



INDUSTRY UPDATE OCT 26

Shipping, trade lanes and cargo | UAE, Saudi Arabia & Oman

Welcome to our first edition

Over the past months, our clients have been asking us the same questions: what is really happening on the ground in the Gulf, how long will my shipment take, and why does it cost more? We have been answering them one call and one email at a time. The AKM Industry Update is our way of sharing that picture with all of you at once.

Every month, we will bring you:

- **Trade lane and port developments** in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman, with more markets to follow.
- **Cost and surcharge movements** that affect your shipments, explained in plain terms.
- **Headline vs reality:** what the news says, and what it means for cargo.

We will keep it short, operational and useful: something you can read in ten minutes and act on the same day.

Hormuz: still closed, and attacks are rising

Talks may resume, but there is no reopening date. Plan Q4 as if nothing changes.

Traffic through the Strait of Hormuz remains close to a standstill. IMF PortWatch recorded just four transits on 4 October, against a pre-crisis average of around 85 a day. Brent crude is holding at around USD 100 a barrel.

The security picture has worsened. Attacks on tankers last week reached their highest weekly level since the war began, and 12 crew members were injured in a separate strike. On the diplomatic side, Iran says it is reviewing the US response to its seven-point plan, but its parliament speaker has stated the strait will not reopen until all of Iran's conditions are met.

Container ships were the first to stop and will be the last to return. A restart will depend on insurers covering vessels again, not on a political announcement alone. We expect a gap of several weeks between the two.

If your cargo does transit the strait: Maersk has announced that any vessel transiting the Strait of Hormuz will incur an additional fee of USD 1,000 per container, on top of other emergency charges. If this applies to your shipment, we will show it on your quote upfront.

Jebel Ali didn't break. The map did.

Seven months into the Gulf disruption, the question we hear most is no longer "when will it reopen?" but "how do we move cargo in the meantime, and at what cost?" In this edition: what has changed in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman, what it means for your bookings, and what we are watching next.

The short version: the ports are working; the routes are not. Capacity has shifted to the UAE east coast, to Saudi Arabia's Red Sea gateways and to Oman, and every shipment into the region now needs a routing decision that used to be automatic.

Figures and carrier positions as of 7 October 2026.

Gateway status board *Where each gateway stands today. Carrier rules change weekly: we confirm the best option for each shipment.*

Gateway	Status	What to know
Jebel Ali (direct by sea)	NO DIRECT CALLS	Undamaged and fully operational, but mainline ships are not calling. Cargo arrives by truck or feeder from the east coast.
Khor Fakkan / Fujairah (UAE east coast)	LIMITED	The main UAE entry point today. Truck queues of up to 12 hours; allow extra time for the truck journey.
Jeddah (Saudi Red Sea)	LIMITED	Open but congested. MSC charges a USD 500/TEU congestion surcharge. Maersk accepts Jeddah bookings for Saudi consignees only.
King Abdullah Port (Saudi Red Sea)	OPEN	The practical alternative to Jeddah. Maersk accepts dry cargo; MSC lets customers reroute here without changing contract terms.
Dammam / Jubail (Saudi Gulf coast)	NO DIRECT CALLS	Reached overland from Jeddah or King Abdullah Port. Plan the truck leg and customs transit carefully.
Sohar / Salalah (Oman)	OPEN	Open and operating. Onward trucking to the UAE and Saudi Arabia is restricted by some carriers, and Iran has threatened to block the corridor along Oman's coast, so we check the route before each booking.

Headline vs reality

The headline: Gulf oil exports hit their highest level since the war began.

The reality: Regional crude exports did recover to around 12.8 million barrels a day in September, and tankers are moving through Hormuz under naval protection. None of that applies to container shipping. The main container lines have not returned to the Gulf, and their booking restrictions are still in place. The only regular container moves through the strait today are a handful of state-backed feeder shuttles from Abu Dhabi, not mainline services.

What it means for you: Don't read an oil recovery as a reopening. For containerised cargo, the signal to watch is carriers lifting their Gulf booking suspensions, not barrels per day.

UAE: Jebel Ali is open, but cargo goes around it

The east coast is now the front door.

Jebel Ali is undamaged and fully operational. The problem is that ships cannot reach it. In the second quarter it handled 374,000 TEU (standard 20-foot container units), compared with 3.8 million a year earlier.

Cargo for Dubai and the rest of the UAE now arrives mainly at Khor Fakkan and Fujairah, outside the strait, and is trucked across. The cost is time: truck queues at these ports have reached 12 hours, against a turnaround of under half an hour at Jebel Ali in normal conditions. Investment is following the new route: DP World is building two new terminals in Fujairah under a 50-year agreement.

Our read: even when Hormuz reopens, the east coast will stay. A reliable Fujairah or Khor Fakkan route is now a permanent second way into the UAE.

Saudi Arabia: the advantage of two coasts

Jeddah is the region's pressure valve. King Abdullah Port is the relief valve.

Saudi Arabia is the only Gulf country with large container ports on both the Red Sea and the Gulf. After a record 2025 (8.3 million TEU, up 10.6%), volumes fell by almost 19% by April as ships stopped calling on the Gulf side.

Cargo for Riyadh and Dammam now lands on the Red Sea coast and crosses the country by truck, a route the industry calls the land bridge. Jeddah is expanding fast, with a dedicated truck road, almost double the number of port gates and new cranes, but demand is still ahead of capacity. Vessel waits of five to ten days have been reported, and MSC has added a congestion surcharge of USD 500 per TEU.

King Abdullah Port, about 120 km north of Jeddah, has become the practical alternative. Carriers are steering cargo there, and it is often the faster option for the land bridge.

