Friday, October 30, 2026

Changes in Global Trade and Hydrocarbon Shipping Routes in the Middle East

Strait of Hormuz shipping routes



- The escalating US-Israel-Iran conflict since February 2026 caused the largest disruption to Middle East trade routes in decades, reshaping the global hydrocarbon trade. The largest shipping companies worldwide (MSC, Maersk, Hapag-Lloyd, CMA CGM) suspended passages through the Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal, forcing ships to take alternative, longer routes.

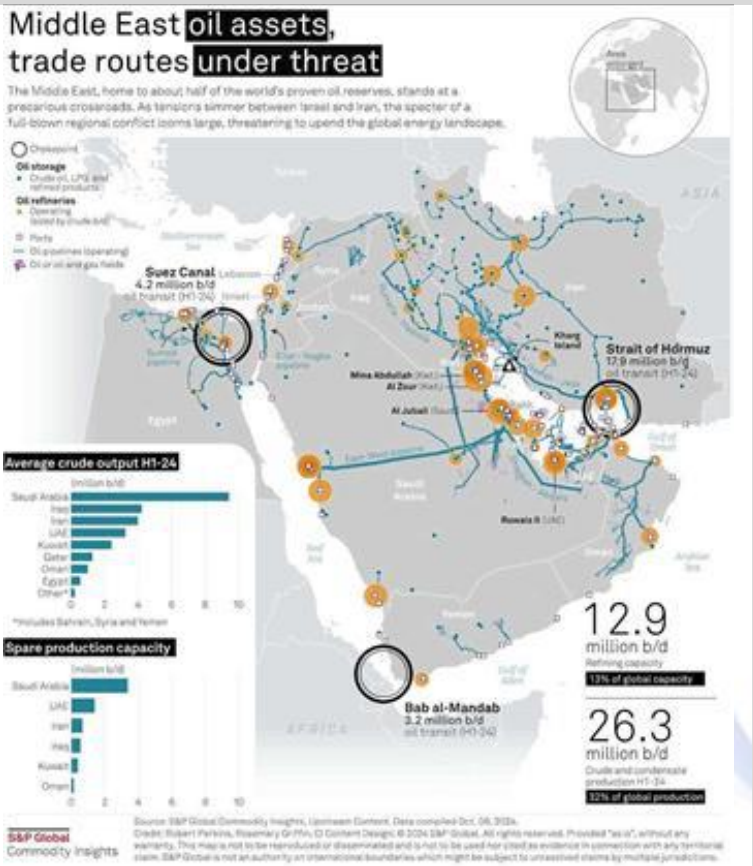
Impacts on the Strait of Hormuz / Strait of Hormuz map



- The Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil supply passes, has been affected by blockades and threats of naval mines. About 33% of the world's fertilizers (sulfur, ammonia) used to pass through the passage before the conflict, but now thousands of ships have been trapped in the Persian Gulf. DP World temporarily suspended operations at Dubai's Jebel Ali port after a fire, worsening the disruptions.

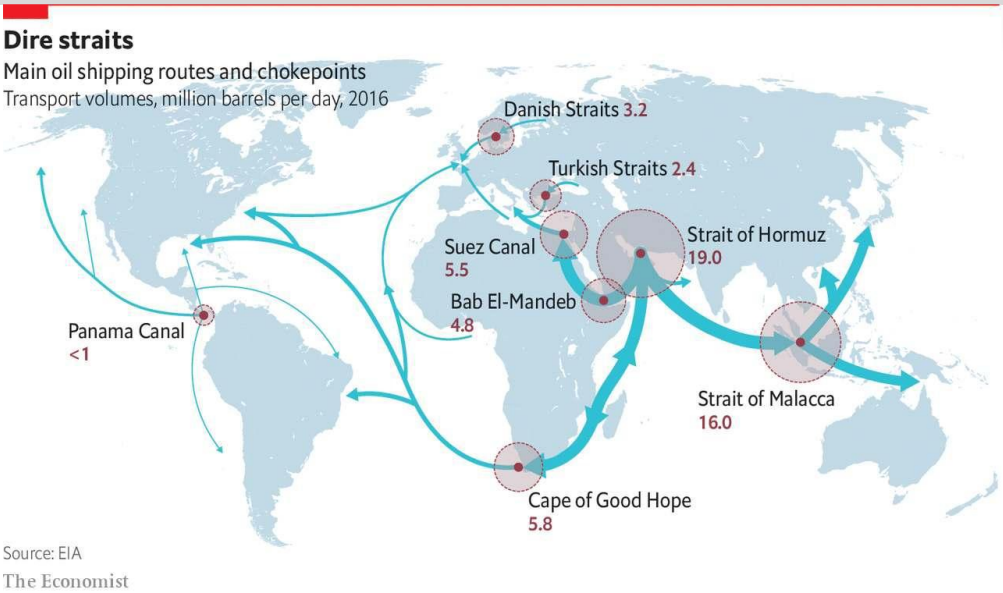
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Alternative Hydrocarbon Routes



