

# MENAT

## Weekly Security Report

Week of 9–15 May 2026

<b>Date:</b>	15 May 2026
<b>DTG:</b>	150800Z MAY 2026
<b>Coverage:</b>	Friday 8 May 2026 06:00 – Friday 15 May 2026 06:00 Baghdad LT (7-day cycle)
<b>Geographic Scope:</b>	Middle East (GCC, Levant/Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Yemen), North Africa (Libya, Egypt), Türkiye, Sudan
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Risk Level Reference:

**MONITORING**  
Minimal threat

**ELEVATED**  
Increased vigilance

**HIGH**  
Significant risk

**CRITICAL**  
Severe / life-threatening

## 01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY &amp; KEY JUDGMENTS

BOTTOM  
LINE

The Iran conflict enters a phase of hardened deadlock. Iran's MOU response was rejected; the diplomatic track has stalled; the Lebanon ceasefire expires today; and China has aligned with the US on Hormuz reopening, removing Iran's key strategic backstop. Iraq's partial cabinet formation is the week's most positive governance development, but the unresolved Defence and Interior portfolios mean al-Zaidi's government remains structurally incomplete. The next 7–10 days will determine whether the conflict enters a period of resumed hostilities or finds a new diplomatic format that neither side has yet proposed.

## The Summary

- The reporting week was defined by a diplomatic reversal: Iran's 8 May response to the US Memorandum of Understanding was dismissed by President Trump as 'a piece of garbage' (11 May), and the ceasefire was declared 'on massive life support.' Iran's counter-proposal demanded an end to all hostilities before any nuclear negotiations could begin — a sequencing that the US has consistently and categorically rejected. The gap between the two positions widened materially this week, and the probability of a deal before the Lebanon ceasefire expiry (17 May, today) was near-zero entering the report date.
- The Trump–Xi summit in Beijing (13–14 May) was the week's most consequential diplomatic event. Both leaders agreed that the Strait of Hormuz must be opened and called on Iran to engage constructively. No binding deal emerged, but the joint signal — the world's two largest economies aligned on Hormuz reopening — produced a material oil price reaction: Brent fell to \$100/bbl on 14 May, its largest single-day drop in weeks. China's formal alignment with the US on Hormuz removes Tehran's ability to rely on Beijing as a diplomatic shield, significantly narrowing Iran's strategic options.
- Iraq's most significant political development in over a year occurred on 14 May: Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi was sworn in alongside 14 confirmed ministers, marking the end of a six-month governance vacuum following the November 2025 elections. The confirmed cabinet is notably free of any Iran-linked armed faction representatives — a direct consequence of sustained US pressure. However, the nine unfilled portfolios — including Defence and Interior, the two most security-sensitive ministries — remain contested among factional blocs and represent the most analytically important governance process in the region for the next 30 days.
- The Lebanon ceasefire, extended on 23 April to 17 May, reaches its formal expiry today. As of the report date, no further extension has been publicly announced. Israel conducted continued strikes in south Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley throughout the week, and Hezbollah maintained its calibrated low-level attack pattern. The 17 May expiry creates a hard decision point: Israel has stated that the absence of a permanent deal requires resumed large-scale operations, while the US is simultaneously managing the Iran MOU collapse and the Trump–Xi summit outcome. A further short extension is the most likely immediate outcome, but it carries diminishing diplomatic credibility.
- Hormuz entered its eleventh week of effective closure with 1,600 vessels stranded in the Gulf. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps turned back an LNG tanker from Qatar (11 May), demonstrating continued enforcement capacity. Trump announced he was considering resuming Project Freedom. Brent's fall to \$100/bbl on 14 May reflected China summit optimism rather than any change in Hormuz physical conditions. The Iran conflict is becoming a structural problem for BRICS, with multiple member

states directly impacted by the strait's closure.

- Sudan's conflict continued at severe intensity. The Rapid Support Forces struck the Kenana Sugar Company facility in White Nile State (3 May) — one of Sudan's most important pieces of economic infrastructure — further undermining food security. SAF continued drone operations in Kordofan. Libya's UNSMIL 4+4 Committee held its Paris session (12 May); the UNSC maritime inspections mandate vote is due before 25 May.

## Key Judgments

Judgment	Conf.	Why It Matters	Basis   Would Change If
China's alignment with the US on Hormuz reopening at the Beijing summit (13–14 May) is the single most strategically significant development of the reporting week — and possibly of the entire ceasefire period. Iran has used its BRICS membership and Beijing's energy dependence on Gulf oil as an implicit diplomatic shield. The joint Trump–Xi communiqué on Hormuz removes that shield. Iran cannot simultaneously position China as a strategic partner and ignore a joint US-China demand to reopen the strait. Tehran's options have narrowed materially.	High	Reduces Iran's diplomatic space and increases pressure to accept a Hormuz framework. Also signals to Russia that its military support offer (5,000 FPV drones) may not translate into diplomatic cover.	Basis: AP (15 May); The Guardian live coverage (14 May); NDTV Profit live updates (15 May); YouTube/TODAY (15 May); Washington Times (14 May).   Would change if: China reverses its Hormuz position under domestic political pressure; Iran makes a significant concession that restores Beijing's support; Russia provides comprehensive diplomatic and military cover that offsets Chinese pressure.
Iran's diplomatic strategy this week — demanding war cessation on all fronts before any nuclear discussions — is not a negotiating tactic; it is a statement of the regime's core sequencing doctrine. IRGC Major General Jafari's 11 May statement that Iran will not negotiate until the US accepts Iran's terms encapsulates this position. The US has repeatedly and explicitly rejected this sequencing. The structural gap between the two positions is not bridgeable within a two-week window. A deal, if it occurs, will require a face-saving formula that allows both sides to claim their sequencing was preserved — this has not yet been proposed by any mediator.	High	Means the current US-Iran diplomatic framework cannot produce a deal without a structural reformulation. Pakistan, China, or Oman may need to propose a new format in which both sequencing claims are simultaneously satisfied — e.g., a parallel-track 30-day period in which war cessation and nuclear discussions proceed concurrently.	Basis: ISW-CTP Special Report, 11 May 2026; Turkiye Today (11 May); Al Jazeera (12 May); NDTV Profit live (15 May).   Would change if: A third-party parallel-track formula proposed and accepted; Khamenei successor consolidation producing a different strategic calculus; economic collapse forcing regime pragmatist override of hardliner sequencing demand.

