefully analyzing threat risk reports regarding the ongoing conflict between Israel and Iran — particularly the potential risks of calling specific Israeli ports and their implications for the safety of our crews — Maersk has made the decision to

temporarily suspend vessel calls at the Port of Haifa, Israel, and also suspend cargo acceptance for Haifa,” the carrier said in an advisory Friday.

*Contact Greg Knowler at [greg.knowler@spglobal.com](mailto:greg.knowler@spglobal.com).*

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