

Ocean carriers wait for clarity on safe Hormuz passage after US-Iran ceasefire



The Strait of Hormuz is a crucial waterway for ocean traffic in and out of the Persian Gulf. Photo credit: Peter Hermes Furian / Shutterstock.com.

[Greg Knowler, Senior Editor Europe](#) | Apr 8, 2026, 11:11 AM EDT

The shipping industry is awaiting details from the US and Iran on how to transit the Strait of Hormuz safely following a narrow two-week ceasefire window agreed to Wednesday between Washington and Tehran.

As part of the deal, Iran said it would allow shipping to resume through the strait with vessel passages coordinated by the Iranian military, but it has not yet issued any technical details. Complicating matters is that Iran has proposed a toll system for Hormuz passage, with Tehran suggesting it would charge vessels \$2 million for transiting and split the fee with neighboring Oman.

And underscoring the sensitivity around transits, a container ship near the strait received a message Wednesday from the Iranian navy warning that operators needed permission from authorities or vessels would be targeted and attacked, according to a source close to the matter who didn't want to be identified.

“In the next couple of days, we will have to see what really happens and how many of the ships can go in and out, and then we'll have to stay close to that situation to judge what's going to happen after those 14 days,” Hapag-Lloyd CEO Rolf Habben Jansen told customers in a briefing Wednesday.

As negotiations between the US and Iran get underway, the top priority from ocean carriers is to remove an estimated 170 container ships representing 450,000 TEUs, or about 1.5% of global capacity, that have been stuck in the Persian Gulf since the Middle East conflict began on Feb. 28. Hapag-Lloyd has six ships comprising a total of 25,000 TEUs in the Gulf.

But the two-week window is too short and too uncertain for carriers to make long-term plans for reestablishing disrupted Middle East networks, Habben Jansen noted.

“Hopefully it remains open, and then we can start looking at how quickly we can return to the Persian Gulf,” he said. “How that will go over the upcoming couple of weeks depends on how stable it is, but you should assume that it will still take six to eight weeks or so until we get back to a more normal situation.

“Maybe on the back of that, we will also see the Red Sea open up again, but first priority is now clearly with the strait,” he added.

Iran issues 10-point plan

Whether the ceasefire will result in a lasting peace settlement remains highly uncertain. In agreeing to the ceasefire, Iran also issued an ambitious 10-point plan in a statement to its National Security Council that includes an end to US military presence in the region, cessation of war by the US “on all fronts” in the Middle East, Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz, the lifting of all primary and secondary sanctions, and compensation for reconstruction from war damages.

Bimco chief shipping analyst Niels Rasmussen said if it was considered safe to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, ships trapped within the Persian Gulf will want to leave as soon as possible.

“They will load cargoes prior to leaving but only if loading does not jeopardize the chance of leaving within the two weeks,” Rasmussen said in a statement from the shipping association Wednesday.

“Unless the two-week window is quickly lengthened, I doubt there will be a large influx of ships into the Persian Gulf,” he said. “Partly because many ships have already sailed to other regions and partly because they do not want to risk being trapped after the two-week window closes.”

Any rush to sail through the Strait of Hormuz without prior coordination with the US and Iran “would entail heightened risk and would not be advisable,” said Jakob Larsen, Bimco’s chief safety and security officer.

An uncoordinated exit would present navigational risks from collisions and groundings in the narrow waterway, while the potential lack of communication within the depleted Iranian military and political system presents other problems, he noted.

“Iran has announced that they want to be in control of transits in the strait,” Larsen said in the Bimco statement. “However, Iran’s military command structure has been severely impacted by attacks in recent weeks which could lead to misunderstandings between the Iranian authorities approving transits and the Iranian military formations that control the weapons.

“Such misunderstandings could potentially lead to unintended targeting and attacks on ships approved for transit,” he added.

Reestablishing oil flows ‘will take months’

News of the ceasefire saw oil prices falling by 13% on Wednesday, although they remain more than 30% above pre-conflict levels. 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 conflict began.

Still, even if the ceasefire holds and shipping resumes through Hormuz, it will take months to reestablish disrupted oil and gas production in the Persian Gulf, according to Tristan Abbey, an administrator at the US Energy Information Administration (EIA).

“Just as we had never before seen the strait close, we’ve never seen it reopen ... what exactly that looks like remains to be seen,” Abbey said in an EIA market forecast released Tuesday before the ceasefire announcement. “Full restoration of flows will take months. Our modeling indicates that fuel prices will continue to rise until these variables resolve.”

The EIA forecast noted that limited oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz caused oil storage to fill quickly in countries that relied on the waterway for exports. As a result, the EIA estimated that Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain

collectively shut in 7.5 million b/d of crude oil production in March, with production shut-ins to rise to 9.1 million b/d in April.

The EIA outlook assumes the conflict will not persist past April, and that traffic through the Strait of Hormuz will gradually resume. Under those assumptions, the agency expects production shut-ins will fall to 6.7 million b/d in May and return close to pre-conflict levels in late 2026.

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