Our read: the land bridge works, but it is decided on paperwork. When your documents are complete before departure, we clear customs in advance through FASAH, the Saudi online customs platform, and your cargo leaves the port days sooner.

Oman: a gateway with a queue

Useful as an alternative, not as a shortcut.

Sohar and Salalah sit outside the strait and took on a large share of diverted Gulf cargo from March onwards. Both are efficient ports, but they were never sized for this volume. Over the summer, container dwell times at Sohar rose from under 10 days to more than 30, as yards filled faster than feeders and trucks could clear them.

Onward trucking is the weak point. Maersk has paused landside bookings from Salalah and Sohar to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, and only local trucks are allowed inside the Sohar terminal.

A new risk emerged in early October: an Iranian official said Iran will soon block shipping routes it considers illegal, specifically the southern corridor along Oman's coast. If Iran follows through, transits towards Sohar would be directly exposed.

Our read: Oman works best for cargo that stays in Oman or moves on by feeder, and routing via Sohar now needs a fresh check before every booking. For the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the east coast and the Saudi Red Sea ports are usually the more predictable options.

Red Sea: an alternative, not a safe harbour

Routing via Saudi Arabia avoids Hormuz. It does not remove risk.

Attacks from Yemen on Saudi Arabia's main oil pipeline to the Red Sea show that the west coast is not risk-free. The southern entrance to the Red Sea remains closed to most large carriers, so ships between Asia and Europe still sail around Africa, adding one to two weeks. Published schedules on the connecting services are less reliable than they look, so build in extra time.

Costs: what's on the invoice

Surcharges now matter as much as the base rate.

Charge	Typical level	Notes
War risk and emergency conflict surcharges	USD 1,500/TEU; USD 3,500 reefer/special	Gulf routes: UAE, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Dammam, Jubail
Jeddah congestion surcharge (MSC)	USD 500/TEU	All cargo types to Jeddah
Emergency cost recovery (Maersk)	USD 500 per container	Contract bookings to the UAE; reviewed every two weeks
Inland trucking (east coast / land bridge)	Variable	Add queue time to transit estimates

Shipping lines have also added an emergency surcharge of USD 500 per container on contract bookings to the UAE, reviewed every two weeks.

Levels are indicative and change frequently. We confirm every charge with you at booking and show it line by line on your quote. No surprises on the invoice.

Beyond the Gulf: Panama Canal

A second squeeze on global capacity, on the other side of the world.

Panama is easing. After cutting daily transits over the summer because of drought, the Panama Canal Authority raised the maximum draft for the largest ships to 49 feet at the end of September and will return to 33 daily transits from 15 October. The water deficit has not gone away, though: a transit booking remains the only guarantee of a slot, and ships without one may face indefinite delays.

For cargo between Asia, the US East Coast and Latin America, this adds delay and cost at the same time as the Cape diversions. Through our trusted partner network, we plan around both, wherever your cargo is going.

What this means for you

- **Tell us early.** The earlier we know about a shipment, the more route and carrier options we can offer.
- **Expect longer transit times.** Allow one to two extra weeks on many routes, plus waiting time at the destination port.
- **Send complete documents.** Complete paperwork is what keeps cargo moving once it arrives, especially in Saudi Arabia.
- **Let us choose the route.** Gateways, carriers, surcharges and customs are ours to manage. We keep you updated at every step.
- **Every charge upfront.** Your quote shows each surcharge separately, with a validity date.

Plan ahead: February 2027

Two slowdowns overlap: Chinese New Year falls on 6 February 2027, when many factories and ports in Asia slow down for up to two weeks. Ramadan is expected to begin around 8 February, with shorter working hours across the Gulf, including at customs.

Our advice: if you have shipments planned for the first quarter, talk to us before mid-January so we can secure space and plan around both.

What we're watching in November

- Whether Iran accepts the US response to its seven-point plan, whether it acts on its threat to block the corridor along Oman's coast, and whether insurers start covering ships through Hormuz again.
- Progress on UAE East coast ports' congestions and east-coast truck queues. Carriers lifting or tightening their Gulf booking suspensions, starting with reefer and dangerous goods.
- Congestion at Jeddah and King Abdullah Port as Q4 volumes build.
- Water levels in Panama, and whether the return to 33 daily transits from 15 October holds.

Planning shipments into the UAE, Saudi Arabia or Oman in Q4? Talk to us before you book. We are on the ground in Dubai and happy to work through the routing with you.

A word on delays

We know delays are frustrating. Ports, carriers and customs are all working under pressure, and the current setup is still far from efficient. Alternative routes have been found, but the whole market now depends on the same few of them, and they were never built to replace the way the region used to work.

We are working closely with everyone in the chain: transport companies, carriers, port operators, customs brokers and our partners at origin and destination. We cannot promise that every shipment will arrive on time, and we would rather be honest about that than make promises the current situation does not allow. What we can promise is that we will do everything we can to get it there, and if something goes wrong, you will have our full effort until it is resolved.

Trust us to find the best balance of cost, speed and reliability for every shipment you move with us.

Thank you for your continued support of AKM.

Why work with AKM

Your logistics and shipping partner in the Gulf, with reach everywhere else.

On the ground in Dubai. We know which gateway and carrier work this week, and quote accordingly.

Transparent quotes. Every charge shown upfront and confirmed at booking.

Paperwork handled early, so your cargo keeps moving at the port.

One contact, global reach. Through our trusted partner network, we serve you at origin and destination worldwide.

Household goods and commercial cargo, from a single family move to a regular flow of freight.

Free routing check: send us the origin, destination and what you are shipping. Within one working day, we will come back with the best route, a realistic door-to-door time and an all-in cost. No obligation.

Reach out to your AKM main contact, or visit www.akmshipping.com

Santos Govinda and the AKM Team

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