

UNCLASSIFIED

US/ISRAEL/IRAN CONFLICT  
#6 MFAT DAILY UPDATE – Friday 20 March



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### KEY MESSAGES - UNCLASSIFIED

- We want this crisis to end as quickly as possible and move to a negotiated solution.
- We are concerned about the increasing death toll and emphasize that international law, including international humanitarian law, must be upheld.
- Iran's ongoing retaliatory attacks on its neighbours are dangerous and unacceptable.
- The attacks on gas fields by Israel and Iran take the region further into destructive conflict. These attacks against **civilian** infrastructure need to stop.
- [If raised: Do Netanyahu's comments on Iran's nuclear capability and missile production capacity indicate the war is nearing end?] It is impossible to know how long the conflict will go on for. New Zealand has long called for an end to Iran's nuclear weapon capacity and missile production programme. Only the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can determine the status of Iran's nuclear programme. New Zealand's core position on this conflict remains the same.
  - We want this crisis to end as quickly as possible and move to a negotiated solution.
  - New Zealand is not taking part in the conflict and does not intend to.
- [If asked: Does New Zealand support US and Israel's military action?] New Zealand is not taking part in the conflict and does not intend to. **New Zealand supports de-escalation and an end to this conflict.**
- [If asked – Strait of Hormuz mining/targeting ships] New Zealand remains concerned about the situation. Freedom of navigation needs to be restored to the Strait of Hormuz as soon as possible.
- [If asked – NZ participation in any freedom of navigation efforts] New Zealand has not been asked to send military support to the area. If we received a request, this would be a matter for Cabinet. I am not going to speculate right now.
- [If asked: whether New Zealand will remove Russian Sanctions in light of partner decisions] I'm not going to comment on the decisions of partners as they respond to this situation. New Zealand has been clear: our sanctions are in place to curtail oil revenues fuelling Putin's illegal war against Ukraine. While we continue to monitor the situation, we're confident our current settings remain appropriate.

### Impacts on the Pacific

- We are monitoring the impact of the conflict on the Pacific.
- We know that there are risks for the region – fuel imports are vitally important for Pacific Island countries, and they are often at the end of long supply chains.
- [If raised: additional support?] Depending on how the situation develops, we will assess what support we can provide to our Pacific partners if needed.
- s6(b)(i)
- [If raised: consular response] We've been in contact with Pacific partners to see if we can help Pacific nationals get home. We've provided support in a small number of cases

### Consular Messaging

- New Zealanders who can, should leave the region on commercial flights or by road now. That will be the fastest way to safely depart.

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- The situation remains uncertain and the current conflict could escalate at any time, cutting off departure options without warning. New Zealanders who can, should leave the region on commercial flights or by road now. That will be the fastest way to safely depart.
- Commercial flights are operating out of UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman, and Qatar.
- [If raised: C130J Hercules returns to NZ] One of the two NZDF aircraft deployed as a contingency has returned to New Zealand and the second is enroute back to NZ. They have not been required as commercial flights remain widely available. Consular surge teams remain deployed.

**END OF PUBLIC MESSAGES. RESTRICTED MATERIAL FOLLOWS**

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### KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Iran continues its strikes on energy infrastructure in Israel and the Gulf, warning of “zero restraint” if attacks on Iranian infrastructure persist. While Israel says it acted alone in the South Pars strike and will “hold off future attacks” following a call from President Trump, it insists the US was informed.
- Prime Minister Netanyahu has said for the first time that Iran “no longer has the capacity to enrich uranium” and that Israel had decimated its ability to produce ballistic missiles. Netanyahu admitted that any regime change is not guaranteed, despite attacks on Iranian leadership, and would depend on the Iranian people seizing the opportunity created by Israel’s actions on the ground.
- Qatar has denounced the attack on the Ras Laffan industrial city as a “dangerous escalation” and represent ongoing “Iranian attempts to drag the region into the conflict.” As much as 17% of Qatar’s LNG export capacity may have been destroyed following Iran’s strike on Ras Laffan, which would cause an estimated \$20 billion lost in annual revenue.
- Amid escalating tensions with Iran, the US has approved emergency arms sales totaling \$16.5 billion to the UAE, Kuwait, and Jordan, including air- and missile-defence systems for the UAE and Kuwait, and aircraft and munitions support for Jordan. The deal comes as the Pentagon is seeking an additional \$200 billion to fund the war.
- Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal warned Tehran that Gulf patience was not “unlimited” and “what little trust there was before with Iran has completely been shattered,” adding that both political and military responses remain on the table.
- Iran has responded with renewed attacks on Tel Aviv following Israel’s killing of three high profile Iranian officials including Senior Security Chief Ali Larjani, Basij Force Commander Gholamreza Soleimani and Senior Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib.
- Iraqi armed group Kata’ib Hezbollah has said it would suspend attacks on the US embassy in Iraq within five days under three conditions; the cessation of Israeli airstrikes in southern Beirut, the guarantee that residential areas in Iraq would not be bombed, and that CIA personnel are withdrawn.
- [New Zealand has joined a statement on the Strait of Hormuz led by UK, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan and Canada. Australia declined to join the statement. Likemindeds (including the E3, Japan and Korea) have signalled readiness to support maritime security operations in the Strait of Hormuz. Germany has signalled that this support is conditional on the war ending as well as an international mandate.

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TRADE AND ECONOMIC UPDATES

International/Government coordination and measures taken

- A second Exporters' Webinar, hosted by MFAT and NZTE with support from MBIE, MPI and MoT, was held on Friday 20 March. Approximately 700 exporters and trade stakeholders attended. Key concerns included the trajectory of the conflict, supply chain disruptions, fuel security, and the import of critical goods. Webinars will be held fortnightly to address ongoing exporter queries.
- Associate Minister for Energy Shane Jones joined the Australian Energy Ministers Sub-Group meeting on 20 March.

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### International Supply Chain and Fuel issues

- s6(b)(i)
- Australia has 37 days of fuel. The New Zealand High Commission in Canberra understands this includes fuel on its way to Australia, not just onshore. State and Federal governments reiterated that no fuel shipments had yet failed to arrive. Energy Minister Bowen announced that following the decision to release fuel from its stockpile last Friday, from today 519 million litres of petrol is starting being released and directed into regional Australia.
- According to Korean media, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources (MOTIR) said late Wednesday (18 March) that it is exploring the feasibility of importing Russian crude oil and naphtha, as well as oil from the US and Venezuela.
- The Thai government has also expressed interest in buying Russian oil already at sea, to which Russia has positively responded.
- Russia will seek to be a credible alternative supplier of products otherwise sourced from the Middle East. Russia is one of the world's largest exporters of naphtha (key purchasers are China, Taiwan, and India). Russia is also one of the world's largest producers of nitrogen and indirect fertilisers, helium, and sulphur (though due to the war in Ukraine it is no longer a net exporter of sulphur).

