

Kpler Media Briefing

Middle East Energy and Maritime Disruptions

Flow data as of Sunday, 18 October 2026 (T-2, to reduce day-to-day revision noise)

Prepared Tuesday, 20 October 2026. Kpler Insight and Kpler platform data only

1. Executive summary and key price drivers

Oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz remain far below pre-war levels, even though the latest daily readings are rising. Total Hormuz clearance reached 24,506 kbd on 18 October, but that figure is still preliminary. The 7-day average of 14,104 kbd sits at about 82% of the pre-war baseline of 17,146 kbd. Strait tanker crossings ran at 14 on 18 October against a pre-war level of 50 a day. Front-month Brent settled at \$109.86/bbl on 16 October, and the back end of the curve has repriced higher. Saudi Arabia has restored exports from both its eastern and western terminals following the September pipeline attack.

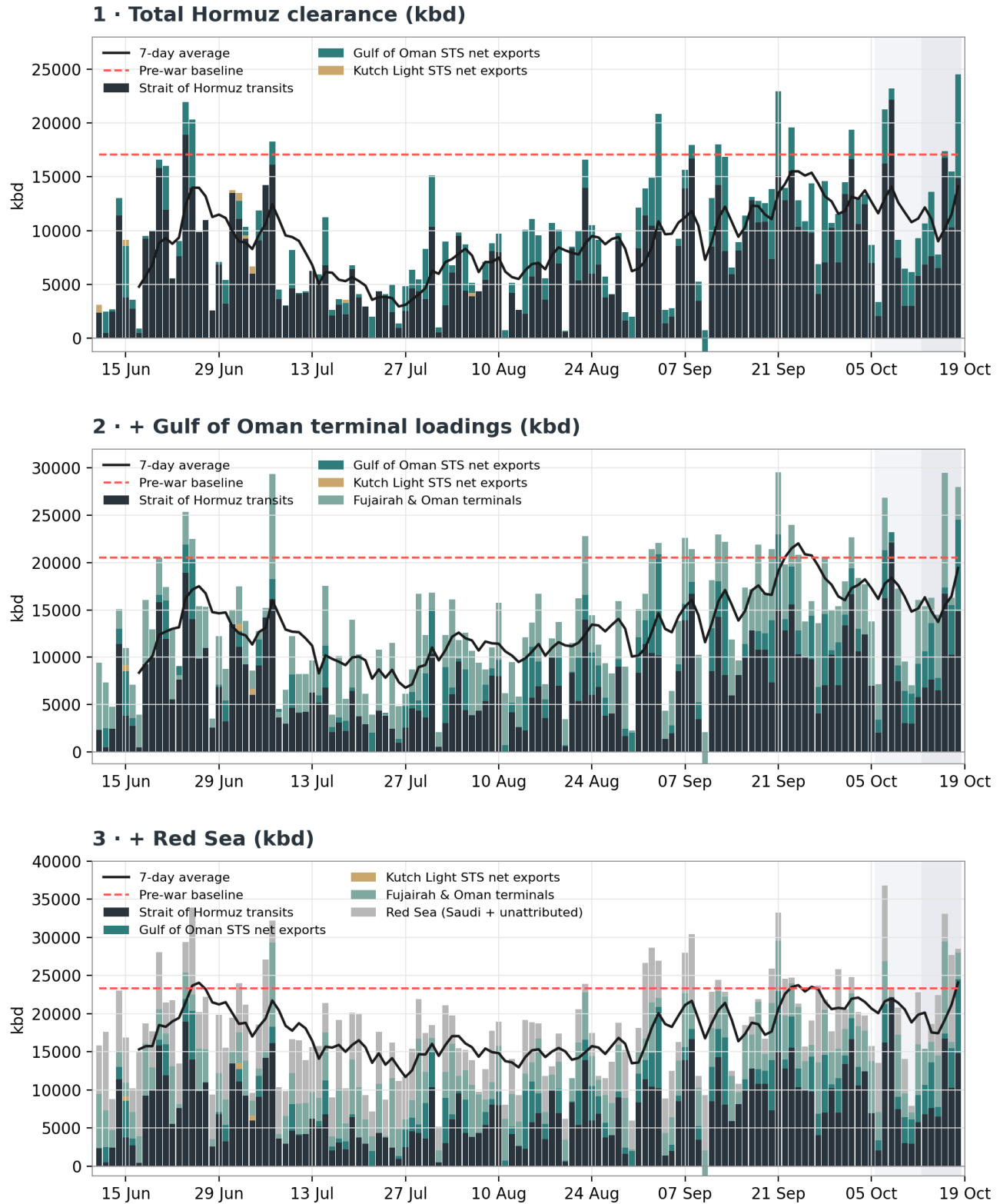
Explore these flows in the new [Middle East Flows dashboard](#) in the Kpler terminal. It brings Strait of Hormuz transits, Gulf of Oman ship-to-ship net exports and Red Sea exports together in one view.

