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GULF COUNTRIES

RECOMMENDATIONS IN TIMES OF REGIONAL TENSION

Situation Update – 16.01.2026

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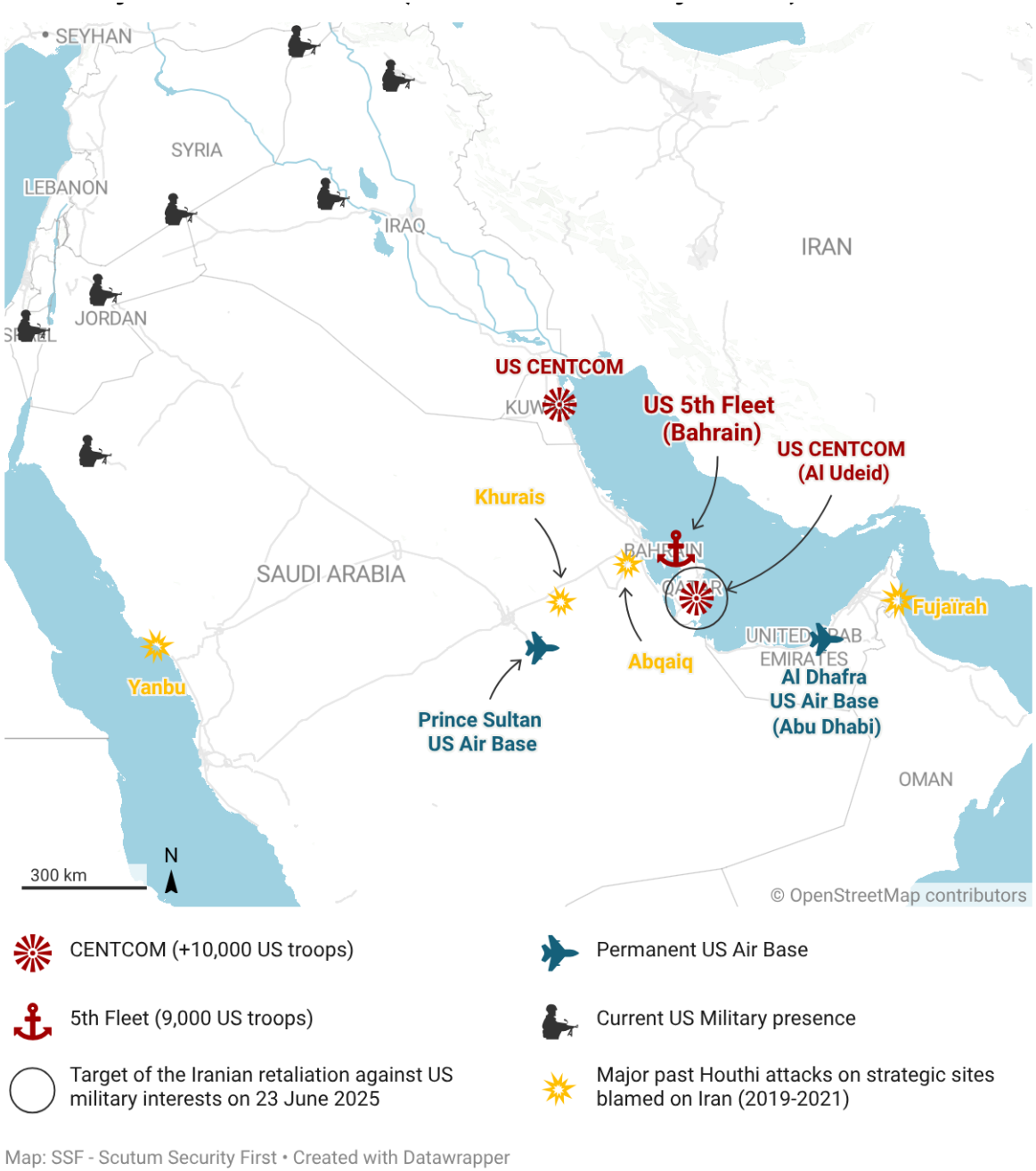
Regional environment and security challenges in the Gulf

Since late December 2025, a **new wave of anti-regime protests** has been developing in Iran (see our last update 09/01/2026), prompting threats of intervention from US President Donald Trump amid the continued regional weakening of the Iranian regime.

Given that US military intervention in Iran could potentially lead to **reprisals against US interests in the region**, it is important to identify such interests (see map opposite) and the countries in which they are located, namely **Qatar**, the **United Arab Emirates**, **Saudi Arabia**, **Bahrain** and **Kuwait**. Although these five countries are not all equally affected by the same type of threat, **regional airspace** could be disrupted as a whole.



Map: SSF - Scutum Security First • Created with Datawrapper

As seen in June 2025, the **US base at Al-Udeid in Qatar** appears, partly for diplomatic reasons, to be a **prime target for Iran**. 14 January, the US authorities **evacuated personnel** from the base before lowering their alert level 15 January following **intense diplomatic negotiations** between the Gulf countries and the Trump administration to suspend any imminent US military action in Iran.

Amidst a **fragile calm** brought about by a fleeting shift in the Iranian regime's repressive apparatus, the priority of which remains survival, it is essential to anticipate the risks in the region in the event of a sudden deterioration in security.

With the Iranian regime still refusing to abandon its **nuclear programme**, the launch of a new Israeli-American military operation targeting the regime's strategic infrastructure seems only a matter of time, as the various parties involved show little faith in attempts to resolve the nuclear issue through diplomatic means.