- The Gulf countries are accelerating the use of alternative pipelines and corridors to bypass the Strait of Hormuz. Saudi Arabia uses the East-West pipeline (capacity 7 million barrels/day) to the Red Sea port of Yanbu, while the United Arab Emirates relies on the Habshan-Fujairah pipeline (1.5-1.8 million barrels/day). Iran is considering the use of the Jask terminal via the Goreh-Jask pipeline to bypass the Straits.

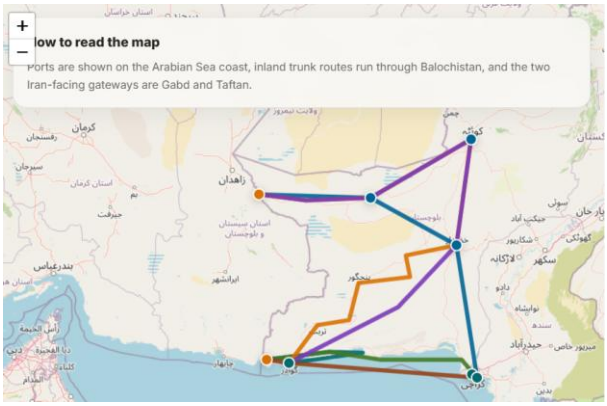
Rerouting Shipping Lines



- Shipping companies are imposing emergency "war risk" fees of $1,500-2,000 per container and rerouting ships around the Cape of Good Hope. This route adds thousands of kilometers and weeks of delay, increasing transportation costs and inflation on a global scale. Over 3,000 containers destined for Iran have been trapped at the Karachi port in Pakistan

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Pakistan re-routing lines to IRAN



- Pakistan has approved six official transit routes for transporting goods to Iran under a new 2026 trade order, aimed at regulating cargo movement amid delays at Karachi port. The routes are: Gwadar–Gabd; Karachi/Port Qasim–Lyari–Ormara–Pasni–Gabd; Karachi/Port Qasim–Khuzdar–Dalbandin–Taftan; Gwadar–Turbat–Hoshab–Panjgur–Nagg–Besima–Khuzdar–Quetta/Lakpass–Dalbandin–Nokundi–Taftan; Gwadar–Liari–Khuzdar–Quetta/Lakpass–Dalbandin–Nokundi–Taftan; and Karachi/Port Qasim–Gwadar–Gabd.
- The move comes as thousands of Iran-bound containers are reportedly stuck at Karachi port due to regional disruptions affecting trade and shipping routes.

Middle East New Trade Corridors



- Governments and logistics organizations are accelerating discussions for alternative corridors, such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), which connects Asia, the Gulf, and Europe through integrated ports and rail infrastructure. Saudi Arabia is reviving historical land trade routes to reduce dependency on maritime routes. Iraq is considering pipelines to Oman (Basra-Duqm) and Jordan (Basra-Aqaba) as long-term solutions.

