

IAM Middle East Core Members Management Board Report

Monday May 4, 2026

Summary

Moving companies across the Middle East region continues to remain operational but shipping conditions are still not normal. While contingency routings are available, ocean freight remains disrupted and airfreight capacity is limited to mainly regional carriers.

United Arab Emirates

Imports are being routed through contingency UAE ports of Fujairah and Khor Fakkan which are based in the Gulf of Oman (UAE East Coast). This is the recommended routing for imports in terms of least additional cost and transit time. For exports, containers are being rerouted via Oman (Sohar and Salalah) and Saudi Arabia (Jeddah). Agents should budget for additional inland haulage, War Risk Surcharges and longer transit times. Current ocean freight delays are generally expected to be around 2 to 4 additional weeks, depending on routing and carrier acceptance. Most shipping liners are getting sold out 2-4 weeks in advance due to high demand via these alternate ports). Emirates and Etihad remain operational for airfreight, but rates remain elevated. Airfreight delays of approximately 5 to 7 days should be expected.

Road freight remains operational and continues to be one of the more reliable options for inter-regional movement, although some border clearance delays may occur.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi West Coast ports continue to operate, with imports and exports mostly through Jeddah. War Risk Surcharges remain applicable and ocean freight transit delays of approximately 1 to 6 additional weeks should still be expected. Saudi East Coast ports remain impacted due to the Strait of Hormuz disruption, with import and export activity paused.

Saudi Airlines remains operational for airfreight, but international carrier capacity remains limited. Airfreight delays of approximately 3 to 10 days should be expected. Road freight remains operational, with normal cross-border movements continuing.

Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait

Ocean freight continues to be routed mainly via Saudi West Coast ports, particularly Jeddah. Direct port activity remains paused, and both import and export movements are dependent on alternative routing solutions.

Qatar Airways, Gulf Air and Kuwait Airways remain operational for airfreight, but international carrier options remain limited. Airfreight delays of approximately 3 to 10 days should be expected.

Road freight remains operational, with additional time required in some cases for border clearance.

Oman

Oman remains the least impacted with free ocean and air passage to rest of the world. However, due to volume pressure from neighboring countries especially UAE, Ocean Freight is getting booked out 2-4 weeks in advance.

General Regional Guidance

Across the region, agents should continue to verify the following before confirming shipments:

1. Sea Freight booking confirmation and routing.
 2. Inland haulage charges to/ from alternative ports.
 3. Whether War Risk Surcharges apply.
 4. Whether storage may be required before shipment dispatch.
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Relevant Updates in last 7 days:

- **U.S. launched “Project Freedom” to reopen Hormuz:** The U.S. has started a new naval mission called Project Freedom to escort or guide stranded commercial ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Two American-flagged ships reportedly crossed the strait under U.S. military guidance.
- **Iran says U.S. naval movement violates the ceasefire:** Iran has warned commercial ships and tankers not to move unless coordinated with Iran’s military. Iranian media claimed missiles hit a U.S. vessel, but the U.S. denied that any Navy vessel was struck.
- **Peace talks are stuck:** Iran has offered to reopen Hormuz if the U.S. lifts its blockade and the war ends. The U.S. side appears unsatisfied with the proposal, especially because Iran wants to delay nuclear-program discussions. Trump said he is “not satisfied” with Iran’s latest plan, though talks are continuing.

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