### PACIFIC DEVELOPMENTS

- s6(b)(i), s6(a)

### MARITIME SECURITY

- s6(b)(i), s6(a)

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- New Zealand has not been approached to contribute to a maritime operation, s6(b)(i), s6(a)
- s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- Given the international response, it is possible the United States may wait until the conflict de-escalates before taking further steps to assemble a coalition.
- s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

### CONSULAR DEVELOPMENTS

- The consular operation to assist New Zealanders to depart Gulf states is nearing conclusion. As at 09.00pm NZT on Thursday 19 March, the number of New Zealanders in the region registered on SafeTravel is 3,660. Current numbers are: UAE 2,203, Qatar 471, Saudi Arabia 455, Jordan 54, Kuwait 97, Bahrain 81, Iran 41, Iraq 32, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories 75, Lebanon 25, Egypt 94, and Oman 32.
- Commercial flight options for departure from the UAE and Qatar are readily available. New Zealanders continue to take up flight options, but flights are well below carrying capacity. Emirates is reducing services from the UAE to Auckland from daily to 3 times a week between March 17 and March 30. This is a temporary measure due to lower-than-normal passenger numbers.
- While flights from Bahrain remain suspended at present, Gulf Air is planning special departure flights ([www.gulfair.com/special-flights](http://www.gulfair.com/special-flights)) from Dammam in Saudi Arabia to destinations including London, Bangkok, and Mumbai. Gulf Air will provide bus transfers between Bahrain and Dammam.
- We continue to closely coordinate with our s6(a) partners, who are winding down their consular operations in the region.
- Our overall assessment is that most New Zealanders who wish to leave Gulf states have now done so, although the ongoing uncertainty and potential for the security environment to deteriorate may prompt a further wave of requests for assistance. Consular assistance is now moving toward more complex cases, rather than New Zealanders requiring immediate assistance to depart.

Assisted departures

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- Bahrain – the planned assisted departure of New Zealanders from Bahrain on Monday 16 March was cancelled due to a lack of demand. The 5 New Zealanders registered to depart decided not to take up the assisted departure option.

### NEW ZEALAND INC POSTS AND PERSONNEL OFFSHORE

- There have been no changes in the status of the safety of our personnel since the previous update.
- s6(d)
- ABD and Dubai: Both offices are closed to the public although staff in Abu Dhabi are able to go into the office for essential tasks.
- RIY: The post remains open to the public and will be supplemented with the arrival of two additional staff from New Zealand who are due to arrive on Saturday morning (NZT).
- CAI and ANK: Our posts continue to be unaffected by the kinetic action.

### DEPLOYMENTS

- The New Zealand Defence Force currently has <sup>s6</sup><sub>(a)</sub> staff deployed in the Middle East region (including the Multinational Force and Observers in Egypt). All remain secure and accounted for.
- The NZDF continues to closely monitor the situation and remains in direct communications with deployed personnel. Personnel are in locations with appropriate security measures and will remain unless operational requirements change. The Multi-National Force and Observers (Egypt) and UN Truce Supervision Organisation (Lebanon/Syria/Israel) missions remain operational with all other deployed missions in the region suspended due to current hostilities. Focus for the NZDF now is to resume mission outputs as soon as possible.

Note: This is incorrect. The correct information is the movements for all other deployed missions were suspended.

### Q&A

#### Military

Will/Does New Zealand support US and Israel's military action?

- NZ is not taking part in the conflict and does not intend to. New Zealand supports de-escalation and an end to this conflict.

If asked about Trump Tweet to send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz open:

- At this point, NZ has not been asked to send military support to the area.
- If we received a request, this would be a matter for Cabinet. And I am not going to speculate right now.

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- We would need to look carefully at how any international coalition develops before making any decisions about a possible NZ contribution. As I have said, this would be a matter for Cabinet.
- A proportion of NZ trade transits through or originates from the Middle East region. Recent trade negotiations and agreements mean NZ's security and economic interests are increasingly linked to the Middle East.

Would New Zealand consider providing support in other ways? For example, the types of defensive support to Gulf states that France or the UK are providing? Or the type of support that Australia is providing?

- We don't have the type of equipment that these states are providing (e.g. fighter jets, advanced air defence systems).
- We have in the past participated in international efforts to support freedom of navigation in the region (like the Red Sea). If a future request along those lines was made, and an international operation is stood up, we would consider it.

What has NZ done in the past?

- New Zealand has contributed to maritime security in the Middle East since the 1990s. This commitment remains directly linked to our economic, trade and geostrategic interests, and our longstanding support for international law, including freedom of navigation.
- Although different, one good example has been our contributions to the Combined Maritime Force which is responsible for coordinating multinational activities to counter smuggling, piracy and terrorism in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden.

What do you think of US attack on Kharg island? Does this mean the US is going after Iran's oil?

- It is clear the US is trying to stop Iran's economic warfare.
- It is not for us to comment on the US' motivations. New Zealand wants to see this crisis end quickly and for there to be a negotiated solution.

Reports emerging that US didn't expect Iran to attack energy infrastructure/block Strait of Hormuz? Is the US at fault for these developments?

- Reiterate that New Zealand wants to see this crisis end quickly and for there to be a negotiated solution.
- Freedom of navigation needs to be restored to the Strait of Hormuz as soon as possible.

What does New Zealand think about reports Iran is mining the Strait of Hormuz?

- This is extremely worrying.
- There are clear international rules that say states cannot disrupt or pose dangers to civilian shipping in this way.
- Freedom of navigation needs to be restored to the Strait of Hormuz as soon as possible.

Do you support/condemn the US and Israeli military action in Iran?

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- New Zealand's efforts are focused on the safety of our people in the region.

[If pressed]:

- There is no doubt that Iran has defied the expectations of the international community for decades. Its behaviour needs to be addressed and contained. That is why the US and Israel have taken action.
- We have concerns about the way the conflict is unfolding. Civilians are being directly affected.
- New Zealand expects that all parties must comply with international law, including international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected.

Legal

Does New Zealand consider the US and Israel's strikes on Iran legal?

- The US and Israel have already explained why they have done this. The US has asserted self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter.
- The US and Israel acted based on their own assessment and information. New Zealand was not privy to that.
- We have been clear that all parties must adhere to their international legal obligations.
- New Zealand will continue to advocate for the Iranian leadership to seek a negotiated solution.

What does New Zealand think about Israel's invasion of Lebanon?

- We're concerned by the escalation of conflict between Hezbollah and Israel.
- Hezbollah has threatened Israel for decades and New Zealand has designated Hezbollah as a terrorist entity.
- However, Israel's response right now is heavy-handed.
- We are particularly concerned that hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced.
- We are at serious risk of a vicious retaliatory cycle that will only raise the temperature further.
- We agree with the Lebanese Government that there need to be peace talks.
- Israel and Hezbollah reached a ceasefire agreement in 2024 and we need to get back to that.

Does New Zealand consider Israel's invasion of Lebanon to be legal/justified?

- Israel has already explained why it has done this.
- It is for Israel, not New Zealand, to make the case.
- We have been clear that all parties must adhere to their international legal obligations. This includes respect for Lebanon's territorial integrity.