Middle East Regional Flows (kbd)

Middle East Regional Flows (kbd)	18 Oct	17 Oct	16 Oct	15 Oct	7-day MA	Pre-War Baseline
Strait of Hormuz Transits	14,835	10,283	16,724	6,496	9,791	17,146
Gulf of Oman STS Net Exports	9,670	5,217	642	1,300	4,313	0
Kutch Light STS Net Exports	0	0	0	0	0	0
1. Total Hormuz Clearance	24,506	15,500	17,367	7,796	14,104	17,146
Crude	23,174	13,938	15,963	5,977	12,541	13,497
Products	1,332	1,562	1,403	1,819	1,563	3,593
Fujairah & Oman Terminals	3,504	766	12,134	6,707	5,326	3,416
2. + Gulf of Oman Terminals	28,010	16,266	29,501	14,502	19,430	20,506
Crude	25,534	14,259	26,722	10,153	16,686	15,672
Products	2,476	2,007	2,779	4,349	2,744	4,834
Red Sea (Saudi + Unattributed)	467	11,441	3,593	7,919	4,648	2,804
3. + Red Sea	28,477	27,707	33,094	22,421	24,077	23,310
Crude	25,534	24,807	28,722	17,226	20,647	17,012
Products	2,943	2,901	4,372	5,195	3,431	6,299
Strait of Hormuz Tanker Crossings	14	8	18	15	12	50
Enter MEG	4	1	8	9	5	25
Exit MEG	10	7	10	6	7	25

Three cumulative measures of confirmed clearance move outward from the strait itself (1) to Gulf of Oman and Fujairah/Oman terminal loadings (2) and then Red Sea volumes (3). Iranian-origin transits are excluded throughout. Figures are oil only, covering Crude/Co, CPP, DPP and Chem/Bio and excluding NGLs and LNG. Source, Kpler.

Middle East Regional Flows, daily series from 11 June to 18 October



Stacked bars are the confirmed components of each cumulative measure; the solid line is the 7-day average and the dashed line the pre-war baseline. Shaded bands mark the provisional (8 to 14 days) and preliminary (last 7 days) recency tiers, which have typically settled 1.5 to 2 times higher as later confirmations land. The late-June peak reflects the evacuation of cargoes stranded by the outbreak of the war. Source, Kpler.

Table and chart methodology and caveats

- Every figure is a confirmed floor and can revise upward at any horizon. The recency tiers mark where revisions concentrate, not where they stop.
- Reported figures are older than 14 days, provisional figures are 8 to 14 days old, and preliminary figures cover the last 7 days. Preliminary figures have typically settled 1.5 to 2 times higher once confirmations land.
- Gulf of Oman, Kutch Light and Red Sea volumes with no confirmed load terminal capture ship-to-ship cargo net of unmatched arrivals, and they carry no origin attribution. The Iranian-origin exclusion therefore applies to strait transits only.
- Pre-war baselines are averages over March 2025 to February 2026 on the same definitions and product-bucket selection.
- Strait crossings are dated by transit, unattributed ship-to-ship cargo by the date it surfaces or departs, and berth loadings by loading date. Daily totals therefore mix event timings, and the 7-day averages absorb most of that noise.

Primary drivers

- Strait transits and Gulf of Oman ship-to-ship exports lifted daily clearance late last week. The 7-day average still sits below the pre-war baseline. Section 2 has the detail.
- Attacks on tankers and Saudi sites keep a risk premium in freight and crude prices. Section 3 covers maritime risk and section 4 covers Saudi export routes.
- Recovering Middle East crude supply is weighing on Dubai premiums and Atlantic differentials. Section 2 sets out the supply picture.
- Refined product cracks are diverging by region as freight, crude prices and Russian diesel returns shift balances. Section 5 gives the benchmark moves.

2. Chokepoint and transit metrics

A. Strait of Hormuz

Total Hormuz clearance ranged from 7,796 kbd on 15 October to 24,506 kbd on 18 October. Strait transits excluding Iranian-origin cargoes ranged from 6,496 to 16,724 kbd over the same 4 days. Gulf of Oman ship-to-ship net exports climbed from 642 kbd on 16 October to 9,670 kbd on 18 October. The 7-day average of total clearance rose to 14,104 kbd from 10,779 kbd on 11 October. Tanker crossings were 14 on 18 October and averaged 12 over 7 days, against a pre-war level of 50.

Kpler Insight reports that Basrah loadings reached a 2-month high of 3.9 mbd last week. Around 30 VLCCs are now heading towards Fujairah, which is roughly 3 times recent levels. That supply is pressuring Dubai premiums, with December Murban retreating to \$5.29/bbl over Dubai, its lowest since July. Security risk still outweighs better vessel availability, with strait crossings averaging 13 a day against 50 before the war.

