

MEIWeekly.



United States President Donald Trump, flanked by Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth on 26 March, revealed that he would delay an attack on Iran's energy plants by 10 days after receiving a "present" of goodwill from Tehran — allowing eight oil tankers to pass through the Strait of Hormuz. Photo: AFP

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS, & MORE

READ: Caught in the fallout of the Middle East war, this MEI Perspective argues that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states must reboot their economic vision for a region defined by recurring disruption. Read the article [here](#).

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Trump Extends Pause on Striking Iran's Energy Plants

Giving Tehran 10 days to open the Strait of Hormuz, the US President said talks were "going very well" with the Iranians. He also claimed that the Islamic Republic let 10 oil tankers sail through the strait as a goodwill gesture in negotiation, including some Pakistan-flagged vessels.

Israel Claims Killing of IRGC Naval Commander

Tel Aviv said it killed Alireza Tangsiri, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) navy, who was overseeing a near-total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz added that several other senior naval commanders were also killed.



Blockading the Strait of Hormuz - the waterway between Iran, the UAE and Oman, through which around 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes - has been a key pillar of Tehran's war strategy. Photo: AFP

Reports: Gulf States Edge Towards Joining Middle East War

Having not gone as far as deploying their militaries openly, recent steps by the Gulf nation bolstered the US' ability to conduct airstrikes and open a new front against Tehran's finances. Iran appears to be forcing their hand after persistent attacks disrupted their economies.

CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

Gulf States Amid the Iran War

Since the start of the US-Israel war in Iran, the Gulf states have faced an unprecedented wave of missile and drone attacks by the Iranian regime, shattering the image of security the monarchies sought to project. With the war's outcome uncertain, the Gulf nations are having to confront multiple challenges. Join MEI's exclusive and timely webinar with regional experts to explore these challenges and the possible trajectory of the Gulf states during and after the war. This event will be conducted online via Zoom on Wednesday, 1 April 2026, from 3:30pm to 4:45pm (SGT). To sign up, click [here](#).



The Gulf nations have been trying to diversify away from their oil-based economies but the war in Iran has seriously set these plans back now. Photo: AFP

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

Pakistan Steps In To Mediate Conflict

Islamabad has unexpectedly emerged as a back-channel mediator between Tehran and Washington, potentially sidelining India's efforts to establish itself as a credible global diplomatic actor. Pakistan reportedly delivered US President Trump's 15-point ceasefire proposal to Tehran, which was rejected by the Iranian authorities. The nation also offered to host talks to end the conflict.



Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan's army chief and the country's most powerful man, has emerged as a central figure in these back-channel talks. Photo: AFP

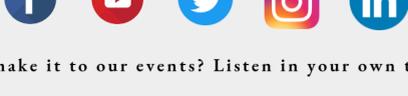
Ukraine to Ink Surprise Air Security Deal with Saudi Arabia

Both countries were set to sign an agreement on "security cooperation - in particular, the protection of the skies" as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in Saudi Arabia on Thursday for an unannounced visit. The war in Iran has spurred interest among the Gulf countries in Ukrainian arms technology.



Kyiv is seeking to leverage its expertise in downing Russian drones to help Gulf nations. Photo: AFP

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