



# | Flash |

## **Fragile Ceasefire – SITREP #37:**

**May 6, 2026**

F-2026-05-06a

Classification: TLP:CLEAR

Criticality: High

Intelligence Requirements: Geopolitics

**May 6, 2026**

## Scope Note

ZeroFox Intelligence is derived from a variety of sources, including—but not limited to—curated open-source accesses, vetted social media, proprietary data sources, and direct access to threat actors and groups through covert communication channels. Information relied upon to complete any report cannot always be independently verified. As such, ZeroFox applies rigorous analytic standards and tradecraft in accordance with best practices and includes caveat language and source citations to clearly identify the veracity of our Intelligence reporting and substantiate our assessments and recommendations. All sources used in this particular Intelligence product were *identified prior to 1:30 PM (EDT) on May 6, 2026*; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.

# | Flash | Fragile Ceasefire – SITREP #37: May 6, 2026

## | Key Findings

- On May 3, the U.S. military launched "Project Freedom" to restart commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz (SoH), enabling two vessels to exit. Iran retaliated with attacks against nearby United Arab Emirates (UAE), commercial vessels, and U.S. ships. Iran's response reaffirms its commitment to restricting commercial shipping in the SoH, making a significant increase in transits highly unlikely.
- Despite recent setbacks, the April 8 ceasefire continues to hold, likely because the episodes demonstrated that renewed fighting will not resolve the conflict. To this end, Project Freedom was paused after one day amid reports that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to end the war is circulating.
- Major stock indices surged and oil prices dropped in response to reports of the MOU. This is likely a reflection of the higher likelihood the MOU will lead to an agreement because it represents the United States moving a step closer to accepting certain Iranian demands in the short term. However, neither the United States nor Iran has tangibly altered its long-term negotiating positions, which could resurface in future talks.

## | Latest Details

### Project Freedom

On May 3, the U.S. military launched Project Freedom, which aimed to restore freedom of navigation for commercial shipping through the SoH and enabled two vessels to exit the strait. While there are limited details on the operation, the U.S. military reportedly utilized “guided-missile destroyers, over 100 land- and sea-based aircraft, multidomain unmanned platforms, and approximately 15,000 service members” to escort commercial vessels through the SoH.<sup>1</sup>

- During these operations, the U.S. military reported defending against separate attacks from Iranian drones and missiles, which all missed, and destroying seven armed Iranian small boats.<sup>2</sup> These strikes were almost certainly in response to U.S. military assistance in escorting two U.S.-flagged ships through the SoH as part of Project Freedom.

Project Freedom is likely a response to weeks of U.S. economic pressure on Iran, which failed to extract concessions.

- Iran is unlikely to respond to economic pressure, as its military-political establishment very likely prioritizes survival over economic concerns. Throughout its recent history, Iran has weathered worse economic crises than it is currently experiencing, including shortfalls in energy exports.

### UAE Singled Out

On May 4, 2026, Iran attacked the UAE for the first time in almost a month, signaling a potential renewal of conflict between the United States and Iran.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

[hXXps://www.centcom\[.\]mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/4476318/us-military-supports-launch-of-project-freedom-in-strait-of-hormuz/](https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/4476318/us-military-supports-launch-of-project-freedom-in-strait-of-hormuz/)

<sup>2</sup>

[hXXps://www.cbsnews\[.\]com/live-updates/iran-war-trump-strait-of-hormuz-ship-attack-threat-peace-proposal/](https://www.cbsnews.com/live-updates/iran-war-trump-strait-of-hormuz-ship-attack-threat-peace-proposal/)

<sup>3</sup> [hXXps://www.wsj\[.\]com/livecoverage/iran-hormuz](https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/iran-hormuz/)

<sup>4</sup> [hXXps://www.aljazeera\[.\]com/news/2026/5/5/uae-intercepts-missiles-and-drones-for-second-day](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/5/5/uae-intercepts-missiles-and-drones-for-second-day)

- The UAE reported that its air defense systems intercepted 12 ballistic missiles, three cruise missiles, and four drones fired by Iran at various parts of the country.<sup>5</sup>
- This attack followed reports that both an Abu Dhabi National Oil Company tanker had been fired upon by Iranian drones near the SoH and a South Korean-operated ship anchored off the UAE coast was hit, causing an explosion.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, an oil terminal was hit in the port city of Fujairah. The facility had been used to send some of UAE's oil through a pipeline that avoids the SoH. Iran published a map showing that the Port of Fujairah is now within its "zone of control", making it a likely target in future operations; this also demonstrates that any efforts to break Iran's control over the SoH will likely lead to targeting of energy assets needed to bring down oil prices in the future.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike previous Iranian barrages, other Gulf states were spared. Iran's selective targeting is likely intended to isolate the UAE and punish its supposed greater willingness to align with Operation Epic Fury on the side of the United States and Israel.<sup>8</sup> By sparing other Gulf states, Iran is likely preventing a unified response that would encourage them to join the U.S.-Israeli campaign.