Judgment	Conf.	Why It Matters	Basis   Would Change If
<p>Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's partial cabinet (14 May) is analytically significant for what it does NOT contain: no minister from any Iran-linked armed faction was confirmed. This is an unprecedented outcome in post-2003 Iraqi politics and reflects the direct, structural effectiveness of US financial and sanctions pressure — the cash halt, the OFAC Maarij sanction, and Trump's explicit Maliki veto combined to produce a cabinet composition that would have been unimaginable six months ago. However, the nine unfilled portfolios, particularly Defence and Interior, remain the primary arena in which this achievement can be reversed. Control of the Defence and Interior ministries determines whether armed faction disarmament can proceed.</p>	High	<p>The composition of the Defence and Interior ministries will define whether al-Zaidi's government is a genuine strategic reorientation for Iraq or a cosmetic arrangement that leaves armed faction power intact. The next 30-60 days of portfolio negotiations are the most consequential governance process in the MENAT region.</p>	<p>Basis: Al Jazeera (14 May); The National (14 May); Washington Post (15 May); Social News XYZ (15 May).   Would change if: Coordination Framework succeeds in inserting an aligned figure as Defence or Interior minister; US restores cash flows before portfolio negotiations conclude, reducing leverage; Iran deal removes the strategic rationale for faction accommodation.</p>
<p>The Lebanon ceasefire's formal expiry today (17 May) does not automatically trigger resumed large-scale hostilities, but it does eliminate the diplomatic framework that has constrained both Israel and Hezbollah since 16 April. A short further extension — one to two weeks — is the most probable immediate outcome, given that the US is managing simultaneous Iran MOU collapse and post-China summit dynamics. However, each extension without substantive progress reduces Hezbollah's incentive to remain restrained and increases Israel's domestic political pressure to act. The ceasefire's shelf life is being consumed faster than a deal can be assembled.</p>	High	<p>Lebanon represents the most immediate kinetic risk in the next 7 days. A Hezbollah decision to test the expiry with a large barrage would collapse the diplomatic space at the worst possible moment.</p>	<p>Basis: CFR (24 Apr); NYT (23 Apr); Wikipedia 2026 Israel-Lebanon ceasefire article; ACLED Middle East Overview May 2026.   Would change if: A meaningful Lebanon permanent deal framework agreed; Iran MOU breakthrough that removes Hezbollah's strategic rationale; IDF unilateral escalation that forces a Hezbollah response and collapses the ceasefire from the Israeli side.</p>

Judgment	Conf.	Why It Matters	Basis   Would Change If
Russia's reported offer to provide Iran with 5,000 short-range fibre-optic drones and longer-range satellite-guided systems (Economist, 8 May; ISW-CTP, 9 May) represents a potential qualitative shift in Iran's defensive and offensive capacity. The fibre-optic drones are designed to evade electronic jamming — a direct counter to the US's primary anti-drone methodology in Hormuz. If delivered, they would complicate Project Freedom and any US strike resumption. Combined with Iran's claimed deployment of 10,000 FPV drones to ground forces, this represents a systematic effort to rebuild military capacity within the ceasefire window.	Medium	Shifts the military balance calculus for any resumed US operations. Makes a decisive US military outcome harder to achieve without infrastructure-level strikes. Increases the cost of resumed hostilities for both sides.	Basis: The Economist (8 May, via ISW-CTP); ISW-CTP Special Report, 9 May 2026.   Would change if: Russia confirms or denies the transfer; US interdicts a Russian drone shipment to Iran; China pressures Russia to withhold the transfer as part of Hormuz diplomacy.

## 02 WEEK IN REVIEW

The week of 9–15 May 2026 was the week the Iran conflict's diplomatic track formally stalled and its geopolitical dimensions widened. It opened with Iran's rejection of the US framework (8–9 May), passed through Trump's 'garbage' dismissal of Iran's counter-proposal (11 May), and closed with a high-stakes Beijing summit that produced a joint US-China Hormuz reopening signal — the most consequential realignment of great power pressure since the conflict began. Simultaneously, Iraq's new government was sworn in, Lebanon's ceasefire reached its formal expiry, and Sudan's humanitarian crisis deepened without international attention.

- 8–9 May — Iran's MOU Response: Rejected. Iran delivered its written response to the US MOU framework on 8 May. The response demanded an end to the war on all fronts — including Lebanon — before any nuclear discussions could begin, and required recognition of Iran's Hormuz sovereignty as a precondition. The New York Times (9 May) reported the Strait remained effectively blocked with 1,600 vessels stranded. ISW-CTP confirmed the Iran-seized tanker Ocean Koi had been held since 8 May. ISW also reported the IDF struck Bandar Anzali port (Caspian Sea) to disrupt Russian drone shipments to Iran. The Iraqi militia disarmament committee was reported 'close to finalising' an executive plan.
- 10–11 May — Ceasefire on 'Massive Life Support.' Trump dismissed Iran's response as 'stupid' (10 May) and then on 11 May declared the ceasefire 'on massive life support' after Iran failed to meet its enriched uranium commitment. IRGC Major General Jafari stated Iran would not negotiate until the US accepted Iran's terms. Trump told Fox News he was considering resuming Project Freedom as part of a larger military operation. Bloomberg reported a Qatari LNG tanker turned away from Hormuz after approaching Iranian-claimed controlled waters. The UK and France convened 40 defence ministers to discuss Hormuz restoration strategy.
- 12–13 May — Trump Travels to Beijing. Trump departed for China on 12 May, with Iran, Hormuz, and trade dominating the agenda. Xi warned on Taiwan but agreed to discuss Iran. The Guardian live coverage confirmed discussions covered economic cooperation and Iran. The UNSMIL 4+4 Committee held its Paris session (12 May), the second in the Rome-Paris mini-table format. Libya's competing

governments both reaffirmed the Unified Budget Agreement. Five names reportedly submitted to the UNSC for possible Libya sanctions.