Oman – Turkey – Bulgaria (Europe) Land/Rail Trade Corridors

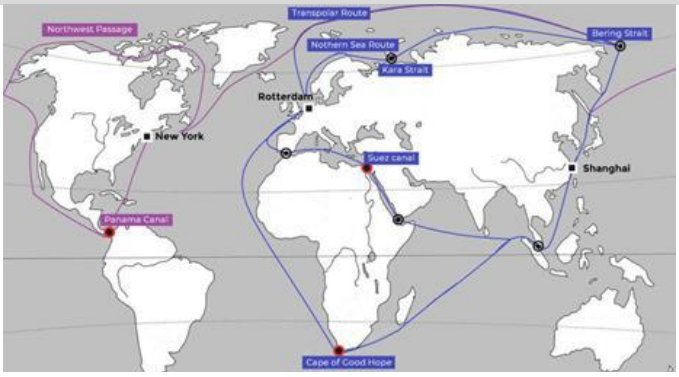


- Turkey's land connectivity initiative is reshaping the debate over future trade routes in the region. The Turkish government is considering the revival and expansion of the Hejaz Railway from Turkey through Syria and Jordan into Oman, which may later be extended further southward to Saudi Arabia, in a manner similar to the Development Road of Iraq that would act as a land transport route that is capable of bypassing the risks associated with transit via the Strait of Hormuz. At the same time, Turkey and Iraq have been working on building their joint border security in order to make these overland routes a viable alternative to current trade routes in the region.

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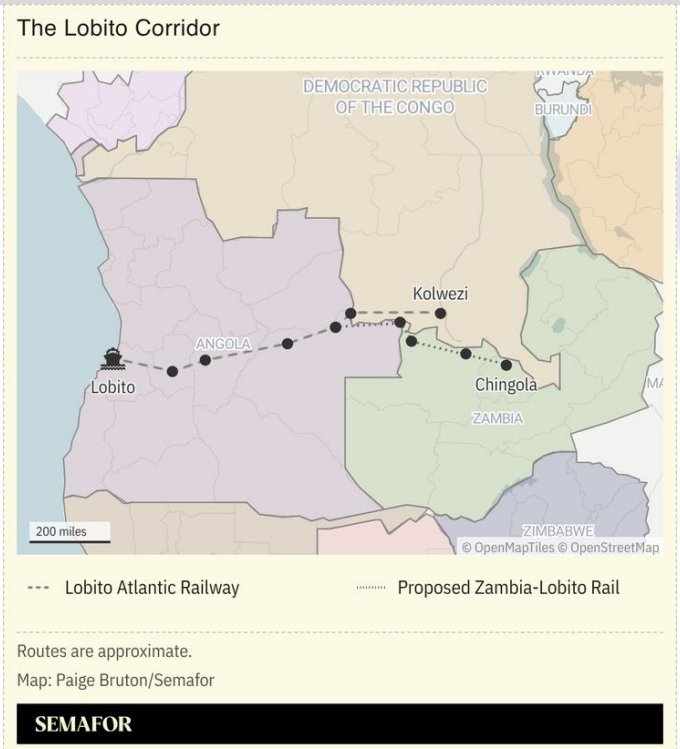
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Global New Trade Corridors



- Greek exports to the Middle East have been affected, with a 25.5% decrease to Iran in 2025. The crisis impacts the global supply chain, with a risk of increased inflation due to higher energy and transportation costs. 2026 is characterized by a permanent restructuring of logistics, with the Cape of Good Hope route, the Middle Corridor, and regional logistics hubs gaining greater importance.

Global New Trade Corridors – West Africa (South)



- Africa Finance Corporation has selected preferred builders for the Lobito Corridor's Zambia and Angola rail works. Final contracts and financing remain pending
- Key point

- Zambia: Webuild, Mota-Engil, and İçtaş were selected for a new 515-kilometre railway.
- Angola: Mota-Engil and Odebrecht were selected for the Angolan section.
- Next steps: Contract talks are expected to take eight to 12 weeks, with financial agreements targeted for late 2027.
- Cost: The wider Zambia–Lobito link could cost up to $5 billion; AFC has not confirmed a final price.

- Why it matters
- The corridor would connect Zambia's and DR Congo's mineral-producing regions to Angola's Lobito port, providing an alternative export route for copper and cobalt while supporting regional industrial development.
- AFC reports annual cargo commitments of roughly 1 million tonnes, but throughput timing depends on contracts, financing, and infrastructure delivery..

https://www.semafor.com/article/10/27/2026/africa-finance-corporation-names-lobito-corridor-builders

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