## **Response to Project Freedom**

Iran's response reaffirms its commitment to restricting commercial shipping in the SoH, making a significant increase in transits highly unlikely. The conflict has demonstrated that the number of attacks matters less than the impact on commercial shipping insurance. Project Freedom is unlikely to convince insurers that there is adequate security to pass through the SoH. Even during brief periods when the SoH has been reopened, ships have not resumed sailing en masse and are unlikely to do so for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>5</sup> [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/articles/cjwp432d0v5o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cjwp432d0v5o)

<sup>6</sup>

[hXXps://www.reuters\[.\]com/world/middle-east/tanker-hit-by-unknown-projectiles-off-uaes-fujairah-ukmto-says-2026-05-04/](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/tanker-hit-by-unknown-projectiles-off-uaes-fujairah-ukmto-says-2026-05-04/)

<sup>7</sup> [hXXps://www.aljazeera\[.\]com/news/2026/5/5/whats-the-significance-of-uaes-fujairah-hit-on-monday](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/5/5/whats-the-significance-of-uaes-fujairah-hit-on-monday)

<sup>8</sup> [hXXps://understandingwar\[.\]org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-may-5-2026/](https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-may-5-2026/)

Despite these setbacks, the April 8 ceasefire remains in place—likely because the episodes demonstrated that renewed fighting will not resolve the impasse over the SoH.

- On May 5, 2026, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that “Operation Epic Fury is concluded” and that offensive operations against Iran were over.<sup>9</sup>

Also on May 5, 2026, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a pause to Project Freedom, citing significant progress toward a diplomatic resolution with Iran. The centerpiece of this potential breakthrough is reportedly a one-page MOU. This document delays nuclear negotiations until a future date, while more immediately outlining a phased reopening of the SoH in exchange for the gradual lifting of the U.S. blockade on Iranian ports.<sup>10</sup>

- Recent Iranian offers have decoupled the SoH and nuclear issues, calling for the United States to lift its blockade without discussing the nuclear issue. Until now, the Trump administration had rejected this offer, likely because it deprives them of leverage.

Major stock indices surged and oil prices dropped in response to the MOU. This is likely a reflection of the higher likelihood the MOU will lead to an agreement because it represents the United States moving a step closer to accepting certain Iranian demands.<sup>11</sup>

- On April 23, 2026, ZeroFox forecasted that “Iran will likely require the United States to de-escalate—most likely by partially lifting its blockade—before returning to talks.”<sup>12</sup>

## Israel-Lebanon

Pressure from the United States has very likely largely constrained Israel from escalating the conflict in Lebanon during the ceasefire period. However, this has done little beyond lowering the intensity of the conflict. Israel continues to strike Hezbollah targets on a daily

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<sup>9</sup> [hXXps://www.jpost\[.\]com/international/article-895236](https://www.jpost.com/international/article-895236)

<sup>10</sup> [hXXps://www.axios\[.\]com/2026/05/06/iran-us-deal-one-page-memo](https://www.axios.com/2026/05/06/iran-us-deal-one-page-memo)

<sup>11</sup> [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/articles/c4g8zejy3o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4g8zejy3o)

<sup>12</sup> ZeroFox Flash Report, Blockade of SoH – SITREP #35: April 23, 2026

basis, and Hezbollah is regularly conducting drone, artillery, and rocket strikes against Israeli forces and civilian infrastructure.<sup>1314</sup>

Over the last several days, Hezbollah has notably increased its use of armed first person view (FPV) drones—particularly those of the fiber optic variety, which are immune to electronic jamming. This development has reportedly triggered widespread and growing consternation among Israeli defense officials.<sup>15</sup> After a series of deadly drone strikes on Israeli military targets in Lebanon in late April 2026, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that he had “ordered the establishment of a special project to counter the drone threat” but that it would “take time.”<sup>1617</sup>

- Although it is not impossible that Israel could develop countermeasures to successfully battle fiber optic drones, neither the Ukrainian nor Russian militaries have been able to accomplish this feat in several years of intense drone warfare.

Should Hezbollah continue to improve on its drone capabilities, it would likely represent a significant shift in the conflict and dramatically raise the costs of the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. A more confident Hezbollah, along with Israeli’s continued refusal to withdraw from Lebanon, would likely lead to an indefinite, lower-intensity conflict that has the potential to scupper a permanent deal with Iran.