- 14 May — Baghdad: Al-Zaidi Sworn In. Iraq’s parliament granted confidence to Ali al-Zaidi’s government, with 14 of 23 ministerial portfolios confirmed. The Defence and Interior ministries — the two most security-sensitive — remain unfilled. No Iran-linked armed faction member appears in the confirmed cabinet. Basim Mohammed was confirmed as Oil Minister; Fuad Hussein retained as Foreign Minister. Al-Zaidi, 41, took the constitutional oath and pledged to consolidate stability, address corruption, and manage the Washington–Tehran balance. The same day, Trump and Xi concluded their summit in Beijing.
- 14–15 May — Trump-Xi Summit Outcome: Hormuz Aligned. Trump and Xi wrapped up two days of talks claiming ‘important progress’ in stabilising US-China relations (AP, 15 May). On Iran, both sides agreed Hormuz must be reopened and called on Tehran to engage constructively. No binding framework emerged, but the joint signal produced Brent’s largest single-day drop in weeks: from \$105+ to \$100.11/bbl on 14 May (-5.23%). Trump declared the trip a success. Iran’s response to the joint US-China Hormuz position: not yet issued at the time of writing.
- 15 May — Lebanon Ceasefire Expiry (Today). The three-week extension agreed on 23 April formally expires on 17 May (today in Baghdad time). No further extension has been publicly announced as of the report’s preparation. Hezbollah continued low-level attacks throughout the week. Israel conducted strikes in south Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. The diplomatic framework is under maximum strain with no Lebanon-specific deal in sight.

### 03 KEY CHANGES SINCE LAST WEEK

↓	Iran MOU / Diplomacy	Iran’s 8 May response rejected by Trump as ‘garbage’ (11 May). Ceasefire declared ‘on massive life support.’ IRGC Jafari: no talks until US accepts Iran’s terms. Sequencing impasse (Iran: war-end first; US: nuclear first) structurally wider than previous week. No new Islamabad round scheduled.
↓	China / Geopolitical Alignment	Trump–Xi Beijing summit (13–14 May): joint statement that Hormuz must reopen. China formally aligned with US on Hormuz. Removes Iran’s Beijing diplomatic shield. Most significant geopolitical shift of the ceasefire period. Brent -5.23% on 14 May (\$100.11/bbl).
↓	Oil Price (Brent)	Brent fell to \$100.11/bbl on 14 May (from \$105+ earlier in week) on Trump–Xi summit optimism. Week 11 of Hormuz effective closure. LNG tanker turned back (11 May). 1,600 vessels stranded in Gulf. Price decline reflects sentiment, not physical Hormuz reopening.
↑	Iraq Government Formation	PM Ali al-Zaidi sworn in 14 May with 14 of 23 portfolios confirmed. No Iran-linked faction members in approved cabinet (US pressure). Defence and Interior ministries unfilled — most consequential unresolved portfolios. Basim Mohammed: Oil Minister. Fuad Hussein: Foreign Minister retained. Nine posts still under negotiation.
↓	Lebanon Ceasefire	Three-week extension (to 17 May) expires TODAY. No further extension announced as of report date. Hezbollah: continued low-level attacks throughout week. Israel: continued strikes south Lebanon and Bekaa Valley. Ceasefire framework under maximum strain. Short further extension assessed as most probable immediate outcome.
↓	Russia-Iran Military Cooperation	New: Russia offered Iran 5,000 short-range fibre-optic FPV drones + longer-range satellite-guided systems (Economist/ISW, 8–9 May). Fibre-optic drones designed to evade electronic jamming. Iran claimed 10,000 FPV drones already deployed to ground forces. IDF struck Bandar Anzali (Caspian) to disrupt Russian arms deliveries.

→	Hormuz / Iran Enforcement	Week 11 closure. LNG tanker turned back (11 May). Ocean Koi tanker held since 8 May. Iran claiming Hormuz 'transit regulation' sovereignty. Some vessels reportedly complying with Iran's transit rules (ISW, 11 May). Trump considering resuming Project Freedom. UK-France 40-nation defence meeting on Hormuz (11 May).
↓	Sudan	RSF drone strike on Kenana Sugar Company, White Nile State (3 May) — critical food security infrastructure. SAF consolidating Kordofan. No ceasefire framework. International attention fully diverted to Iran. Humanitarian crisis at maximum severity.
→	Libya	UNSMIL 4+4 Paris session (12 May). UNSC maritime inspections mandate vote: before 25 May. Five names circulated for possible UNSC sanctions. Both rival governments committed to Unified Budget Agreement. No electoral framework progress.

#### 04 GEOGRAPHICAL ASSESSMENTS

Area	Implications	Near-Term Outlook	Priority Risks
Iran ESCALATING	The Trump–Xi joint Hormuz statement is the most consequential development for Iran's strategic calculus this week. Beijing has explicitly aligned with Washington on Hormuz reopening — a position that China's own energy import dependence (\$1/3 of its needs from the Gulf) makes structurally irreversible. Iran cannot simultaneously claim BRICS solidarity and ignore a joint US-China demand on Hormuz. The regime's dual-track strategy (diplomatic resistance + military rebuilding) is sustainable for weeks, not months: oil storage, production capacity, and economic resilience are all deteriorating under the combined pressure of the blockade, sanctions, and Hormuz closure.	Iran must choose between two paths in the next 7–14 days: (1) Accept a parallel-track format in which war-cessation and nuclear discussions proceed concurrently — a face-saving middle ground that no mediator has yet formally proposed; or (2) Allow the ceasefire to collapse and resume hostilities, accepting the military and economic consequences of a resumed US campaign with Chinese diplomatic cover removed. Assessment: 35% probability of a reformulated deal format emerging within 14 days; 65% probability of continued stalemate drifting toward ceasefire collapse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ceasefire collapse triggering resumed US strikes</li> <li>▪ Russian drone delivery changing military balance calculus</li> <li>▪ storage capacity forcing economic crisis before a deal is reached</li> <li>▪ China-Iran rift deepening from Trump-Xi communique</li> </ul>
GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) MONITORING	Qatar's LNG interdiction is analytically significant: it extends Iran's enforcement beyond oil tankers to natural gas exports, directly threatening European energy security at a time when LNG supply chains are already strained. The GCC domestic security crackdowns — particularly Bahrain's 291 arrests and Kuwait's 2,000+ citizenship revocations — reflect a sustained internal pressure campaign against Iran-linked networks that predates this week but has intensified alongside the external conflict. GCC states' fundamental interest remains a Hormuz deal that preserves their energy export architecture without conceding transit sovereignty to Iran.	GCC fiscal position: Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar remain comfortable at \$100/bbl. Kuwait's breakeven is approximately \$85/bbl — adequate but narrowing. Bahrain's fiscal position is more exposed. If Brent falls further on deal speculation below \$90/bbl, Saudi Arabia's Q2 budget planning will require revision. Qatar's GDP remains under sustained pressure from LNG export disruption. The Trump–Xi joint Hormuz statement is a positive development for GCC strategic interests regardless of deal timeline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Qatar LNG export disruption extended</li> <li>▪ UAE infrastructure targeted in IRGC resumed strike campaign</li> <li>▪ Bahrain internal security pressure event affecting US 5th Fleet access</li> </ul>