In light of this situation, which could remain **volatile in the medium term**, the authorities in the Gulf countries have **strengthened their public alert and crisis management systems** (see below), particularly following the outbreaks of direct clashes between Israel and Iran in April, September 2024 and June 2025. They have also identified **latent information threats**, with risks of internal destabilisation.

Locally, the authorities are calling on citizens to remain alert to **the risks of false information**; the circulation of unreliable sources, mainly relayed on social media, has been reported. In a press release dated 14 January, the Qatari Interior Ministry emphasised "the importance of obtaining information from official, authorised sources", stating that "the competent authorities will not hesitate to take all legal measures against anyone proven to be involved **in spreading false information that undermines public security**".

The following information includes reliable and **accessible sources of information in the Gulf countries**, as well as safety **recommendations** for **responding to a crisis**.

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Stay informed, plan ahead and respond locally

QATAR

📞 Emergency number: **999**
🌐 Information outlets: Interior Ministry, The Peninsula, Qatar Tribune
📲 Useful mobile app: Metrash (for residents and citizens)

📢 Qatar has a **national mobile alert system** managed by the *National Command Centre*, which is part of the Interior Ministry.
The system is **designed to automatically send emergency alerts to all mobile phones in the country**, without having to download an app or register in advance: messages are displayed on the screen even if the phone is on silent, via operator networks. It was recently tested during the national "Watan Exercise 2025" in November 2025.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

📞 Emergency number: **999**
🌐 Information outlets: Interior Ministry, The National, Khaleej Times
📲 Useful mobile app: UAE Pass (residents, citizens and visitors)

📢 The UAE has set up a **nationwide emergency alert system** managed by the National Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA). The system can send **alert messages directly to the mobile phones** of people located in a danger zone via telecommunications networks, with automatic display on the screen, sound and vibration.

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BAHRAIN

📞 Emergency number: **999**
🌐 Information outlets: Interior Ministry, Gulf Daily News
📲 Useful mobile app: MyGov

📢 The government encourages citizens and residents to activate the emergency alerts and sirens feature built into the *MyGov* app. This allows users to **receive official alerts and safety notifications in the event of an emergency**, with the option of an alarm sounding on their phone.

KUWAIT

📞 Emergency number: **112**
🌐 Information outlets: Interior Ministry, Kuwait Times

❌ No national system for automatic government mobile alerts is listed (no officially announced Cell Broadcast). Many **Kuwaiti public services have accounts on X/ Twitter** and **Instagram**, which are used to broadcast information in real time.

SAUDI ARABIA

📞 Emergency number: **911**
🌐 Information outlets: Interior Ministry, Arab News, Saudi Gazette
📲 Useful mobile app: Absher (for residents and citizens)

📢 Saudi Arabia has a **national alert system** designed to warn the population in the event of imminent danger. This system is managed by the **General Directorate of Civil Defence**, under the Interior Ministry. **Alerts are sent with a distinctive sound without the need for an app or prior registration** — they appear on the screens of mobile phones connected to the network. Tests combining telephone alerts and fixed sirens were carried out in November 2025 in several regions (Riyadh, Tabuk, Mecca) to test the effectiveness of the system and raise public awareness.

General safety recommendations

Country Codes

- **Qatar**: +974
- **UAE**: +971
- **KSA**: +966
- **Bahrain**: +973
- **Kuwait**: +965

Travel to Gulf countries remains possible at this time, provided that the regional situation is closely monitored and that travellers are prepared to respond in the event of a sudden deterioration in security, specifically by complying with the following recommendations.

Always have an active and charged **means of communication** and follow regional news. Ensure that you can always contact your security advisor and that you are able to contact your diplomatic representation. Locate and know how to get to a potential assembly point. Make sure you have charged **external batteries** available and that you always have access to copies of your **identity documents**.

Please remember that certain messaging app features (WhatsApp, Skype, FaceTime, etc.) are not available in certain countries, including Qatar and the UAE. Using a VPN to bypass these restrictions is illegal and subject to severe punishment.

Make sure you have a **certain amount of flexibility** (accommodation, flights, etc.) in case of delays, flight cancellations or airspace closures. Familiarise yourself with **escalation criteria** and make sure you take the appropriate action, particularly in the event of a deterioration in the security situation: **stay at home, limit your movements, prepare to leave**.

For travellers, it is best to stay in densely populated areas (such as large international hotels, e.g. skyscrapers) rather than in residential neighbourhoods.

For residents, it is advisable to stock up on resources at home that will allow for 96 hours of self-sufficiency (water, food, etc.). Keep an emergency bag ready so that you can leave at short notice. Choose a confined space without windows in your place of residence (e.g. bathroom, stairwell) where you can take shelter in the event of an emergency.

In the event of an air raid or explosion: **take shelter away from windows and raise the alarm as quickly as possible**, including reporting your situation (on-site contacts, etc.). If necessary, turn off the main **gas** supply. Do not use **lifts**.

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Information & Analysis

Country profiles
Alerts 24/7
Customised Reports

Training

E-learning
Courses prior to travel
Crisis management drills

Consultancy

Business intelligence
Travel safety audit
Security risk management
ISO 31030 compliance advice

Technology

Tracking
Mobile app
SOS & Safety Check

Operations

Security Operations Centre 24/7
Assistance in high-risk zones
Crisis management support

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