Have you received legal advice? What did it say? Are the strikes illegal?

- I can't talk about that. Legal privilege/the Cabinet Manual prevents me from discussing legal advice. [Note: Cabinet Manual 4.65 all legal advice that is provided to Ministers will attract solicitor-client privilege].

The Government says it wants to protect civilians. Why hasn't it condemned Israel's bombing of oil refineries, or the US's bombing of a girl's school?

- I understand the US is doing an investigation into the bombing of the girl's school and has committed to releasing the results. We will have to wait for that, but no matter what happened, it is certainly an absolute tragedy.

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- Like the rest of the international community, we are very worried about the way this conflict escalating. Civilian deaths are deeply concerning.
- There are clear international rules that govern conflict. There is no question for New Zealand that international law and international humanitarian law have to be observed.
- Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected.

NZ Embassies in Middle East

Will NZ pull staff out of ME Posts (e.g. UAE) like Australia and others are doing?

- New Zealand continues to monitor and assess the security situation in the region.
- New Zealand does not have an Embassy in Israel [if asked: or Jordan or Qatar].
- Our Embassy in the UAE is operational but not currently receiving in-person visitors.
- For security reasons we won't comment on staff movements.

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US/ISRAEL/IRAN CONFLICT

#7 MFAT DAILY UPDATE – Sunday 22 March

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### KEY MESSAGES - UNCLASSIFIED

- We want this crisis to end as quickly as possible and move to a negotiated solution.
- **We are worried about escalation; attacks against civilian infrastructure need to stop.**
- International law, including international humanitarian law, must be upheld.
- [If asked: Does New Zealand support US and Israel's military action?] New Zealand is not taking part in the conflict and does not intend to. New Zealand supports de-escalation and an end to this conflict. The US and Israel acted based on their own assessment and information. New Zealand was not privy to that.
- [If asked: New Zealand joining statement on Strait of Hormuz] New Zealand has joined a statement **with 21 other countries** emphasising the importance of getting ships moving through the Strait of Hormuz so fuel and goods can be transported freely.
- This conflict has had a huge impact on global shipping. Attacks on fuel tankers and energy infrastructure in the Middle East are leading directly to higher fuel prices for Kiwis.
- This is about how we stand alongside international partners in support of re-opening the Strait of Hormuz to all commercial shipping.
- [If asked: Does this statement mean New Zealand has joined the war?] We have been clear. We are not taking part in the conflict. This statement **on the Strait of Hormuz** is about the importance of working with partners to try and address one of the impacts of this conflict, which has huge implications for us, our partners, and the global economy.
- If we received a request, or if an international coalition was established in the future, any possible contribution would be a matter for Cabinet to determine based on careful consideration of New Zealand's interests
  
- **What does New Zealand think about the attacks on nuclear facilities?**
- **Strikes on nuclear-related facilities pose a significant nuclear safety risk. They also have the potential for serious environmental and humanitarian impacts.**
- **The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Association has called for maximum restraint to prevent risk of a nuclear accident. We completely agree with that.**

### Impacts on the Pacific

- We are monitoring the impact of the conflict on the Pacific.
- We know there are risks for the region — fuel imports are vitally important for Pacific Island countries which are often at the end of long supply chains.
- [If raised: additional support?] Depending on how the situation develops, we will assess what support we can provide to our Pacific partners if needed.
- [If raised: consular response] We have been in contact with Pacific partners to see if we can help Pacific nationals get home. We've provided support in a small number of cases.
- [If raised: request for support from Niue] New Zealand has received a request for budget support from the Government of Niue to help mitigate against anticipated fuel price increases which we are

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working through. Given our unique Realm relationship with Niue, requests for unplanned one-off support are not unusual.

### Consular Messaging

- New Zealanders should immediately leave the region on commercial flights or by road now, if they can do so safely. This is fastest way to safety.
- The situation remains uncertain and the current conflict could escalate at any time, cutting off departure options without warning.
- **For a number of locations, we recognise it is not currently possible to depart. New Zealanders are advised to shelter in place if they are concerned about their safety.**
- Our posts in the region and crisis response centre continue to support New Zealanders in the region seeking assistance. **A response team is in the region to support this effort.**
- [If asked: C130J Hercules returns to NZ] **Both** of the two NZDF aircraft deployed as a contingency **have** returned to New Zealand. They have not been required as commercial flights remain widely available. Consular surge teams remain deployed.

### Economic Implications

- A large proportion of New Zealand trade transits through or originates from the Middle East region. Recent trade negotiations and agreements mean New Zealand's security and economic interests are increasingly linked to the Middle East.
- [If asked: exports stuck due to conflict] It is too early to assess the scale of impacts. Delays can be expected due to suspended sailings and rerouting via alternative corridors. This is likely to have ongoing effects.
- [If asked: impact on NZ economy] It is difficult to predict what the consequences might be for New Zealand when we don't know the trajectory of the conflict. There is a risk that continued disruption to global energy supply chains brings higher fuel prices and places upwards pressure on inflation.

### Fuel

- [If asked: US removing Russia oil sanctions] Our sanctions are in place to curtail oil revenues fueling Putin's illegal war against Ukraine. We continue to monitor the situation closely, which includes engaging with partner countries on sanctions issues, assessing international developments, and our own settings. This is an ongoing process.
- [If asked: What are New Zealand's views on South Korea/Thailand/partners considering importing Russian crude/naphtha as result of US easing sanctions] I'm not going to comment on the decisions of partners as they respond to this situation. As I've said, no changes are required to New Zealand's sanctions settings to secure our fuel supply.
- [If asked: China putting restrictions on fuel exports] We have seen no formal announcement from China that they are planning to restrict fuel exports. We urge all exporters to do all they can to maintain free and open trade.

### Security

- All staff are safe and accounted for.

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END OF PUBLIC MESSAGES. RESTRICTED MATERIAL FOLLOWS

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### KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- President Trump said the US will “obliterate” Iran’s power plants if the Strait of Hormuz is not fully opened within 48 hours, and while Iran wants to make a deal, “I don’t!” This contrasts with his earlier comment that the US was considering “winding down” military efforts in the Middle East (though Trump ruled out a ceasefire). In response, Iran’s armed forces warned all energy infrastructure and desalination plants linked to the US in the region will be targeted if Iran’s fuel and energy infrastructure is attacked.
- Meanwhile, Israel’s Defence Minister said strikes on Iran will “increase significantly” this week.
- Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated British lives were “in danger” following the UK’s decision to allow the US to use British bases to target Iranian forces in the Strait of Hormuz.
- Iran’s state media confirmed damage at the Natanz nuclear facility following a US-Israeli airstrike. Natanz is Iran’s main uranium enrichment facility. Iran said there are no radiation leaks. An Iranian missile struck near an Israeli nuclear facility in the town of Dimona.
- Iran unsuccessfully attempted to target the US-UK military base on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean with two intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs). This was Iran’s first use of IRBMs. One missile failed in flight and the other was intercepted. The UK said the attack occurred before it approved the US’ use of British bases.
- The UK now has more combat aircraft deployed in the region than at any point in the past 15 years, with jets flying defensive patrols over Jordan, Qatar, the UAE, and Bahrain.
- 22 countries in total have now joined the [UK-led statement](#) on the Strait of Hormuz. Separately, the G7 Foreign Ministers released a [statement](#) condemning Iran’s actions and expressing support for Middle East partners.
- Saudi Arabia has declared Iran’s Military Attaché and four other Embassy staff persona non grata. They must leave the Kingdom within 24 hours.