MEG to China VLCC freight eased \$1.09/bbl over the week to \$37.37/bbl, after opening at a record \$38.47/bbl.

B. Bab el-Mandeb and Red Sea

Red Sea volumes ranged from 467 kbd on 18 October to 11,441 kbd on 17 October. The 7-day average of 4,648 kbd sits above the pre-war baseline of 2,804 kbd. The Red Sea series covers Saudi cargoes and unattributed ship-to-ship volumes with no confirmed load terminal. Daily readings swing widely because ship-to-ship cargo is dated by the day it surfaces or departs.

3. Maritime risk and fleet status

Kpler Insight noted on 16 October that at least 18 vessels had reportedly been attacked over 2 weeks. Despite rising aggression, Kpler Insight sees liquids transits flat month on month and little sign of deterrence. The report also cites IMO data showing the first full sinking in about 7 months, the containership GFS PRIDE. The vessel sample below shows crude exits from Iraqi and Saudi terminals, products cargoes and tankers returning in ballast.

Illustrative Mideast Gulf tanker crossings, 15 to 18 October

Date	Vessel	Type	Direction / state	Cargo	Volume (kb)	Load port	Discharge / next port
18 Oct	ENNIE	VLCC	MEG exit, laden	Crude/Co	1,903	Al Basrah, Iraq	Sohar Light, Oman
18 Oct	OTTOMAN COURTESY	Suezmax	MEG entry, ballast	None	0	Sikka, India	Al Basrah, Iraq
17 Oct	PERU PROSPERITY	VLCC	MEG exit, laden	Crude/Co	2,000	Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia	Vadinar, India
16 Oct	BAYRAQ	VLCC	MEG exit, laden	Crude/Co	2,000	Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia	Zhoushan, China
16 Oct	ANGOLA B	VLCC	MEG entry, ballast	None	0	Fujairah Light, UAE	Zirku, UAE
15 Oct	JOURY	MR	MEG exit, laden	CPP	316	Jubail Industrial Port, Saudi Arabia	Mombasa, Kenya
15 Oct	VAUGHAN	MR	MEG exit, laden	DPP	143	Khor Al Zubair Port, Iraq	Fujairah, UAE
15 Oct	JOANNA	Small tanker	MEG exit, laden	Chemicals	60	Jubail Industrial Port, Saudi Arabia	Mumbai, India

Illustrative sample, not the full crossing log. Source, Kpler, Strait of Hormuz Tanker Crossings dashboard.

Where AIS coverage lapses, Kpler applies a dark-transit methodology, cross-referencing satellite imagery and human intelligence against a binary confirmation standard before attributing a movement. See the full methodology note at the end of this briefing.

4. Critical infrastructure status

Saudi infrastructure, Petrolina and Yanbu

Kpler Insight reports that a drone attack on the East-West Pipeline in September halted loadings at Yanbu. Exports resumed on 17 September, and Kpler analysis shows the pipeline was operational by at least 22 September. Confirmed crude loadings from the Saudi West Coast reached 42 mb between 17 September and 4 October. Radar imagery from 4 October showed 2 tankers at Yanbu and all 3 berths occupied at Muajjiz. On 10 and 12 October, radar imagery showed 4 VLCCs at the Juaymah moorings on each date.

The pipeline was running at around 5.8 mbd as of 12 October, according to industry sources cited by Kpler Insight. Saudi Arabia plans to expand pipeline capacity to 10 mbd from 7 mbd, which could take up to 3 years. A strike on the Aramco headquarters in Dhahran on 13 October caused a fire but did not affect oil operations. Six ballistic missiles aimed at Taif and Yanbu were intercepted, according to Saudi military statements cited by Kpler. Kpler Insight describes the conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis as rapidly rising.

Indicator	Latest reading
Trigger event	A drone attack on the East-West Pipeline in September halted loadings at Yanbu and Muajjiz. The last confirmed Yanbu loading was on 10 September, and no tankers were berthed on 13 September.
Pipeline status	Kpler analysis shows the pipeline operational by at least 22 September. Industry sources put flows at around 5.8 mbd as of 12 October.
Restoration timeline	Exports resumed on 17 September after repairs. Confirmed West Coast loadings reached 42 mb by 4 October. Saudi Arabia plans to lift capacity to 10 mbd from 7 mbd over up to 3 years.
Yanbu terminal inventories	Inventories fell to 8.99 mb on 10 September, the lowest since 2018. They had rebuilt to 16.17 mb by 4 October.
East coast pivot	Ras Tanura loadings rose to 2.46 mbd in the first half of September. Saudi crude production rose to about 8.55 mbd in September from 6.3 mbd in August, with exports planned from both east and west.

