

Photo: Tamzin News Agency

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# MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

*Reflections for Singapore*

Updated 9 Apr 2026

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# 1. BACKGROUND

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## US AND ISRAEL ATTACK IRAN

- On 28 Feb 2026, the United States (US) and Israel initiated a coordinated military campaign against Iran, with extensive air and missile strikes against key targets.



### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- On 28 Feb 2026, the United States (US) and Israel initiated a **major, coordinated military operation, dubbed "Operation Epic Fury" by the US, against Iran.**
- The strikes aimed to **disrupt Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and instigate regime change.** The attack resulted in the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.
- Following the escalation of hostilities by both sides, the US has also attacked Iran's Kharg Island, a place through which 90% of Iran's oil exports flow and which is a major source of revenue for the Iranian regime.

### For reference

- Reasons for US' attack of Iran: <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/explainer-why-is-the-us-attacking-iran>

## IRAN'S RESPONSE

### *Retaliatory Attacks*

- In response, Iran launched **missile and drone attacks** against **US and Israel military bases** across the Gulf states.

### *Disruption to Strait of Hormuz*

- Iran sits above the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway that is the world's busiest oil shipping channel and a vital route for exports and other commodities from the Gulf.
- Iran has targeted tankers serving the US and its allies in the region through a range of tactics, including signal jamming, drone strikes, naval mines, and missile attacks.
- **Maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has significantly decreased** since the strikes.
- This chokehold has sent **global oil prices soaring**, with the **bottleneck disrupting energy supplies, spiking shipping costs, and creating severe global economic shocks.**



### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- Iran called the strikes unprovoked and illegal, and responded with **missile and drone attacks against Israel and at least seven other countries, including Gulf states that host US bases.**
- Iran has also used its strategic location to effectively **disrupt and control the passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz** (located to the south of Iran). They have issued threats and attacked and sabotaged foreign tankers, **causing global energy price spikes and destabilising global markets.** Ships need to accept a high risk of transit or need to seek a guarantee from Iran for safe passage through the Strait.
- As a response, US President Donald Trump has called on allies to help secure the Strait of Hormuz, adding that he hoped China, France, Japan, South Korea, Britain, and others would participate. As of 23 Mar 2026, no country has confirmed its participation.

### For reference

- How Iran war disrupts Strait of Hormuz:  
<https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/international/global/how-iran-war-disrupting-strait-hormuz>
- Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), countries can exercise sovereignty up to 12 nautical miles from their coastline – this is smaller than the narrowest point of the Strait of Hormuz. While Iran has signed the UNCLOS, it has not been ratified by its parliament.

### For screening (Optional)

- Significance of Strait of Hormuz: "Are there alternatives to the Strait of Hormuz?"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3GBBUd9AxY>

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## 2. SINGAPORE'S POSITION

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## **SINGAPORE IS DEEPLY CONCERNED BY THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AND ESCALATING TENSIONS IN THE REGION.**

- We watch with heavy hearts as civilians bear the devastating cost of the conflict, including the loss of lives, homes, and safety.
- Our thoughts and prayers are with innocent civilians, especially children, the elderly, and families living in fear amid the violence.



### **For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:**

- Singapore is deeply concerned by the conflict and escalating tensions in the region, especially when we see civilians living in fear and losing their lives or homes amid the violence.
- One of the most tragic incidents from the conflict was a missile strike on a primary school in the southern Iranian city of Minab on 28 Feb 2026 that killed at least 170 people, mostly children.

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## WE CALL FOR DE-ESCALATION & RETURN TO DIPLOMACY.

- Singapore regrets the failure of negotiations that has resulted in strikes by the US and Israel on Iran, and the escalation to a regional conflict following Iran's widespread retaliatory attacks, including those against non-combatant countries.
- Singapore urges all parties to:
  - Return to negotiations to achieve a peaceful resolution as soon as possible, in accordance with international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter.
  - Prioritise the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

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### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- MFA's spokesperson made these comments on the day of the strikes:  
<https://www.mfa.gov.sg/newsroom/press-statements-transcripts-and-photos/mfa-spokesperson-s-comments-on-the-situation-in-the-middle-east--28-february-2026/>
- Prime Minister (PM) Lawrence Wong also made calls to United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed Zayed Al Nahyan, and Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Hamad Al Thani, on 7 and 8 Mar 2026 respectively. He thanked both leaders for their countries' support and assistance to Singaporeans residing there and said that Singapore valued its "close friendship" with their countries, and stood in solidarity with their people during these challenging times.