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### TRADE AND ECONOMIC UPDATES

- The US has lifted sanctions on 140 million barrels of Iranian oil, in an attempt to ease prices. This applies to oil and oil products currently loaded on ships, and will last until April 19, 2026.

### KEY FUEL, OIL, AND ECONOMIC DATA

- Australia announced it would continue to subsidise its two oil refineries (which together contribute about 20% of its fuel needs) and “would not hesitate” to release more fuel from its emergency reserves if needed. Australia is also reportedly considering options to tax gas companies’ windfall profits.
- s9(2)(ba)(i)

s6(a)

- Thailand has requested safe passage of vessels through the Strait of Hormuz to enable it to receive plastic pellets and chemical fertilisers from the Middle East, in exchange for processed food and raw materials. Iran has not responded to the request.
- s9(2)(ba)(i)

(Hong Kong is excluded from China’s fuel restrictions).

### PACIFIC DEVELOPMENTS

- s6(b)(i), s6(a)

### CONSULAR DEVELOPMENTS

- The consular operation to assist New Zealanders to depart Gulf states is nearing conclusion. As at **Sunday 22 March**, the number of New Zealanders in the region registered on SafeTravel is 3,613. Current

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numbers are: UAE 2,173, Qatar 476, Saudi Arabia 437, Jordan 51, Kuwait 96, Bahrain 81, Iran 41, Iraq 30, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories 72, Lebanon 25, Egypt 100, and Oman 32.

- The most up to date and reliable flight information can be obtained from the airlines' websites. New Zealanders should check their flight's status and airline's website for operational information, before travelling to the airport.
- Our overall assessment is that most New Zealanders who wish to leave Gulf states have now done so, although the ongoing uncertainty and potential for the security environment to deteriorate may prompt a further wave of requests for assistance. Consular assistance is now moving toward more complex cases, rather than New Zealanders requiring immediate assistance to depart.

### NEW ZEALAND INC POSTS AND PERSONNEL OFFSHORE

- There have been no changes in the status of the safety of our personnel since the previous sit rep.
- Iran: The New Zealand Embassy in Tehran remains closed. s6(d)
- United Arab Emirates: Both Abu Dhabi and Dubai (UAE) offices are closed to the public although staff in Abu Dhabi can go into the office for essential tasks. The New Zealand Embassy in Abu Dhabi was closed on Thursday 19th March and Friday 20th March 2026 for Eid al-Fitr. The Embassy will resume WFH on Monday 23rd March 2026. The New Zealand Consulate General Dubai will resume WFH Tuesday 24th March 2026. The Embassy Duty Officer can be contacted on the Duty Phone for consular enquiries.
- Saudi Arabia: The post remains open to the public. The NZ Embassy in Riyadh is closed for Eid from 19th March to Monday 23rd March.
- Egypt and Türkiye: Our posts continue to be unaffected by the kinetic action. The New Zealand Embassy in Cairo is close for Eid al-Fitr and will be back in the office on Tuesday 24th March. Ankara Embassy is closed for Seker Bayram (Eid) until Monday 23 March.

### Q&A

#### Military

What does New Zealand think about the attacks on nuclear facilities?

- Strikes on nuclear-related facilities pose a significant nuclear safety risk. They also have the potential for serious environmental and humanitarian impacts.
- The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Association has called for maximum restraint to prevent risk of a nuclear accident. We completely agree with that.

What does New Zealand think about Iran targeting commercial ships?

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- This is a worrying escalation. Nobody should be targeting commercial ships.
- Iran needs to stop its attacks on these ships and respect the rights of neutral shipping under international law.

### Legal

Does New Zealand consider the US and Israel's strikes on Iran legal?

- The US and Israel have already explained why they have done this. The US has asserted self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter.
- The US and Israel acted based on their own assessment and information. New Zealand was not privy to that.
- We have been clear that all parties must adhere to their international legal obligations.
- New Zealand will continue to advocate for the Iranian leadership to seek a negotiated solution.

What does New Zealand think about Israel's invasion of Lebanon?

- We're concerned by the escalation of conflict between Hezbollah and Israel.
- Hezbollah has threatened Israel for decades and New Zealand has designated Hezbollah as a terrorist entity.
- However, Israel's response right now is heavy-handed.
- We are particularly concerned that hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced.
- We are at serious risk of a vicious retaliatory cycle that will only raise the temperature further.
- We agree with the Lebanese Government that there need to be peace talks.
- Israel and Hezbollah reached a ceasefire agreement in 2024 and we need to get back to that.

Does New Zealand consider Israel's invasion of Lebanon to be legal/justified?

- Israel has already explained why it has done this.
- It is for Israel, not New Zealand, to make the case.
- We have been clear that all parties must adhere to their international legal obligations. This includes respect for Lebanon's territorial integrity.

Have you received legal advice? What did it say? Are the strikes illegal?

- I can't talk about that. Legal privilege/the Cabinet Manual prevents me from discussing legal advice. [Note: Cabinet Manual 4.65 all legal advice that is provided to Ministers will attract solicitor-client privilege].

The Government says it wants to protect civilians. Why hasn't it condemned Israel's bombing of oil refineries, or the US's bombing of a girl's school?

- I understand the US is doing an investigation into the bombing of the girl's school and has committed to releasing the results. We will have to wait for that, but no matter what happened, it is certainly an absolute tragedy.
- Like the rest of the international community, we are very worried about the way this conflict is escalating. Civilian deaths are deeply concerning.
- There are clear international rules that govern conflict. There is no question for New Zealand that international law and international humanitarian law have to be observed.
- Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected.

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NZ Embassies in Middle East

Will NZ pull staff out of ME Posts (e.g. UAE) like Australia and others are doing?

- New Zealand continues to monitor and assess the security situation in the region.
- New Zealand does not have an Embassy in Israel [if asked: or Jordan or Qatar].
- Our Embassy in the UAE is operational but not currently receiving in-person visitors.
- For security reasons we won't comment on staff movements.