- Israel will likely continue to push the United States to separate the broader Iran-U.S. ceasefire from future efforts to target Iranian proxies that threaten Israel, thereby decoupling the Iran and Lebanon conflicts.

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<sup>13</sup> [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/articles/cy523z7x0g5o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy523z7x0g5o)

<sup>14</sup> [hXXps://t\[.\]me/s/rasedal3ado138e](https://t.me/s/rasedal3ado138e)

<sup>15</sup>

[hXXps://www.timesofisrael\[.\]com/hunted-by-drones-it-should-have-seen-coming-israels-lebanon-strategy-is-no-w-at-risk/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/hunted-by-drones-it-should-have-seen-coming-israels-lebanon-strategy-is-no-w-at-risk/)

<sup>16</sup> [hXXps://apnews\[.\]com/article/hezbollah-israel-drones-fiber-optic-war-00cd07852f49ade04ed0a6fde505d987](https://apnews.com/article/hezbollah-israel-drones-fiber-optic-war-00cd07852f49ade04ed0a6fde505d987)

<sup>17</sup>

[hXXps://www.timesofisrael\[.\]com/netanyahu-says-project-to-counter-drone-threat-underway-but-will-take-time/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-says-project-to-counter-drone-threat-underway-but-will-take-time/)

## | Conclusion

Neither the United States nor Iran has tangibly adjusted its long-term negotiating stances. This likely led to military action in the form of Project Freedom, which was devised to end the stalemate, and was followed by the MOU, which avoids most of the difficult negotiation gaps.

- Over the long term, the United States is prioritizing a 20+ year freeze on uranium enrichment and the removal of Iran’s existing uranium stockpiles.
- Iran, in turn, is demanding control over transits in the SoH, a three to five-year enrichment freeze, and an agreement to dilute—but not remove—its enriched uranium. While there are likely some differences among Iran’s negotiators and its more hardline members of the military-political establishment, they are likely unified on these core tenets.

Even if an agreement on both the SoH and the nuclear issue is reached, per the MOU, that still leaves Iran’s support for regional proxies and its missile programs unresolved—which is arguably of equal or greater concern to Israeli and Gulf allies than the nuclear issue.

Iran very likely views support for proxies abroad and its missile program as key deterrents against further military aggression, despite both programs being severely degraded due to recent years of U.S./Israeli military operations. However, if the war ends, Iran is likely to focus domestically on preventing conditions that cause another uprising before rebuilding its foreign deterrents. Furthermore, war has very likely depleted Iran’s weapons stockpiles and set back its nuclear program by years, to such an extent that the country would likely be in compliance with U.S. requirements for years regardless of its intent.<sup>18</sup> Taken together, U.S. negotiators very likely view reaching an agreement on the SoH as the more immediate concern, relegating the other pre-war aims to future talks.

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<sup>18</sup> ZeroFox Flash Report, Military Strikes on Iran – SITREP #29: March 27, 2026

## **| Appendix A: Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination**

	<b>Red</b>	<b>Amber</b>
<b>WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?</b>	<b>Sources may use</b> <b>TLP:RED</b> when information cannot be effectively acted upon by additional parties and could lead to impacts on a party's privacy, reputation, or operations if misused.	<b>Sources may use</b> <b>TLP:AMBER</b> when information requires support to be effectively acted upon but carries risks to privacy, reputation, or operations if shared outside of the organizations involved.
<b>HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?</b>	<b>Recipients may NOT share</b> <b>TLP:RED</b> with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.	<b>Recipients may ONLY share</b> <b>TLP:AMBER</b> information with members of their own organization and its clients, but only on a need-to-know basis to protect their organization and its clients and prevent further harm. <b>Note that</b> <b>TLP:AMBER+STRICT</b> restricts sharing to the organization only.
	<b>Green</b>	<b>Clear</b>
<b>WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?</b>	<b>Sources may use</b> <b>TLP:GREEN</b> when information is useful for the awareness of all participating organizations, as well as with peers within the broader community or sector.	<b>Sources may use</b> <b>TLP:CLEAR</b> when information carries minimal or no risk of misuse in accordance with applicable rules and procedures for public release.
<b>HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?</b>	<b>Recipients may share</b> <b>TLP:GREEN</b> information with peers and partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.	<b>Recipients may share</b> <b>TLP:CLEAR</b> information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.

## **| Appendix B: ZeroFox Intelligence Probability Scale**

All ZeroFox intelligence products leverage probabilistic assessment language in analytic judgments. Qualitative statements used in these judgments refer to associated probability ranges, which state the likelihood of occurrence of an event or development. Ranges are used to avoid a false impression of accuracy. This scale is a standard that aligns with how readers should interpret such terms.

Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certain
1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%