<p>Levant / Palestine (Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Palestine)</p> <p>ESCALATING</p>	<p>Israel's buffer zone demolition operations in 30+ south Lebanese villages — ongoing throughout the ceasefire — represent a deliberate effort to create physical facts on the ground that constrain any future withdrawal terms. This strategy is consistent with Netanyahu's stated position that Israeli forces will not leave south Lebanon without Hezbollah disarmament. Hezbollah, which did not participate in any ceasefire negotiation and has consistently stated it rejects the framework, retains full operational capacity. The most likely immediate outcome on 17 May is a further short extension of 1–2 weeks while the US manages post-China summit Iran diplomacy — but each extension without progress reduces its stabilising effect.</p>	<p>Three scenarios for 17 May: (1) Short extension (1–2 weeks) — most probable (50%); (2) Ceasefire collapse triggering IDF large-scale operations — elevated risk if Hezbollah tests the expiry with a large barrage (30%); (3) Framework agreement on Lebanese state authority, IDF withdrawal timeline, and Hezbollah disarmament roadmap — assessed as unlikely within days but achievable within weeks if Iran MOU produces a parallel de-escalation (20%).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hezbollah large-scale barrage on 17 May testing ceasefire expiry</li> <li>▪ IDF ground offensive resumption</li> <li>▪ Lebanon state unable to enforce disarmament</li> <li>▪ Gaza operation resumption creating second front</li> </ul>
<p>Iraq</p> <p>IMPROVING</p>	<p>The absence of Iran-linked faction ministers in the confirmed cabinet is the analytical headline, but the unfilled Defence and Interior portfolios are analytically more important. These two ministries control: (1) the Iraqi Army's relationship with armed factions operating alongside it; (2) the Interior Ministry's federal police and National Intelligence Service, which monitors faction activity; and (3) the operational implementation of any disarmament plan. Whoever controls these portfolios will determine whether al-Zaidi's government is genuinely reorienting Iraq's security architecture or merely presenting a cosmetic facade to unlock US financial flows. The US cash halt restoration is likely to be used as a direct incentive to influence the Defence and Interior nominees.</p>	<p>Al-Zaidi must fill the nine remaining portfolios. Constitutional timeline: no hard deadline for partial cabinet completion, but political momentum requires resolution within 2–4 weeks. Assessment: Defence and Interior nominees will be the most contested and the longest to resolve — expect continued US pressure and further OFAC signalling to shape the outcome. The militia disarmament executive plan, if presented to the US within the next 10 days, would be the most significant confidence-building measure available to al-Zaidi. Partial US cash flow restoration expected within 1–2 weeks of al-Zaidi's oath.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Defence and Interior portfolios assigned to faction-aligned figures, undermining disarmament</li> <li>▪ Coordination Framework faction pressure reversing cabinet composition</li> <li>▪ Kataib Hezbollah and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba kinetic escalation in response to exclusion from cabinet</li> </ul>
<p>Türkiye</p> <p>MONITORING</p>	<p>The Trump–Xi Hormuz alignment is an indirect benefit to Turkey: it increases pressure on Iran to accept a commercial Hormuz framework, which would provide Turkey with energy import relief regardless of the broader Iran deal timeline. Turkey's BRICS partial engagement makes it a credible intermediary if Beijing needs a channel to Tehran that avoids the appearance of direct Chinese pressure.</p>	<p>Turkey will support any Hormuz commercial reopening framework. If the Iran deal requires a multilateral format that includes regional powers, Turkey would be a natural host for a broader conference. Domestic pressure from oil costs will build if Brent returns above \$105/bbl.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extended Hormuz closure driving Turkish economic deterioration</li> <li>▪ US Treasury sanctions on Turkey-Iran financial networks escalating</li> </ul>

<p>North Africa (Libya, Egypt) MONITORING</p>	<p>The High Council of State's suspension of its own members for participating in UNSMIL's process without authorisation signals that Tripoli's institutional politics are becoming an obstacle to even the most modest dialogue formats. If the 4+4 mini-table cannot proceed without triggering internal HCS sanctions, the UNSMIL roadmap will stall at the participation stage. The UNSC maritime inspections mandate renewal is a procedural priority: non-renewal would create an enforcement gap in Libya's arms embargo that would be exploited by arms traffickers within days.</p>	<p>Libya maritime inspections renewal: will pass (P5 consensus on procedural matters). 4+4 mini-table: continuing but fragile. HCS internal politics may force a format renegotiation. No electoral framework progress before June. Egypt: stable but acutely exposed to prolonged Hormuz disruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UNSC maritime inspections mandate not renewed</li> <li>▪ HCS withdrawal from 4+4 process</li> <li>▪ Libya arms trafficking escalation if enforcement gap emerges</li> </ul>
<p>Sudan DETERIORATING</p>	<p>The Kenana strike confirms the RSF's deliberate strategy of economic warfare against SAF-aligned areas — targeting infrastructure that serves civilian populations and generates government revenue simultaneously. Combined with the SAF's consolidation of Kordofan, the conflict is trending toward a de facto partition: SAF controls the Nile corridor (Khartoum to Port Sudan) and central Sudan; RSF controls Darfur and is contesting Kordofan. This partition, if consolidated, would create two competing governance systems with no reunification mechanism. The humanitarian consequences of this trajectory are catastrophic and largely invisible to international media.</p>	<p>No ceasefire achievable within 30 days. Kordofan remains the decisive front. SAF will attempt to consolidate the Kadugli-Khartoum corridor; RSF will attempt to interdict it and push toward the Red Sea. For humanitarian operators: El Fasher (RSF-held) access remains at minimum. Kordofan partial reopening following Kadugli SAF control. Sudan risk remains the highest in the NGO/UN portfolio.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RSF advance closing Kordofan humanitarian corridors</li> <li>▪ SAF Khartoum supply route disruption</li> <li>▪ de facto partition consolidation eliminating reunification prospects</li> <li>▪ famine spreading from Darfur to Kordofan</li> </ul>
<p>Red Sea / Maritime (Hormuz, Arabian Sea, Bab el-Mandeb) ESCALATING</p>	<p>Vessel compliance with Iranian transit regulations — if confirmed as a sustained pattern rather than isolated incidents — represents a significant escalation of Iran's strategic achievement: establishing a precedent of sovereignty over Hormuz without firing a shot. The international maritime norm that Hormuz is an international strait has been eroded, not by a treaty, but by the gradual accumulation of enforcement incidents to which the international community has not mounted a sustained response. The UK-France multilateral framework is the most credible counter-initiative, but it requires 40 nations to operationalise a naval escort capability that does not yet exist at the required scale.</p>	<p>Hormuz will remain effectively closed until either a deal framework or Project Freedom resumption changes the physical reality. The Trump-Xi statement increases pressure on Iran to accept commercial access in the near term. If Iran accepts a commercial Hormuz arrangement before a full deal (as a confidence-building measure), Brent could fall to \$85–90/bbl. Red Sea: Houthi resumption probability assessed as MEDIUM — operational pause intact but the 'stand ready' posture is maintained. Any ceasefire collapse would trigger Houthi Red Sea resumption within 48–72 hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Vessels complying with Iranian transit rules establish de facto sovereignty precedent</li> <li>▪ Project Freedom resumption triggers IRGC attack on US assets</li> <li>▪ Houthi Red Sea resumption adding second maritime front</li> <li>▪ mine detonation on commercial vessel in Hormuz</li> </ul>