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## US/ISRAEL/IRAN CONFLICT

#8 MFAT DAILY UPDATE – Monday 23 March

## KEY MESSAGES - UNCLASSIFIED

- New Zealand is gravely concerned about the trajectory of this conflict. Attacks against civilian energy and water infrastructure are deeply troubling.
- We want to see all parties acting responsibly, with restraint, and moving toward a negotiated solution.
- Further intensification of this conflict would have severe, wide-ranging and long-lasting consequences.
- International law, including international humanitarian law, must be upheld.
- [If asked: Are you concerned about President Trump's ultimatum – is this conflict getting out of control?] We want to see the Strait of Hormuz open, but we do not want to see any further escalation.
- [If asked: Now that we have seen Iran fire a missile at Diego Garcia, are you worried the war is going to escalate to include Europe?] It was worrying to see Iran launch a missile with this capability. The UK has said there is no evidence Iran is trying to target Europe, let alone that they could if they tried. All of this underscores the need for de-escalation.
- [If asked: New Zealand joining statement on Strait of Hormuz] New Zealand has joined a statement with 21 other countries emphasizing the importance of getting ships moving through the Strait of Hormuz so fuel and goods can be transported freely. Attacks on fuel tankers and energy infrastructure in the Middle East are leading directly to higher fuel prices for Kiwis. This is about how we stand alongside international partners in support of re-opening the Strait of Hormuz to all commercial shipping.
- [If asked: Does this statement mean New Zealand has joined the war?] We are not taking part in the conflict. This statement on Strait of Hormuz is about the importance of working with partners to try and address one of the impacts of this conflict, which has huge implications for us, our partners, and the global economy. If we received a request, or if an international coalition was established in the future, any possible contribution would be a matter for Cabinet to determine based on careful consideration of New Zealand's interests.

## Consular

- New Zealanders should immediately leave the region on commercial flights or by road now, if they can do so safely. This is fastest way to safety.
- The situation remains uncertain and the current conflict could escalate at any time, cutting off departure options without warning.
- For a number of locations, we recognise it is not currently possible to depart. New Zealanders are advised to shelter in place if they are concerned about their safety.
- Our posts in the region and crisis response centre continue to support New Zealanders in the region seeking assistance. A response team is in the region to support this effort.

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- [If asked: C130J Hercules returns to NZ] Both of the two NZDF aircraft deployed as a contingency have returned to New Zealand. They have not been required as commercial flights remain widely available. Consular surge teams remain deployed.

### Impacts on the Pacific

- We are monitoring the impact of the conflict on the Pacific.
- We know there are risks for the region — fuel imports are vitally important for Pacific Island countries which are often at the end of long supply chains.
- [If raised: additional support?] Depending on how the situation develops, we will assess what support we can provide to our Pacific partners if needed.
- [If raised: consular response] We have been in contact with Pacific partners to see if we can help Pacific nationals get home. We've provided support in a small number of cases.
- [If raised: request for support from Niue] New Zealand has received a request for budget support from the Government of Niue to help mitigate against anticipated fuel price increases which we are working through. Given our unique Realm relationship with Niue, requests for unplanned one-off support are not unusual.

### Economic Implications

- A large proportion of New Zealand trade transits through or originates from the Middle East region. Recent trade negotiations and agreements mean New Zealand's security and economic interests are increasingly linked to the Middle East.
- [If asked: exports stuck due to conflict] It is too early to assess the scale of impacts. Delays can be expected due to suspended sailings and rerouting via alternative corridors. This is likely to have ongoing effects.
- [If asked: impact on NZ economy] It is difficult to predict what the consequences might be for New Zealand when we don't know the trajectory of the conflict. There is a risk that continued disruption to global energy supply chains brings higher fuel prices and places upwards pressure on inflation.

### Fuel

- [If asked: US removing Russia oil sanctions] I'm not going to comment on the decisions of partners as they respond to this situation.
- [If asked: What are New Zealand's views on South Korea/Thailand/partners considering importing Russian crude/naphtha as result of US easing sanctions] I'm not going to comment on the decisions of partners as they respond to this situation.
- [If asked: China putting restrictions on fuel exports] We have seen no formal announcement from China that they are planning to restrict fuel exports. We urge all exporters to do all they can to maintain free and open trade.
- [If asked: Is NZ likely to change its position on Russia sanctions?] Our sanctions are in place to curtail oil revenues fueling Putin's illegal war against Ukraine. We continue to monitor the situation

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closely, which includes engaging with partner countries on sanctions issues, assessing international developments, and our own settings. This is an ongoing process.

END OF PUBLIC MESSAGES. RESTRICTED MATERIAL FOLLOWS

Security

- s6(d)

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### KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- President Trump's ultimatum to Iran that the US will "obliterate" Iran's power plants if the Strait of Hormuz is not fully opened within 48 hours expires midday NZT Tuesday). The IRGC continues to threaten that all energy infrastructure and desalination plants linked to the US in the region will be "irreversibly destroyed" if Iran's fuel and energy infrastructure is attacked. The Houthi stated they are willing to support Iran should there be an attempt to reopen the Strait.
- European leaders, including the UK, have taken a deliberately calm response to Iran's targeting of US-UK military base on Diego Garcia. When quizzed by media about the attack, UK Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper emphasised, "our approach to the conflict has been the same throughout. We were not and continue not to be involved in offensive action." This was Iran's first use of IRBMs. One missile failed in flight, and the other was intercepted. UK Housing Secretary Steve Reed said there is "no assessment to substantiate" Israel's claim that Iran has missiles capable of targeting London.
- Iran has stated that the Strait of Hormuz is open to "friendly nations and those not involved in the aggression against Iran." Suggestions persist that vessels who pay with Chinese yuan are being allowed to pass through. Pakistan, China, India, Türkiye, and Russia have all reportedly negotiated passage.
- Iran's Foreign Minister stated on Saturday that Iran is prepared to allow Japanese vessels through the Strait if Japan requests it. This followed a phone call with Japan's Foreign Minister on 17 March, where Japan advocated for the Strait to be opened for all countries. The Japanese Foreign Minister says Iran did not promise to allow Japanese vessels safe passage during the call and denies seeking a bilateral deal with Iran.
- Iranian missiles broke through Israeli air defences, making direct impact on the cities of Dimona and Arad, wounding at least 180 people.
- 22 countries in total have now joined the UK-led statement on the Strait of Hormuz. Separately, the G7 Foreign Ministers released a statement condemning Iran's actions and expressing support for Middle East partners. <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>
- Iranian casualties since 28 February now stand at more than 1,330 killed, including at least 200 children, and more than 18,000 injured, according to the Iranian Red Crescent and Iran's UN Ambassador.

s6(a)

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INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND RESPONSES

KEY FUEL, OIL, AND ECONOMIC DATA

- Australian Energy Minister Chris Bowen announced on Sunday 22 March that six fuel shipments (of 81) due to arrive between April and May had been cancelled or deferred. Fuel reserves had risen slightly to 38 days' worth of petrol (and 30 days of diesel and jet fuel (from both Australia's two onshore refineries and supply ships still arriving).
- The UAE's energy sector is currently experiencing a severe but primarily logistical and security-driven disruption rather than lasting production loss. Oil output for the UAE remains down by as much as 50% from pre-crisis levels (largely driven by shipping bottlenecks through the Strait of Hormuz).