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## OUR PRIORITY IS THE SAFETY & SECURITY OF SINGAPOREANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

Officers from various government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence, worked tirelessly to bring Singaporeans and their dependents home from the Middle East – from chartering commercial flights to deploying the Republic of Singapore Air Force's (RSAF) A330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT).

*The RSAF's MRTT arriving at Changi Airport T2 on 11 Mar 2026, after the repatriation flight from Riyadh.*

*Photo: PIONEER Facebook*



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### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- When the Middle East conflict disrupted air travel across the region, many Singaporeans there had limited options to return home. They were left stranded as flights were cancelled and airspaces were closed.
- In response to the urgent need of Singaporeans in Middle East countries like Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia for assisted departure to Singapore, and given the lack of feasible commercial options in the region, the **RSAF A330 MRTT was deployed for repatriation flights from Riyadh and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.**
- Government agencies had worked round the clock with our embassies in the Middle East to assist those who sought help to return home. Agencies involved included MFA, MINDEF, MOT, CAAS, ICA as well as Singapore Airlines, to ensure that the repatriation flights took place smoothly.



### **3. IMPACT ON SINGAPORE**

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- I. Singapore must be prepared in an increasingly volatile and uncertain world.**
- II. We are well-positioned to navigate challenges.**
- III. The SAF remains vigilant and stands ready for Singapore and Singaporeans.**
- IV. We must be prepared and look out for one another in the uncertain times ahead.**

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## I. SINGAPORE MUST BE PREPARED IN AN INCREASINGLY VOLATILE AND UNCERTAIN WORLD

- The Middle East conflict and failure of negotiations reflect the **broader breakdown of the rules-based world order**. The risk of war and conflict has risen.
- The global economic system is also under threat. The disruption of global supply chains, energy markets, and shipping routes has **far-reaching impact on multiple areas**, including travel, aviation, logistics, and the wider business environment.
- As a highly open and trade-dependent economy, **Singapore is particularly vulnerable to such external shocks**.
- Amid rising global tensions and conflicts, **we must be prepared for a world where such disruptions become increasingly frequent**.



### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- With the Middle East conflict, we see the **continued breakdown of the rules-based global world order** and a rise in the risk of war and conflict. For example:
  - The rules-based global order is being replaced by a world where “might is right”, in which countries settle disputes by force rather than going through multilateral institutions such as the United Nations.
  - Iran’s blockade and attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz go against longstanding norms of open sea lanes and threaten freedom of navigation.
- The **global economic system is also under threat**.
- As the rules-based order recedes, small states like Singapore are vulnerable to external shocks. We must **build capabilities to ensure we remain relevant and secure our seats at the table**.
- As Minister for Defence Chan Chun Sing said at the Shangri-La Dialogue Sherpa Meeting on 19 Jan 2026, *“If we are not able to speak for ourselves, others will speak for us.”*

## I. SINGAPORE MUST BE PREPARED IN AN INCREASINGLY VOLATILE AND UNCERTAIN WORLD

- As global power dynamics shift, Singapore may face more pressures. However, our **national interests remain non-negotiable**:
  - Protecting our **independence** and **access to essential supplies**
  - **Standing up for international law**
  - Maintaining our role as a **trusted, reliable hub**
- In this uncertain world, upholding principles and being consistent becomes even more critical. Singapore must **remain guided by our values and national interests** while **working with like-minded partners** where we can have common cause.
  - In response to a parliamentary question on whether Singapore would engage Iran or consider paying a toll for its vessels to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said that **Singapore would not do so as it would undermine fundamental principles of international law**.



### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- Amid the volatile and uncertain world, our **national interests remain non-negotiable**:
  - Protecting our **independence** and **access to essential supplies**
  - **Standing up for international law**
  - Maintaining our role as a **trusted, reliable hub**
- Singapore must remain guided by our values and national interests while **working with like-minded partners** where we can have common cause.
  - For example, in response to a parliamentary question on 7 Apr 2026 on whether Singapore would engage Iran or consider paying a toll for its vessels to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said that **Singapore would not do so as it would undermine fundamental principles of international law**.
  - The right of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, like the Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Singapore, is codified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which Singapore is a signatory to. **Transit through such waterways is a right – not a privilege to be granted by the bordering state.**
  - **This approach is of profound importance to Singapore, as the Straits of Malacca and Singapore is another critical chokepoint.** More maritime oil and global container trade flow through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore than the Strait of Hormuz. The narrowest point in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore is less than two nautical miles, compared to 21 nautical miles in the Strait of Hormuz.

### For reference

- Transcript of interview with Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, on CNA's "Singapore Tonight", 27 Feb 2026: <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/newsroom/press-statements-transcripts-and-photos/transcript-of-minister-for-foreign-affairs-dr-vivian-balakrishnan-s-interview-on-cna-s--singapore-tonight---27-february-2026>
- ST podcast on Singapore's measured and consistent approach:
  - Podcast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ciGbH5R9jM>
  - Report: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/what-does-the-war-in-iran-change-for-singapore>
- Transcript of Dr Balakrishnan's oral reply in Parliament: <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/newsroom/press-statements-transcripts-and-photos/minister-for-foreign-affairs-dr-vivian-balakrishnan-s-oral-reply-to-supplementary-question-following-the-ministerial-statements-on-the-government-s-response-to-the-conflict-in-the-middle-east--7-april-2026/>

## II. WE ARE WELL-POSITIONED TO NAVIGATE CHALLENGES

- Singapore's **energy supply remains secure** despite rising oil and gas prices caused by the Middle East conflict. We have multiple lines of defence to safeguard energy supply, including:
  - **Diversification** across global sources and fuel types
  - Fuel **stockpiles**
  - Turbines and power plants that can **run on both gas and diesel**
  - **Exploration of alternatives** such as solar power and potential low-carbon solutions
- The government also has **measures to support households and businesses**.
- The government will continue to work closely with the industry to ensure continued and reliable electricity supply for households and businesses. However, in the event that this conflict is prolonged or there is further serious damage to energy production capacity, we cannot rule out the possibility of fuel shortages here. **Everyone has a part to play in energy conservation.**

Oil prices surge as Kharg attack raises stakes in Middle East conflict

SG businesses brace for higher energy costs, supply chain woes: US-Israel-Iran conflict

Singapore GasCo to buy more LNG cargoes if needed, says EMA, as global energy concerns rise

An oil refinery in Singapore.  
Photo: budak, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- With the Middle East shipping 25% of seaborne oil and 19% of global Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) through the Strait of Hormuz, **fuel disruptions** and **price fluctuations** are expected to become more frequent.
- Singapore has **multiple lines of defence** to safeguard our energy supply, with **diversified sources** across different regions and fuel types such as piped gas, fuel **stockpiles** comprising a mix of gas and diesel, as well as electricity-generating turbines and power plants which can **run on both gas and diesel**. Singapore is also **maximising domestic solar power** to increase self-reliance, while **studying potential low-carbon solutions** like geothermal energy and hydrogen to strengthen our long-term energy security.
- The government will continue to monitor the situation, **work closely with the industry** to ensure Singapore's energy security, and **support households and businesses** through various schemes and grants. However, in the event that this conflict is prolonged or there is further serious damage to energy production capacity, we cannot rule out the possibility of fuel shortages here.
- Singapore's energy security is not something to be taken for granted, and **everyone has a part to play** – such as by **conserving electricity** and **adopting more energy-efficient options**.

## II. WE ARE WELL-POSITIONED TO NAVIGATE CHALLENGES

- A **whole-of-government coordinated response** mounted Singapore's largest repatriation effort since COVID-19.
- The **swift deployment** of the RSAF's MRTT brought Singaporeans and their dependants home from Saudi Arabia. This demonstrates the **SAF's operational readiness and robust capabilities** consistently built up over the years.
- We also rendered assistance to foreign nationals, underscoring **reciprocity and enduring ties with our international partners**.



Many thanks for sharing your experience with us. I teared reading it. I feel proud to be a Singaporean. Kudos to the RSAF servicemen and leaders who have made the right call.