## 05 THREAT ASSESSMENT BY TYPE

### Ballistic / Air Threat

- Iran ceasefire: ballistic strikes on Israel, US bases, and GCC paused since 8 April. Both sides declared 7 May exchange 'below threshold' but ceasefire is now 'on massive life support' (Trump, 11 May).
- IDF struck Bandar Anzali port (Caspian Sea, 9 May) to disrupt Russian drone deliveries to Iran. First IDF Caspian strike of the conflict.
- Russia offered Iran 5,000 fibre-optic FPV drones + satellite-guided systems (Economist/ISW, 8-9 May). Fibre-optic design counters US jamming systems. If delivered, materially alters Hormuz risk calculus.
- Iran: 10,000 FPV drones deployed to ground forces (Iranian Armed Forces General Staff media, 11 May). Defensive and offensive capacity being rebuilt within ceasefire window.
- Lebanon: Israel continued strikes south Lebanon and Bekaa Valley. Hezbollah: continued low-level FPV drone attacks on IDF.
- Threat level: LATENT-CRITICAL (Iran-US; resumed full-scale if ceasefire collapses); CRITICAL (Lebanon expiry today); HIGH (Russian drone transfer if confirmed).

### Maritime Threat (Hormuz / Arabian Sea / Red Sea)

- Hormuz: week 11 effective closure. 1,600 vessels stranded. LNG tanker turned back (11 May). Ocean Koi held since 8 May. Some vessels reportedly complying with Iranian transit regulations.
- Iran asserting Hormuz transit 'sovereignty' through regulatory enforcement rather than kinetic action this week — a shift from previous vessel seizure pattern toward regulatory capture.
- Trump considering Project Freedom resumption. UK-France 40-nation defence meeting (11 May) developing multilateral framework.
- Trump-Xi joint statement (14 May): Hormuz must reopen. Most significant political pressure on Iran to accept commercial access.
- Red Sea / Bab el-Mandeb: Houthi pause intact. Claimed 6 attacks on Israeli territory (ballistic/cruise missiles, no Red Sea commercial targeting). Operational pause maintained.
- Threat level: CRITICAL for Hormuz transit (regulatory enforcement + potential kinetic resumption); HIGH for Arabian Sea approaches; MEDIUM for Red Sea (structured pause).

### Armed Group / Asymmetric Threat

- Hezbollah: ceasefire expires today. Low-level attacks throughout week. 17 May expiry decision point: large barrage would collapse ceasefire; calibrated continuation preserves diplomatic space.
- Iraqi armed groups: Kataib Hezbollah and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba excluded from al-Zaidi's confirmed cabinet (14 May). Formal rejection of disarmament maintained. Risk of escalation against US facilities in Iraq rising with exclusion from government.
- Houthi forces: operational pause intact. 6 attacks on Israeli territory since 27 March. No Red Sea commercial targeting. 'Stand ready' posture maintained.
- GCC internal: Bahrain 291 arrests; Kuwait 2,000+ citizenship revocations; UAE arrests. Systematic suppression of Iran-linked networks intensifying.

- Threat level: CRITICAL (Hezbollah, 17 May expiry today); HIGH (Iraqi armed groups, exclusion from cabinet); MEDIUM (Houthi Red Sea latent).

## Nuclear / WMD / Cyber

- Iran's MOU counter-proposal (8 May): demanded war-end before nuclear talks. US rejected (Trump: 'garbage,' 11 May). Nuclear sequencing impasse wider than previous week.
- Mount Kolang Gaz La facility (south of Natanz): partially blocked tunnel entrances (ISIS/Sat imagery, reported 22 Apr). Iran preparing concealment of advanced centrifuge assembly.
- ISW (11 May): Some vessels complying with Iran transit rules — precedent of Hormuz sovereignty without kinetic enforcement is a de facto strategic WMD-equivalent in maritime law terms.
- Cyber: no confirmed major incidents this reporting week. Elevated threat against GCC, US DoD, financial, and energy sector targets.
- Threat level: CRITICAL (nuclear impasse structural, not tactical); MEDIUM (cyber baseline).

## 06 SECTOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Sector	Impact This Week	Key Risk	Priority Action	Status
UN & International NGOs	Lebanon: ceasefire expires today (17 May) with no further extension announced. Humanitarian access south of Litani at maximum risk. Beirut airport: operational but at risk of sudden closure if hostilities resume. Sudan: RSF drone strike on Kenana Sugar Company (3 May) accelerates food security deterioration. Darfur and south Kordofan access remains severely constrained. Hormuz: week 11 closure; humanitarian supply chain costs 20-35% above pre-conflict baseline for import-dependent operations (Yemen, Lebanon, Gaza, Sudan).	Lebanon ceasefire collapse today creating sudden-onset Beirut access denial. Sudan Kenana strike signals infrastructure targeting escalation. Hormuz LNG interdiction extends disruption to humanitarian gas-dependent operations.	Lebanon: all staff south of Litani must have evacuated or have confirmed evacuation routes by COB today. Sudan: suspend Kordofan and White Nile State operations pending security assessment. Hormuz: maintain Cape of Good Hope routing; no Hormuz transit.	CRITICAL
Oil & Gas Operators	Brent \$100.11/bbl (14 May, -5.23% on Trump-Xi Hormuz statement). Qatar LNG tanker turned back by Iran (11 May) — first confirmed LNG interdiction of this cycle. 1,600 vessels stranded in Gulf. Week 11 Hormuz closure. Some vessels reportedly complying with Iranian transit regulations — raises force majeure and compliance questions for operators. New Iraq Oil Minister (Basim Mohammed) confirmed 14 May — replaces sanctioned Deputy Maarij; early engagement on OFAC compliance expected.	LNG interdiction extending to Qatar exports creates direct disruption to European gas supply contracts. Vessel compliance with Iranian transit regulations creates legal and reputational exposure. Resumed hostilities would push Brent back above \$115/bbl and trigger GCC infrastructure targeting.	Do not comply with Iranian transit regulations without legal clearance — compliance may constitute recognition of Iranian Hormuz sovereignty. Maintain Cape of Good Hope routing. Brent planning range: \$85–120/bbl for Q2-Q3 2026. Engage new Iraq Oil Minister on OFAC compliance and cash halt restoration timeline.	HIGH