Supply chain and international connectivity

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- Small scale impact on industry in Australia continues to be reported including Virgin Australia joining Qantas in signaling a 5% increase in its fares. Coles (supermarket) has said it will review fuel payments for freight twice weekly and has not ruled out price rises for groceries. Tourism operators have said they may introduce a fuel surcharge on certain activities ahead of the Easter holidays but are not reporting large-scale cancellations.
- The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has intensified pressure on sub-Saharan African countries already exposed to external shocks. As net importers of petroleum products, many now face higher import costs, currency pressures, and supply risks. Risks of a fuel crisis also have the potential to exacerbate food insecurity and, in some cases, conflict.

### PACIFIC DEVELOPMENTS

- s6(a), s6(b)(i)

### CONSULAR DEVELOPMENTS

- As at Monday 23 March, 3,601 New Zealanders are registered on safe travel in the region. Current numbers are: UAE 2,180, Qatar 468, Saudi Arabia 430, Jordan 50, Kuwait 96, Bahrain 78, Iran 41, Iraq 30, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories 72, Lebanon 25, Egypt 99, and Oman 32.
- Our overall assessment is that most New Zealanders who wish to leave Gulf states have now done so, although the ongoing uncertainty and potential for the security environment to deteriorate may prompt a further wave of requests for assistance. Consular assistance has moved toward more complex cases, rather than New Zealanders requiring immediate assistance to depart.

### NEW ZEALAND INC POSTS AND PERSONNEL OFFSHORE

- There have been no changes in the status of the safety of our personnel since the previous sit rep.
- Iran: The New Zealand Embassy in Tehran remains closed. s6(d)
- United Arab Emirates: Both Abu Dhabi and Dubai (UAE) offices are closed to the public although staff in Abu Dhabi can go into the office for essential tasks.
- Saudi Arabia: The post remains open to the public. The New Zealand Embassy in Riyadh is closed for Eid from 19th March to Monday 23rd March.
- Egypt and Türkiye: These posts continue to operate normally.

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## US/ISRAEL/IRAN CONFLICT

#9 MFAT DAILY UPDATE – Tuesday 24 March

## KEY MESSAGES - UNCLASSIFIED

- New Zealand is gravely concerned about the trajectory of this conflict.
- We want to see all parties acting with restraint and moving toward a negotiated solution.
- The longer this conflict goes on, the more severe the impacts – for civilians in the region and for the international economy.
- International law, including international humanitarian law, must be upheld.
- [If asked: talks between US and Iran] We note the US announcement that it is reaching out to Iran through diplomatic channels. New Zealand is keen to see immediate de-escalation and a negotiated solution to this conflict. A political solution is the best way to get lasting security.

## Consular

- The situation remains uncertain and the current conflict could escalate at any time, cutting off departure options without warning.
- New Zealanders should immediately leave the region on commercial flights or by road now, if they can do so safely. This is the fastest way to safety.
- For some locations, we recognise it is not currently possible to depart. New Zealanders are advised to shelter in place if they are concerned about their safety.

## Impacts on the Pacific

- We are monitoring the impact of the conflict on the Pacific.
- We know there are risks for the region — fuel imports are vitally important for Pacific Island countries which are often at the end of long supply chains. We're working closely with our partners to understand the state of play across the region.
- [If raised: additional support] Depending on how the situation develops, we will assess what support we can provide to our Pacific partners if needed.

## Economic Implications

- A large proportion of New Zealand trade transits through or originates from the Middle East region.
- [If asked: exports stuck due to conflict] It is too early to assess the scale of impacts. Delays can be expected due to suspended sailings and rerouting via alternative corridors.
- [If asked: impact on NZ economy] It is difficult to predict what the consequences might be for New Zealand when we don't know the trajectory of the conflict. There is a risk that continued disruption to global energy supply chains brings higher fuel prices and places upwards pressure on inflation.

## Fuel

- [If asked: what are New Zealand's views on South Korea/Thailand/partners considering importing Russian crude/naphtha as result of US easing sanctions?] I'm not going to comment on the decisions of partners as they respond to this situation.
- [If asked: is NZ likely to change its position on Russia sanctions?] Our sanctions are in place to curtail oil revenues fueling Putin's illegal war against Ukraine. We continue to monitor the situation closely, assessing international developments, and our own settings. This is an ongoing process.
- [If asked: Will NZ consider buying fuel from Iran now that the US has lifted sanctions?] The US decision is a temporary carve out measure for a specific set of Iranian oil, such as Iranian oil already on tankers out at sea. This decision does not lift UN sanctions on Iran or US secondary sanctions in a way that alters New Zealand's current policy settings.

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END OF PUBLIC MESSAGES. RESTRICTED CONTENT BEGINS HERE.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- President Trump’s announcements that the US and Iran had "very good and productive conversations regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East" and his delay of US strikes on Iran's energy infrastructure for five days have been positively, if cautiously, received.
- Iran's foreign ministry continues to deny dialogue with the US. Iranian state-affiliated media dismissed Trump's claims of productive talks as “part of efforts to lower energy prices and buy time for the implementation of his military plans.”
- PM Albanese and Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong issued a joint statement on 23 March, reaffirming their commitment to accelerate the renewable energy transition, address “unjustified import and export restrictions”, and “strengthen energy security”. s6(b)(i)  
s9(2)(g)(i)
- s6(b)(i)
- Bahrain is reportedly considering a UN Security Council resolution on the Strait of Hormuz, possibly including language that would authorise the use of force to open the Strait.

KEY ASSESSMENTS – (not for public commentary)

- s6(a)

Upcoming Prime Minister and Ministerial engagement with counterparts				
NZ Minister	Country/Territory	Counterpart	Agency lead	Date/timeframe
PM Luxon	Singapore	PM Wong	MFAT	Took place

s6(a)

s6(a)

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND RESPONSES

KEY FUEL, OIL, AND ECONOMIC DATA

Oil – international situation

Australia

- s9(2)(g)(i)

The joint statement issued by Albanese and Singaporean PM Lawrence Wong reaffirmed their commitment to the renewable energy transition, addressing “unjustified import and export restrictions”, and energy security.

- Energy Minister Bowen downplayed the possibility of fuel rationing. He said he has been receiving advice from his department on contingency plans, but that Australia is a “long way” from this. The first step is “public restraint, public information campaigns and requesting people to save fuel”.
- The Australian Government has reportedly asked for modelling on a flat 25% export tax on gas companies, ahead of their upcoming Budget. Legislative changes to give the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) more powers to fight petrol price-gouging (e.g. doubling the potential fines available) are expected to progress this week.
- The Australian construction, agriculture and domestic freight industries have all raised concerns that the prospect of supply chain shocks that could fuel wider inflationary pressures. Some fertiliser cargo on the way to Australia is delayed in the Gulf.
- s6(b)(i)

Republic of Korea

- s6(b)(i)

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### Singapore

- PM Luxon spoke with Singaporean PM Wong on 23 March. s6(b)(i)

### United States

- s9(2)(g)(i)

### Ireland

- Ireland is scheduled to announce temporary measures including removal of excise fuel tax, extension of fuel allowance payments to the most vulnerable, and a tax rebate for haulers. It does not have a specific plan to respond to potential fuel shortages, however, as it is aligning with the EU in providing timebound measures to address soaring fuel prices.