Sources, Kpler Insight articles published on 14 September, 5 October, 12 October and 14 October, plus Kpler internal flow-tracking data.

5. Refined products and bunker fuel impact

Kpler Insight reports that refining margins diverged by region last week as freight and crude prices shifted. US Gulf Coast complex margins fell \$7.05/bbl, or 11%, as Mars and WTI month 1 prices rose 9% and 7%. In north-west Europe (NWE) simple refinery margins jumped \$16.75/bbl, while the Mediterranean lost \$4.8/bbl because of high freight costs.

In Asia, high sulphur fuel oil cracks surged \$8.8/bbl on the week as Singapore supply tightened. Hub inflows fell to their lowest in more than 2 years, according to the same report. September VLSFO bunker sales rose 1.1% month on month to 2.22 mt, while HSFO sales fell 4.9%.

Kpler Insight notes that December 2027 ICE gasoil crossed \$1,000/t for the first time, against \$644/t before the conflict. US Gulf Coast diesel arbitrage into Europe closed again as MR freight rose around 30% week on week. Russian diesel exports are recovering, with 173 kbd set to load so far in October, the highest since June.

Benchmark	Weekly move	Note
USGC gasoline cracks (ex RVO)	Down \$15.85/bbl (38%)	Softer seasonal demand and a 3.5 mb gasoline stock build weigh on cracks.
USGC ULSD cracks (ex RVO)	Down \$2.65/bbl (3%)	Low inventories and harvest season demand continue to support cracks.
USGC HSFO cracks	Down \$5.05/bbl	Cracks average a discount of \$14.25/bbl as inventories reach 24.2 mb.
NWE ULSD cracks	Up \$6.95/bbl	Mediterranean cracks rose \$7.45/bbl. Stock releases and Russian diesel returns weigh on the outlook.
NWE and Med HSFO cracks	Up about \$17/bbl	Seasonally low ARA inventories and tight high sulphur supply provide support.
NWE simple refinery margins	Up \$16.75/bbl	Mediterranean simple margins fell \$4.8/bbl as Persian Gulf freight costs weighed.
Asia HSFO cracks	Up \$8.8/bbl	Singapore hub inflows fell to their lowest in more than 2 years.
Asia gasoline cracks	Down \$11.8/bbl	Absent Saudi gasoline barrels limit further downside.
USGC to NWE diesel arbitrage (MR)	Down \$35/t	Margin of negative \$22.25/t for 21 to 30 November delivery as MR freight rose around 30%.

Source, Kpler Insight Refinery Margins and The Distillate Arb View, both published on 19 October 2026.

6. Sources and notes

This briefing draws exclusively on Kpler Insight research and Kpler platform data. No external or third-party sources were used.

Kpler Insight citations

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Kpler platform data

- Kpler Insight search API (reports and short-form content), published-by-date range from 16 October 2026 to 20 October 2026. Uses a 48-hour rolling window on Wednesday to Friday editions, extended back to the prior Friday on Monday and Tuesday editions to include weekend publications.
- Kpler internal flow-tracking data, “Middle East Regional Flows” measures (Total Hormuz Clearance and Strait of Hormuz Tanker Crossings panel), flow data to 18 October 2026, compiled by the Insight team.
- Kpler, Strait of Hormuz Tanker Crossings dashboard, illustrative vessel sample, 15 to 18 October 2026.

Standing methodology note, vessel and cargo tracking

Kpler compiles vessel and cargo tracking data from 3 complementary sources. Automatic Identification System (AIS) signals form the backbone, providing real-time position data whenever a vessel's transponder is active. A gap in that signal is informative but not conclusive on its own. Satellite imagery, both optical and synthetic aperture radar (SAR), corroborates vessel presence and laden state at terminals and along transit routes. SAR can see through cloud cover where optical imagery cannot. These streams are supplemented by human intelligence, meaning market sources reporting loading events, ship-to-ship transfer scheduling and port call activity. This intelligence often flags a movement before satellite imagery can confirm it.

The 3 streams are cross-referenced against a binary confirmation standard. An event is recorded only when consistent evidence from more than one source supports it, not through probabilistic attribution or a single source. Where AIS coverage lapses, such as during a dark transit, analysts look for satellite imagery placing a vessel inside a region on one date and outside it on another. They also draw on human intelligence and discharge-side confirmation that corroborates timing and cargo grade. Volumes that cannot be independently verified this way are classified as unknown origin rather than attributed by inference, a deliberately conservative approach that favours accuracy over completeness.

Source, Middle East and Gulf of Oman dark crude exports methodology, Kpler Help Centre. <https://help.kpler.com/en/articles/15462913-middle-east-and-gulf-of-oman-dark-crude-exports-methodology>