Sector	Impact This Week	Key Risk	Priority Action	Status
Power & Energy	Brent's \$100.11/bbl post-Trump-Xi provides marginal relief for import-dependent energy systems. Qatar LNG interdiction adds to European winter storage planning uncertainty. Iraq electricity sector: new Electricity Minister confirmed (14 May) in al-Zaidi cabinet — creates opportunity for bilateral engagement on Iran gas import renegotiation. Turkey: \$100 Brent partial relief for lira-stressed energy import budget.	Qatar LNG interdiction reduces European winter 2026-27 storage trajectory. Iraq's Iran gas import dependence: new government formation creates a renegotiation window but also uncertainty about gas supply continuity.	European operations: LNG storage pre-positioning target remains unchanged (winter buffer). Iraq operations: engage new Electricity Ministry on gas import continuity planning for summer 2026 peak demand.	HIGH
Government & Diplomatic	Iraq: PM al-Zaidi sworn in 14 May — first formal engagement opportunity with new Iraqi government. New Foreign Minister (Fuad Hussein, retained) and Oil Minister (Basim Mohammed) available for diplomatic engagement. US cash halt expected to be partially restored in near term. Iran: MOU framework rejected; no new diplomatic format proposed. Lebanon: ceasefire expires today — missions in Beirut should have activated emergency protocols. Trump-Xi joint Hormuz statement: direct implication for GCC embassy reporting and GCC government diplomatic positioning.	Lebanon ceasefire expiry today: sudden escalation risk for all diplomatic missions in Beirut. Iran MOU collapse: no diplomatic framework in place for the next phase of negotiations.	Beirut missions: emergency protocol active. Baghdad missions: schedule early engagement with al-Zaidi government; position on US cash halt, disarmament plan, and OFAC compliance. All MENAT missions: update threat assessments following Trump-Xi Hormuz statement and its implications for Iran's strategic calculus.	HIGH
Travel and Access Security	Lebanon: ceasefire expires TODAY (17 May). All non-essential staff south of Litani must be evacuated. Beirut airport operational but at acute risk. Movement north of Litani: reduce to essential only. UAE: no new direct strikes this week but IRGC threat posture unchanged. Hormuz maritime: no commercial transit. LNG tanker turned back (11 May) confirms Iranian enforcement active. Iraq: al-Zaidi government sworn in — political transition period; PMF-area avoidance maintained. Sudan: Kordofan and White Nile State operations suspended pending security assessment following Kenana strike.	Lebanon: ceasefire expiry is today — risk of sudden large-scale hostilities with minimal warning. Hormuz: commercial transit carries confirmed Iranian interdiction risk. Baghdad: political transition creates elevated uncertainty for PMF-area movement.	Lebanon: ALL non-essential staff south of Litani must have left by COB today. Beirut: departure flight options identified and briefed. Hormuz: no transit. Sudan White Nile State: no field operations pending security review.	CRITICAL

## 07 INDICATORS & ESCALATION TRIGGERS

TRIGGER = activate crisis protocols. WATCH = assess and monitor closely. MONITOR = note for situational awareness.

Level	Indicator	Why It Matters	Signals	Decision Response
CRITICAL	Hezbollah large-scale barrage on or after 17 May ceasefire expiry (today)	Israel has stated the 17 May expiry without a deal triggers resumed large-scale operations. A Hezbollah large barrage would collapse the Lebanon ceasefire immediately and simultaneously destabilise the Iran track.	IDF northern command emergency alert; UNIFIL emergency report; Hezbollah media claim of large-scale operation; Trump Truth Social statement.	Maximum Lebanon emergency. Evacuate all non-essential staff from Beirut immediately. Activate regional contingency protocols. Brent \$120+ within 24 hours.
CRITICAL	Iran accepts a parallel-track diplomatic format (war-cessation and nuclear discussions concurrent)	The only credible resolution to the sequencing impasse. If Iran accepts a parallel-track format proposed by Pakistan, China, or Oman, the MOU track is revived and a deal before end-May is plausible.	Pakistani FM press statement; Araghchi public statement modifying Iran's sequencing demand; Witkoff or Kushner announcement of resumed talks.	Brent -\$10–15/bbl on announcement. Begin Hormuz commercial reopening contingency planning. Lebanon ceasefire likely extended further.
HIGH	Vessels complying with Iranian Hormuz transit regulations become a sustained pattern	Establishes de facto Iranian sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. Fundamentally undermines the international maritime norm of free transit. Has legal, commercial, and geopolitical implications that far outlast the current conflict.	Multiple vessels complying with Iranian regulations over 3+ days; ISW or commercial intelligence tracking confirmation; Lloyd's of London guidance change on Hormuz.	Immediate legal review for any vessels considering compliance. Escalate to government diplomatic channels. Do not comply without explicit legal and political clearance.
HIGH	Iraq Defence and Interior ministers nominated and confirmed	The most consequential remaining governance decision in Iraq. The nominees will determine whether the disarmament process has any implementation capacity. Nominees with faction links would reverse the week's cabinet composition achievement.	Al-Zaidi press conference announcing nominees; parliamentary scheduling of confidence vote; Coordination Framework public statement on nominees.	Assess nominees against US demands. If faction-linked nominees: anticipate continued OFAC sanctions pressure. If independent nominees: positive signal for disarmament plan credibility.
HIGH	Russia confirms or delivers the FPV drone transfer to Iran	5,000 fibre-optic FPV drones designed to counter US jamming would materially alter the Hormuz military balance. Changes the cost calculus for Project Freedom resumption and any US strike campaign.	US intelligence announcement; satellite imagery of Russian cargo delivery at Iranian airfield; IDF strike on Russian cargo aircraft/vessel in transit.	Reassess US military options in Hormuz. Project Freedom risk assessment updated. Increase maritime threat level for all Gulf operators.