### Mexico

- As a crude oil exporter but refined petroleum and natural gas importer, the increase in energy prices is expected to have a relatively limited net impact on Mexico in the short term. Energy imports are sourced almost exclusively from the United States and therefore serious concerns about continuity of supply are yet to materialise.
- There has been a short-term increase in crude exports, but as any significant increase in production is highly unlikely, Mexico will not be in a position to contribute to supply gaps.

### Switzerland

- Switzerland has determined no government intervention is currently required, although will keep this under review. Its supply strategy focuses on two stages: prevention and management. The prevention stage relies on compulsory private-sector fuel stockpiles covering 4.5 months for petrol and diesel, and three months for aviation fuel. In a severe shortage of fuel “that the economy is not able to cope with on its own”, a three-stage intervention framework applies: release of stocks, followed by demand-side measures (voluntary first, then regulatory measures), then prioritisation of vital national functions.

### PACIFIC DEVELOPMENTS

- s6(a), s6(b)(i)

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- s6(a), s6(b)(i)

### CONSULAR DEVELOPMENTS

- The consular operation to assist New Zealanders to depart Gulf states is nearing conclusion. As at Tuesday 24 March 1530 NZT the number of New Zealanders in the region actively registered on SafeTravel is 3,595. Current numbers are: UAE 2,182, Qatar 466, Saudi Arabia 425, Jordan 51, Kuwait 96, Bahrain 78, Iran 40, Iraq 30, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories 70, Lebanon 25, Egypt 99, and Oman 33.
- The most up to date flight information can be obtained from the airlines' websites and New Zealanders should check their flight's status before travelling to the airport.
- Our assessment is that most New Zealanders who wish to leave Gulf states have now done so, albeit any security deterioration may prompt further requests for assistance. Consular assistance is now primarily focused on more complex cases.

### NEW ZEALAND INC POSTS AND PERSONNEL OFFSHORE

- There have been no changes in the status of the safety of our personnel since the previous sitrep.
- Iran: The New Zealand Embassy in Tehran remains closed. s6(d)
- United Arab Emirates: Both Abu Dhabi and Dubai (UAE) offices are closed to the public although staff in Abu Dhabi can go into the office for essential tasks.
- Saudi Arabia: The post remains open to the public.
- Egypt and Türkiye: These posts continue to operate normally.

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## US/Israel/Iran Conflict Situation Report #10



### Situation Report #10 – 1300 Thursday 5 March

#### KEY MESSAGES

*UNCLASSIFIED*

- This is a complex and dangerous situation that is evolving rapidly. New Zealand is concerned about the escalation. We call on Iran to cease its retaliatory attacks in the region. We cannot risk further regional escalation, and civilian life must be protected.
- We call for a resumption of negotiations and adherence to international law - and we urge the Iranian leadership to seek a negotiated solution that returns Iran to the community of nations.
- New Zealand has consistently condemned Iran's nuclear programme, its destabilising activities in the region and elsewhere, and its repression of its own people.
- In this context, we acknowledge that the actions taken by the US and Israel were designed to prevent Iran from continuing to threaten international peace and security.
- We recognise too the courage of the Iranian people who have taken to the streets in recent weeks to demand change, only to be met by violence. The Iranian people must be allowed to determine their future.

#### Consular

- The New Zealand Government announced today (5 March) it will pre-deploy New Zealand consular staff and two New Zealand Defence Force planes to the region so that they can be ready when conditions allow to assist with any civilian evacuation options.
- It will take some days for arrangements to be put in place so in the meantime we continue to advise New Zealanders to depart the region if it is safe for them to do so and they are able to depart using commercial flights or other avenues.
- To stay updated on the civilian evacuation options and other important information, we urge New Zealanders to register their details on SafeTravel. Key messages are also being shared on the SafeTravel Facebook account.

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- We have alerted New Zealanders in the region (via SafeTravel) that commercial flights out of the UAE are slowly resuming. If it is safe and possible to do so, New Zealanders should leave the region now.
- For New Zealanders in parts of the region where airspace closures remain in place, or the security situation remains unsafe, we continue to recommend sheltering in place.
- We advise New Zealanders to keep in contact with their airlines, travel agents and insurers so that they can use commercial travel as soon as it is possible to do so.
- New Zealanders requiring consular assistance should call the New Zealand 24/7 Consular Emergency Line on +64 99 20 20 20.

### **NZ media coverage**

- **5 March – MFA announces deployment of C-130s and consular teams** [Live: NZ Defence Force planes prepare to fly to Middle East for evacuations | RNZ News](#)
- **5 March – NZ on standby for Middle East evacuation mission** [NZDF standby for Middle East evacuation mission | Stuff](#)
- **5 March – “Help is on the way” Defence Force Planes Deploy** [‘Help is on its way’: NZ Defence Force planes deploy for Middle East evacuations | The Press](#)
- **5 March – Middle East Crisis complicates OCR outlook** [Middle East crisis complicates OCR outlook | BusinessDesk](#)
- **5 March – What are New Zealand’s global supply chains disrupted by the US-Iran conflict?** [What are New Zealand's global supply chains being disrupted by the US-Iran conflict? | RNZ News](#)
- **4 March MFA interview on Morning Report** [Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters talks to Morning Report | RNZ](#)
- **1 March PM and MFA released** [NZ Government Statement on Iran | Beehive.govt.nz](#)

### **KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

*Restricted content begins here*

- US and Israeli military strikes on Iran continue as the death toll in Iran reportedly surpasses 1,000. Strikes are increasing in intensity.
- **Iran’s Foreign Ministry has accused the United States and Israel of striking dozens of civilian sites during attacks across the country - locations claimed to have been hit included hospitals, schools, residential areas and markets in several Iranian cities.**

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- US military leaders have briefed media that Iran's missile launches have reduced by 86% and Iran's one-way attack drones are down by 73%. The US has hit over 2,000 Iranian targets.
- Iran continues (at a decreased rate) to strike Israel, US bases and diplomatic facilities in the region, and critical economic infrastructure (including energy production) in Gulf countries.
- Iranian Kurdish groups have reportedly launched a ground offensive in western Iran against the Iranian government. President Trump spoke over the phone to Kurdish leaders on Sunday. According to media reports the CIA is arming Kurdish groups.
- Israel has intensified strikes on Hezbollah sites in Lebanon and expanded its presence in the south of the country. The UN says 80,000 people in Lebanon are displaced. Israeli troops have also moved further into Syria.
- An attempt to restrict the President's powers in the US Senate has failed in a 52-47 vote, with lawmakers voting almost entirely down party lines.
- MFAT is tasking Pacific posts to provide Pacific governments with an update on New Zealand's response to the situation, including our government statement, consular response and views on trade and economic impacts.