5d Like Reply 107

View 1 reply

The crucial time when u expect the support and someone actually showed up. Mindef MFA RSAF Singapore 🇸🇬 did for us in Doha. I can't believe how smooth the how process was and we need not worry about anything. I'm single and am independent but I saw how the families and elderly were well taken care of. I feel so proud as a Singaporean 🇸🇬

5d Like Reply 59

### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- With Singaporeans stranded in the Middle East due to the conflict, various government agencies, including MFA and MINDEF, **coordinated closely to mount the largest repatriation operation since COVID-19**.
- The RSAF's A330 MRTT was swiftly deployed to evacuate Singaporeans and their dependants from Riyadh and Jeddah, demonstrating **the SAF's operational readiness, robust capabilities, and dedication to the safety and well-being of our citizens**. This drew **heartfelt appreciation** and a **deep sense of pride** from Singaporeans, which is truly a Majulah Singapura moment.
- The remaining seats were also extended to citizens from other countries - a reciprocal gesture that recognises their earlier assistance in bringing Singaporeans home during past crises. This also reflects the **solidarity and strong ties Singapore shares with our partners** in the world.

### For reference

- Account of repatriation flight from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DVuyoLgEfzu>

## Letter from an appreciative Singaporean

Article: ST Forum

Letter of the day

# What 'Welcome home' meant to S'porean on RSAF evacuation flight

**“W**elcome home.” These two words were spoken by a Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) serviceman as my family boarded an evacuation aircraft in Riyadh that would take us safely back to Singapore. We had not even taken off yet, but passengers looked around quietly, some smiling. Others wiped away tears. When the aircraft lifted off,

applause broke out. Then someone began singing Majulah Singapura, and others joined in.

The moment made me realise that home is not simply a place on a map but a shared identity, and the reassurance that when circumstances turn uncertain, your country will come for you.

My family and I had been living in Doha, where I worked. Just days earlier, we were sheltering at our home there during the missile attacks across the Gulf region. Living through those moments

was deeply unsettling. Commercial flight options were uncertain due to airspace closures. But eventually, the Singapore Embassy contacted us and advised Singaporeans in the area to prepare to leave.

Standing at the foot of that RSAF aircraft in Riyadh was a moment I will never forget.

Our soldiers had flown thousands of kilometres into an uncertain region to take Singaporeans home. They greeted each passenger calmly, served



Mr Nisar Keshvani with his wife and children before boarding the RSAF evacuation flight from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. PHOTO: COURTESY OF NISAR KESHVANI

meals and checked on families throughout the journey. It is a side of military service that is rarely visible to the public.

My wife captured the moment best. When the servicemen greeted passengers, she said: “When they said ‘Welcome home’,

you already felt like you were home.” She admitted she still felt a brief moment of fear knowing the aircraft would be flying through uncertain airspace. “But when the pilot said it was an honour to take us home,” she said, “that was the moment I felt safe.”

We are deeply grateful to the Singapore Government, Ambassadors S. Premjith (Riyadh) and Pong Kok Tian (Doha), and the embassy teams who remained composed, met us personally and ensured we were cared for during a difficult journey home.

For Singaporeans who have grown up in stability, it is easy to assume peace is permanent. But even a brief experience in a conflict zone reminds us how fragile peace can be. Peace exists because generations before us built strong institutions, careful diplomacy and a national ethos of responsibility. Singapore’s tradition of national service and preparedness reflects this understanding – that safeguarding our people requires foresight, discipline and the willingness to serve when duty calls.

The words “Welcome home” that night were more than a greeting. They were a reminder that Singapore’s greatest strength lies not only in its prosperity or global connections, but also in its commitment to look after its people wherever they may be.

**Nisar Keshvani**

### For commanders’/facilitators’ sharing:

- Here’s a forum letter written by one of the appreciative Singaporeans who was repatriated by the RSAF from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

### For reference

- Full unedited letter:

<https://www.facebook.com/ho.ching.268883/posts/pfbid027G6LcrhYAqyvKQwdfHei9JqesVFNQn8d3BoKtoV1uPWRaCjsvzH4bNw7Jhb4DN3el>

### III. THE SAF REMAINS VIGILANT AND STANDS READY FOR SINGAPORE AND SINGAPOREANS

- The Middle East conflict and global events are stark reminders that **peace is not a given**, and defending our sovereignty and way of life falls on a **strong and capable SAF**.
- **Every SAF personnel must continue to be vigilant and ready to respond to the call of duty when called upon.**
- As modern warfare evolves across multiple domains (including the cyber and information domains), the SAF will continue to **adapt to a changing security environment** and **modernise its capabilities** to tackle emerging threats.