## 08 INTELLIGENCE GAPS & COLLECTION PRIORITIES

- Iran's next diplomatic move: Following the MOU rejection, what diplomatic format — if any — Iran is prepared to accept is not known. Whether Tehran has internally discussed a parallel-track formula

(concurrent war-cessation and nuclear talks) is the most important unknown in the conflict.

- Russia's drone transfer status: Whether Russia has begun delivering or will deliver the 5,000 fibre-optic FPV drones and satellite-guided systems is not confirmed. Delivery timeline and Iranian deployment capacity are unknown.
- Lebanon ceasefire status post-17 May: As of this report's preparation, no further extension has been publicly announced. Whether the US has offered or Lebanon and Israel have accepted a further short extension is not confirmed.
- Iraq Defence and Interior nominees: The Coordination Framework's proposed nominees for these two ministries are not publicly known. Their factional affiliations will be the primary indicator of whether al-Zaidi's cabinet composition reflects a genuine strategic shift.
- Iran's response to Trump-Xi Hormuz statement: Iran's official position on the joint US-China demand that Hormuz be reopened had not been issued at the time of writing. The nature and tone of this response will be an important indicator of Beijing's actual leverage over Tehran.
- Sudan RSF-UAE arms supply current status: Whether the UAE has modified arms and logistical support to the Rapid Support Forces following sustained international pressure is not confirmed in open sources. The Kenana strike and continued RSF operational capacity suggest supply continuity, but the channel is uncertain.

## 09 OUTLOOK (NEXT 7 DAYS)

### Escalation Risks

- 1. Hezbollah large-scale barrage on 17 May — most immediate binary risk; collapses Lebanon ceasefire on report date.
- 2. Iran rejects Trump-Xi Hormuz statement publicly and defiantly — demonstrates Beijing's leverage is limited and eliminates the diplomatic benefit of the summit.
- 3. Russia FPV drone delivery confirmed — shifts Hormuz military balance and increases cost of any US action.
- 4. Iraq Defence/Interior nominees are faction-aligned — reverses week's cabinet achievement and reduces disarmament credibility.
- 5. Vessel compliance with Iranian Hormuz regulations sustained — establishes de facto sovereignty precedent with long-term international maritime law consequences.
- 6. Sudan RSF captures Kordofan corridor — closes last humanitarian access route and consolidates de facto partition.

### Most Likely Scenario

Scenario A — Short Lebanon Extension, Iran Track Reformulation (40% probability): The US announces a further 1–2 week Lebanon ceasefire extension on or around 17 May to prevent immediate collapse. Iran, under combined US-China pressure following the Beijing summit, signals willingness to engage a parallel-track format in which war-cessation and nuclear discussions proceed concurrently. Pakistan or Oman proposes the format; both parties accept without publicly conceding their sequencing positions. Islamabad round two occurs in the week of 18–25 May. A preliminary framework (not a final deal) is possible by 31 May. Brent stabilises at \$95–105/bbl. Lebanon: limited further IDF strikes but no large-scale

offensive.

## Alternative Scenarios

- Scenario B — Lebanon Ceasefire Collapse, Iran Stalemate Continues (35% probability): Hezbollah tests the 17 May expiry with a significant barrage. Israel resumes large-scale operations in south Lebanon and Bekaa Valley. Iran ceasefire simultaneously comes under greater strain but does not immediately collapse. Brent spikes to \$115–125/bbl on resumed Lebanon hostilities. US managing two simultaneous military fronts. Iran uses Lebanon escalation to claim the US is not honouring ceasefire terms. Most immediate kinetic risk scenario.
- Scenario C — Iran Deal Breakthrough Before End-May (25% probability): Combined US-China-Pakistan pressure produces a rapid Iranian concession on the parallel-track format. Islamabad round two produces a one-page MOU in the week of 19–23 May. Lebanon ceasefire extended as part of package. Hormuz commercial access agreed within 30 days. Brent falls to \$80–90/bbl. Iraq's cabinet formation accelerates with US cash flows restored. Most optimistic scenario; requires both Khamenei's endorsement and Vahidi's constraint.

## Operational Consequences

Lebanon: ceasefire expires today — all organisations must have completed south-Litani evacuations and Beirut contingency briefings. This is not a planning horizon; it is a current-day operational requirement. Hormuz: week 11, no commercial transit, LNG interdiction now confirmed. Maintain Cape of Good Hope routing for all non-emergency cargo. Oil budget: \$85–125/bbl range for Q2–Q3 2026 — three-scenario planning required. Iraq: engage new government within the week. Sudan: White Nile State field operations suspended pending Kenana security assessment. Senior leadership: maximum availability for 17–25 May window.

### 10 DECISION SUPPORT CONSIDERATIONS

Domain	Action Required	Key Details	Trigger
Executive / C-Suite	Activate Lebanon emergency protocol today and monitor Iran parallel-track format signal	Lebanon ceasefire expires today. Assign named owner to monitor: (1) Lebanon ceasefire status post-17 May; (2) Iran's response to Trump-Xi Hormuz statement; (3) Iraq Defence/Interior nominees. Three scenario planning: A (Brent \$95–105), B (Brent \$115–125), C (Brent \$80–90). Scenarios A and B represent 75% of probability.	Hezbollah large barrage (Scenario B activation); Iran parallel-track acceptance (Scenario C signal); Lebanon further extension announcement (Scenario A confirmation).
Operations / Security	Complete Lebanon evacuation today; maintain all other MENAT contingency postures	Lebanon: all non-essential staff south of Litani must leave by COB today. Beirut: departure flight options confirmed. UAE: Fujairah area access suspended. Hormuz: no commercial transit. Baghdad: PMF-area avoidance. Sudan White Nile State: no field operations pending security review.	Hezbollah large-scale barrage (immediate Beirut evacuation); IDF ground offensive resumption (all Lebanon operations suspend).