**Aviation**

*Repatriation flights*

s6(b)(i)

*Commercial flights in and out of the Gulf*

- Today's (5 March) scheduled Emirates flight (EK448) to Auckland was cancelled. The UAE's airspace is running under an emergency protocol which means several layers of approval are required to operate aircraft.

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- An Emirates flight (EK414) from Dubai to Sydney arrived last night with 16 New Zealanders on board. Another Emirates flight departed Dubai for Sydney today.
- An Etihad flight (EY450) scheduled to depart from Abu Dhabi to Sydney sometime on 5 March local time has spare seats. Both Australian and New Zealand Embassies have alerted interested citizens to this opportunity through social media channels.
- Qatar's airspace remains fully closed. Ben Gurion (Tel Aviv) approved a phased reopening framework from Wednesday night.
- Commercial flights are available to depart Lebanon. No countries are currently planning repatriation flights from Lebanon.
- While flights are not departing Tel Aviv, New Zealanders can depart via the Taba border to Egypt 24/7.

### Shipping

- At least six ships have been attacked near the Strait of Hormuz and 200 tankers are stranded in the Gulf following effective closing of the Strait. Leading maritime insurance companies are cancelling war risk insurance from 5 March. Several shipping lines have redirected container services to avoid the Gulf.
- President Trump announced on 4 March that the US Navy will begin escorting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and will provide insurance for trade through the Persian Gulf although there are limited details about this.

### Domestic Security

- Police report no concerns or planned events of note at this time. Police continue to provide support and reassurance to communities and affected Diplomatic missions, including through high visibility patrols.

### Economic Impacts

- Treasury's update to MoF on 05/3 notes:
  - Risk sentiment has stabilised following US offers to assist shipping in the region, including oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz
  - Oil prices remain volatile, rising above US\$84/barrel in overnight trading, before dropping back to about US\$81/barrel this morning, little changed from yesterday's close but up 14% from a week ago.

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- US and European equities rose in overnight trading. Asian equities suffered heavy losses, with Japan's Nikkei down 3.6% and South Korea's Kospi 200 down 12%, but analysts expect a recovery today.
- US Treasuries were little changed and the US dollar index was marginally weaker.
- The NZ dollar rose slightly against the US dollar, trading back over US\$0.59 from yesterday's close at US\$0.588. The trade-weighted index (TWI) rose 0.6% overnight.
- Expectations of a sustained lift in oil prices continued to transmit through to the NZ rates market yesterday, with the 2-year swap rate up 4 basis points to 3.02%. The 10-year swap rate was unchanged at 4.02%.
- MFAT's Economic Division provided a submission on the trade and economic impacts of the conflict for Ministers on 4 March. This submission will be converted into a market intelligence report that will be released to external stakeholders and exporters.
- An Exporters Webinar will be hosted by NZ agencies on 6 March NZT to provide an overview of New Zealand's response, discuss trade and economic impacts, and answer exporter questions.
- MPI is liaising with exporters regarding consignments that require redirection to third countries or a return to New Zealand. Where products can be redirected, MPI is supporting exporters with certification. If the conflict persists, there will likely be domestic storage capacity constraints.

### International Reactions

- Tensions between **Spain** and the **United States** continue, with Spain denying it has agreed to cooperate with US demands. French President Macron has issued a statement of support for Spain, whilst German Chancellor Merz has faced criticism for silence on the matter as Trump criticised Spain in his presence in the Oval Office.
- The **UN** has activated contingency plans across Iran and the region. UNHCR staff are mobilizing from Iran and Afghanistan to Lebanon and Syria to support people forced to flee their homes as the regional crisis intensifies. Iran hosts 1.65 million refugees and others needing international protection and UNHCR is providing support where able. UNHCR's capacity to assist returnees has been significantly reduced due to funding cuts.

### Consular Support

- As at **11:50am Thursday 5 March**, the number of New Zealanders in the region registered on SafeTravel has grown to **3,171**. Registrants in the UAE have increased to **1,893**. Others have also increased, including **Qatar 411, Saudi Arabia 401, Egypt 120,**

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Jordan 42, Kuwait 72, Bahrain 55, Iran 30, Iraq 12, Israel and the OPT 83, Oman 38, Lebanon 14. The real number of New Zealanders in each country will be higher.

- Call volumes and email enquiries are steady, but we expect these to rise with the announcement of evacuation flights, and the most recent calls have been asking about these.
- Overall call volumes – and demands – are likely to continue to increase the longer airspace remains closed, and flight disruptions continue.

### SafeTravel Advice

- The New Zealand Government announced today (5 March) that it will pre-deploy New Zealand consular staff and two New Zealand Defence Force planes to the region to be ready to assist with civilian evacuation options when conditions allow.
- It will take some days for arrangements to be put in place. In the meantime, we continue to advise New Zealanders to depart the region using commercial flights or other avenues if it is feasible and safe for them to do so.
- s6(a)
- As part of our contingency planning, we are also in contact with Air New Zealand and charter companies regarding possible assisted departure flights.
- SafeTravel content published on the MFAT NZ and SafeTravel Facebook accounts has accumulated over 214,000 views to date. We are currently not using boosts/paid advertising on this content.
- New Zealanders requiring consular assistance should call the New Zealand 24/7 Consular Emergency Line on +64 99 20 20 20.
- We have responded to all New Zealanders who have directly reached out to [consular@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:consular@mfat.govt.nz) for assistance accessing SafeTravel.

### Post Operations and staff welfare

- s6(d)
- ABD, Dubai, and RIY - Staff and dependents are confirmed safe and are sheltering in place. Some staff were in proximity to attack locations, but none have been directly impacted. Cleared staff in ABD and RIY are accessing the Embassies as needed to carry out essential tasks s6(a) . Staff who do not yet have adequate

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contingency supplies are in the process of preparing them. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

Internet and phone services are currently operating as normal. Approval has been provided for dependents to voluntarily depart when it is safe to do so.

- ANK and CAI - Business operations continue as normal.

**NZDF Deployments in the Region**

- The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) currently has approximately <sup>s6(a)</sup> staff deployed in the Middle East region (including the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Egypt). All remain secure and accounted for.

**NZ agency response and coordination**

- Government agencies are maintaining a daily stand-up at 9am (led by MFAT)

<b>Response Operations</b>	The MCC will operate on two shifts: 7am-2pm, 2pm-10pm. <u>Key contacts:</u>  Incident Controller: <a href="mailto:MFAT.IncidentController@mfat.govt.nz">MFAT.IncidentController@mfat.govt.nz</a> Response manager: <a href="mailto:MFAT.ResponseManager@mfat.govt.nz">MFAT.ResponseManager@mfat.govt.nz</a> Intel: <a href="mailto:MFAT.Intelligence@mfat.govt.nz">MFAT.Intelligence@mfat.govt.nz</a> Consular: <a href="mailto:CON.ResponseManager@mfat.govt.nz">CON.ResponseManager@mfat.govt.nz</a>  MFAT Wellington MCC phone +64 21 221 2479
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**NEXT SITREP DUE: 06/03 0800**

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