Photos: PIONEER Facebook



#### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- The recent events in the Middle East and around the world are stark reminders that **peace is not a given**. The responsibility of defending our sovereignty and way of life falls on a **strong and capable SAF**.
- **Every SAF personnel must continue to be vigilant and ready to respond to the call of duty when called upon,**
- As modern warfare evolves across multiple domains (including the cyber and information domains), the SAF will continue to **adapt to a changing security environment** and **modernise its capabilities** to tackle emerging threats.

## IV. WE MUST BE PREPARED AND LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER IN THE UNCERTAIN TIMES AHEAD



- The **global environment is getting more volatile and unpredictable**. We are seeing more crises – wars, geopolitical tensions, and economic shocks.
- These events can escalate quickly, so **Singapore must stay alert, flexible, united, and ready to adjust** as new realities emerge.
- In times like these, the information space can be exploited to spread disinformation and sow division along socio-economic, racial, and religious lines or seed distrust in national institutions. We must **remain discerning when consuming information online**.
- As Singapore braces for the economic fallout during this prolonged period of instability, **let us be a “We First” society**.

Illustration: CNA/Nurjannah Suhaimi



### For commanders’/facilitators’ sharing:

- The **global environment is getting more volatile and unpredictable**. We are seeing more crises – wars, geopolitical tensions, and economic shocks.
- For Singapore, a small and highly globalised country, these shifts have direct implications. Events can escalate quickly, so **Singapore must stay alert, flexible, united, and ready to adjust** as new realities emerge.
- In uncertain times, **bad actors may exploit the information space to spread disinformation** to sow division along socio-economic, racial or religious lines, or seed distrust in national institutions.
- We must **exercise discernment** when consuming and sharing information. Under the Digital Defence pillar, **every Singaporean is the first line of defence** against threats from the digital domain:
  - Pause before sharing
  - Check the source and context
  - Verify against trusted sources
  - Flag out false information
- In his 2025 National Day Rally speech, PM Lawrence Wong spoke about **building a “We First” society** to keep Singapore going in a more troubled world. This means caring, contributing, and looking out for one another, instead of just focusing on our self-interest. **Together, we keep Singapore strong.**

*[Commanders and facilitators may choose to share personal examples and simple ways to play a part in defence and look out for one another during this period. E.g.,*

- *Households and businesses have a part to play by conserving electricity and adopting more energy-efficient appliances.*
- *We can express or demonstrate care for those with loved ones who are still in the Middle East.]*

## REFLECTION

1

While other countries may face difficulty repatriating their citizens, what does it say about Singapore – our standing, friendships, and networks – that we could fly our aircraft into conflict zones and bring Singaporeans home?

2

In these challenging times, how can we continue to play our part as Singaporeans to stay prepared for crises and disruptions?

3

How do we maintain social harmony and mutual respect within our community, even as we hold different views on external events that may spark strong emotions?

### For commanders'/facilitators' sharing:

- S/N 1 - Commanders and facilitators may share the **various processes required for repatriation ops**, which include the diplomatic and legal steps (e.g., obtaining diplomatic clearance and securing overflight permissions from transit countries, coordinating with relevant embassies and consulates, and ensuring compliance with international aviation regulations), operational planning, and military coordination. The coordination between multiple stakeholders, agencies and countries is complex, and **it takes an effective Singapore system across different levels of government ministries to be able to pull this off smoothly and safely.**
- S/N 2 - You may share about the **annual Exercise SG Ready** that is conducted to ensure that businesses, organisations, communities, and individuals can test out their contingency and business continuity plans. Individuals will also become more aware of potential disruptions and contingencies that will affect their daily lives and how they can respond. **By being prepared for disruptions, we play our part to keep Singapore strong.**
- S/N 3 – You may share **different ways to maintain harmony and respect**, which includes practising active and empathetic listening, focusing on shared values, and choosing constructive engagement in a respectful manner.

# THANK YOU

## Your feedback is valuable to us.

Please take a minute to share your feedback through the following link or QR code:



<https://go.gov.sg/middleeast2026>

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