

## Maersk forced to ship fuel from US, Europe as Asia bunkers start to run dry



*The Port of Salalah, one of Maersk's main bunkering stations in the Middle East, is currently unable to refuel the carrier's vessels. Photo credit: Ivan Kuzkin / Shutterstock.com.*

[Greg Knowler, Senior Editor Europe](#) | Mar 11, 2026, 11:54 AM EDT

The disruption to oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz is forcing Maersk to take the unprecedented step of filling ships with fuel in the US and Europe and transferring the bunkers to vessels in Asia, the carrier's chief commercial officer said Wednesday.

Karsten Kildahl told the *Journal of Commerce* in an interview that in the past two days, several of Maersk's bunker suppliers in key areas in the Middle East and Asia have been unable to refuel the carrier's vessels.

"We've had to start moving oil around ourselves because we don't have enough supplies where we need them," Kildahl said. "In Asia, nearly half of their supplies come from the Gulf area, so some of the vessels leaving the US and Europe are filled with as

much oil as we possibly can, and then we transport the fuel to other vessels we connect with in Asia.”

About one-fifth of the world’s crude oil and refined products — 20 million barrels per day — is exported via the Strait of Hormuz, but that slowed to a trickle after the US and Israel began air strikes on Iran on Feb. 28. More than 10 ships have been attacked since the war started, and soaring war risk insurance is keeping most commercial shipping out of the region, including oil tankers.

With the flow of waterborne oil suspended, reports out of China say suppliers are rationing fuel in anticipation of growing shortages, while bunkering centers such as Salalah in Oman are no longer able to fulfil fuel orders, Kildahl said.

“Salalah is one of our main bunker ports in the Gulf, but we’ve not been able to bunker there for the past two days, so we need to transfer bunkers from one place to another,” he said. “The main concern right now is how do we safeguard the supply of oil?”

## **Tanker chartering not an option**

Chartering a tanker to transport oil to where it is needed was not an option, Kildahl said, with available vessels in short supply.

“In the short term, we have started bunkering in less efficient locations with a higher cost and more difficult logistics behind it, and over time we will have to significantly beef this up if [the war drags on],” he warned. “That is where you will have the risk of a larger impact, much more than the 7% of world cargo flow that goes in and out of the Gulf.”

Oil prices, meanwhile, have rocketed higher. S&P Global Energy, a sister company of the *Journal of Commerce*, on Wednesday assessed the price of 0.5% sulfur marine bunker fuel in Singapore at \$1,050 per metric ton, up from \$519/metric ton the day before the war began.

Carriers have responded by rolling out “emergency” surcharges.

Maersk on Tuesday announced a global emergency bunker surcharge of \$400 per FEU, joining Hapag-Lloyd, CMA CGM and Mediterranean Shipping Co. in implementing similar fuel surcharges. Kildahl said the ship-to-ship transfers, moving oil from the US and Europe to Asia, and changing fuel supply patterns was creating additional expenses for the carrier, on top of rising bunker prices.

With the Persian Gulf out of bounds, congestion is growing at other ports in the region with carriers looking to discharge cargo that had already departed Asia when booking

suspensions were announced on March 1.

Most of the carriers are prioritizing urgent cargo, such as food and pharmaceuticals, but Kildahl said at some point “other cargo will become urgent,” such as aluminum and petrochemicals and polyethylene that are raw materials for plastics production.

“Those products can’t float out right now realistically, and so is that a problem tomorrow? No, it’s not,” he said. “It’s not a problem next week either, but at some point, it will be.”

## **‘End-of-voyage’ disruptions**

For general and non-urgent cargo, MSC, CMA CGM and Yang Ming are among the carriers that have declared “end-of-voyage” for Persian Gulf-bound containers already onboard vessels. That cargo status means the carriers are unable to fulfill obligations on a bill of lading, and when the containers are offloaded at a port, they become the responsibility of the cargo owner.

Kildahl said Maersk has about 40,000 TEUs that are shipped in and out of the Persian Gulf every week, and that bookings have been suspended to avoid diverted volume collapsing terminals in the region.

But instead of declaring end-of-voyage, Maersk has taken a different approach, offering shippers three options: Keeping the cargo in temporary storage, having it returned to the port of departure, or delivering it to another destination for onward transport by another mode.

“We are using Salalah and Khor Fakkan for cargo that comes from the east and are securing trucking capacity to take it into the Gulf,” Kildahl said. “For cargo that comes from Europe, we focus mainly on Jeddah and are deploying trucks to take the cargo across the Arabian Peninsula through the desert.

“We don’t think it is a fantastic solution for any customer to get an end-of-voyage declaration,” he added. “If the customer doesn’t want any of the options, we may be forced into an end-of-voyage declaration, but I doubt we will come to that.”

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

© 2026 S&P Global. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.

You are permitted to print or download extracts from this material for your personal use only. None of this material may be used for any commercial or public use. For more information on reprints/eprints, please visit <https://subscribe.joc.com/mediasolutions/>.