Domain	Action Required	Key Details	Trigger
Finance / Treasury	Three-scenario oil planning \$85–125/bbl; Iraq government financial engagement	Do not assume a deal before end-May. Three scenario oil ranges: Scenario A (\$95–105), Scenario B (\$115–125), Scenario C (\$80–90). Iraq: engage new Oil Minister (Basim Mohammed) on OFAC compliance and US cash halt restoration timeline — window opened by al-Zaidi's swearing-in. Sudan: assess USD liquidity exposure in White Nile State operations.	Iran parallel-track acceptance (shift planning toward Scenario C range); Lebanon ceasefire collapse (immediate Scenario B activation).
Humanitarian / NGO	Lebanon evacuation today; Sudan White Nile State suspension; Kordofan partial reopening assessment	Lebanon: south-Litani evacuation must be completed today. Sudan: White Nile State field operations suspended pending Kenana strike security assessment. Kordofan: SAF's Kadugli control has partially reopened the corridor — assess feasibility of limited aid movement with armed escort and OCHA clearance.	Lebanon ceasefire collapse (full Beirut evacuation); SAF or RSF Kordofan offensive closing corridors; further RSF infrastructure strikes in White Nile State.

## 11 WATCHLIST

17 May (TODAY)	Lebanon ceasefire formal expiry — no further extension announced as of report preparation	CRITICAL	Hezbollah large barrage collapses ceasefire immediately. Short further extension most probable. Absence of extension AND absence of large barrage would represent de facto continuation without a framework — most fragile possible state.
Within 48–72 hours	Iran's official response to Trump-Xi joint Hormuz statement (14 May)	CRITICAL	Defiant rejection demonstrates Beijing's leverage is limited and eliminates the diplomatic benefit of the summit. Constructive engagement signals Iran is recalibrating under combined US-China pressure. Most consequential indicator of the next 7 days.
Within 7–10 days	Iraq: PM al-Zaidi announces nominees for Defence and Interior ministries	CRITICAL	Nominees' factional affiliations determine whether disarmament process has implementation capacity. Faction-linked nominees reverse the week's cabinet composition achievement. Independent nominees enable credible disarmament plan submission to the US.
Before 25 May	UNSC vote on Libya maritime inspections mandate renewal (expires 25 May)	HIGH	Non-renewal creates arms embargo enforcement gap off the Libyan coast. Five names already circulated for possible UNSC sanctions — mandate renewal vote and sanctions consideration proceed in parallel.
Week of 19–25 May	Islamabad round two (if Iran accepts parallel-track format following Trump-Xi pressure)	HIGH	Deal framework before 31 May is achievable if Iran modifies its sequencing demand. Failure to convene round two by 25 May significantly increases probability of Scenario B (resumed hostilities).
Within 14 days	Iraq: US cash halt partial restoration (expected after al-Zaidi swearing-in)	HIGH	Partial restoration is an incentive signal for continued cabinet formation progress. Full restoration conditioned on credible disarmament plan submission. Timeline provides leverage window for Defence and Interior ministry negotiations.
Ongoing	Russia FPV drone transfer to Iran — delivery confirmation or interdiction	HIGH	5,000 fibre-optic FPV drones + satellite-guided systems would shift Hormuz military balance. Delivery alters Project Freedom risk calculus and any resumed US strike cost-benefit.

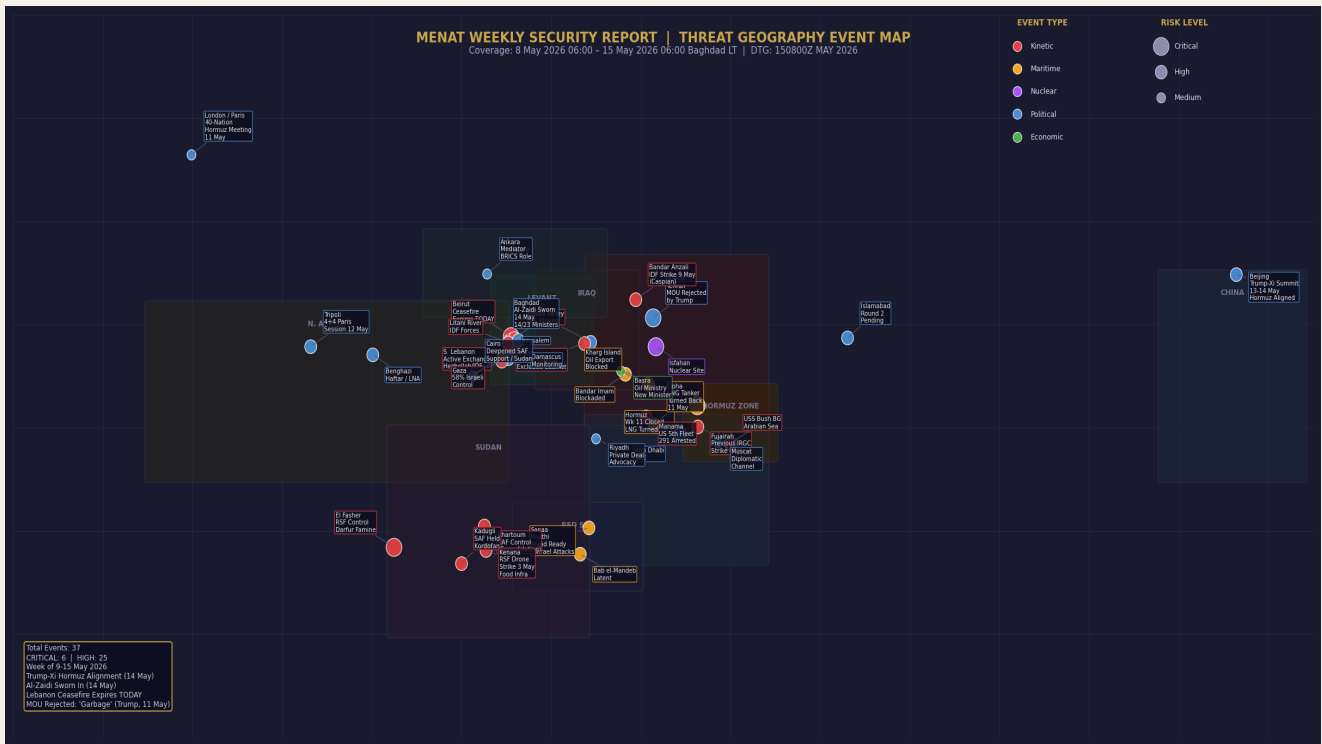
Ongoing

Sudan: Kordofan front-line movements — SAF consolidation vs RSF pressure on Kadugli corridor

MEDIUM

Kordofan corridor determines humanitarian access to Darfur and south Kordofan. RSF recapture of Kadugli closes last functional access route to famine-affected populations.

## 12 EVENT MAP



Markers: kinetic (red), maritime (amber), nuclear (purple), political (blue), economic (green), air defense (gold). Pulsing = CRITICAL. Overlays = active interdiction and combat zones.

## 13 CONTACT US

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