STRAIT OF HORMUZ MONITOR

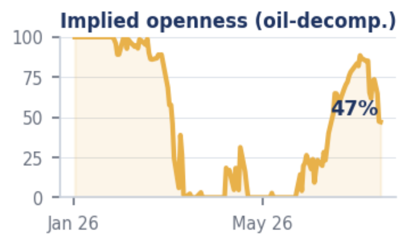
How open · how fast

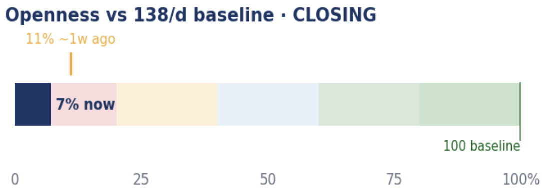
The headline question: how open is Hormuz, and how fast is it reopening? We lead with what we can OBSERVE; dark-share hides the rest.

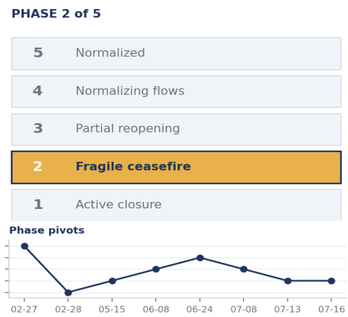
Hormuz ~7% open (observable) · **Phase 2/5 — Fragile ceasefire** · **CLOSING** -4.0 pts/wk

Backing out SPR releases, OPEC+ slack and demand destruction ($12/bbl combined, per Global Oil S/D v12), today's Brent implies Hormuz is 47% open. Observed visible openness is 7%, total flow estimate 37%; the residual Hormuz risk premium in Brent is $18/bbl. Forward Brent has the premium decaying to $-2/bbl by 12m (100% implied openness).

Of the ships we can SEE, only 51% are AIS-off — but the visible count is itself a fraction of true flow: 9 transits/day vs 138 baseline (~7%), with most traffic running dark/unobserved (50-80% on an all-traffic basis). Estimated total ~37% of 20 mb/d throughput (est., low-confidence).







SYNTHESIS — three-sentence headline

HOLD — Phase 2 (Fragile ceasefire, ESCALATING). The blockade FIRED, but it is a MANAGED siege, not a closure. CENTCOM's blockade of Iran's ports is in force and biting (a vessel disabled off Bandar Abbas; the US struck Abadan/Mahshahr) — but Trump DROPPED the toll, Iran's Kuwait reply was INTERCEPTED, the US SPARED Kharg, and GL X survives. The flow is the feedback: throughput DIPPED 8.0 -> 7.4 mb/d as the siege cuts Iran's dark export trickle (dark 55 -> 51) — ~37% of the ~20 mb/d norm, degraded not shut, the GCC through-corridor holding. The blockade is measurably draining Iran's EXPORT leverage (the Two-Clock), NOT a corridor closure. Phase-1-proper triggers (a Kharg strike, a mine detonation, Brent through ~$95) armed but UNFIRED. HOLD — Phase 2 (Fragile ceasefire, ESCALATING). The blockade FIRED — CENTCOM's blockade of Iran's ports is in force and biting (a vessel disabled off Bandar Abbas; Abadan/Mahshahr struck) — but it is a MANAGED siege, not a closure. Read the whole target set: Trump DROPPED the toll, Iran's Kuwait reply was intercepted, the US SPARED Kharg, GL X survives. The flow is the feedback: throughput DIPPED 8.0 -> 7.4 mb/d (dark 55 -> 51) as the siege cuts Iran's dark export trickle — ~37% of the ~20 mb/d norm, degraded not shut, with the GCC through-corridor holding. This is the blockade measurably draining Iran's EXPORT leverage, NOT a corridor closure. The durability vector would mechanically tip to Phase 1 — we OVERRIDE and hold Phase 2, because the siege targets Iran's export outlet, Kharg is spared, and price does not confirm closure (Brent ~$86 vs $100-130). The frame is now the Two-Clock: whose leverage runs out first — the siege LOWERS near-term resolution (the 90-day prob sits at a cycle low) while RAISING the end-game odds (settlement-from-weakness, 6-18 months out). Phase-1-proper triggers (a Kharg strike, a mine detonation, Brent through ~$95) ARMING, not fired. The distinction that matters this print: the blockade targets IRAN'S EXPORT OUTLET (Bandar Abbas, Abadan, Mahshahr), not the through-corridor. The GCC crude that is the bulk of Hormuz volume (Saudi, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar) keeps moving — CENTCOM says the Strait remains open to lawful transit — while Iran's own barrels are throttled. ~7.4 mb/d still transits. Reduced, contested, and now with a live blockade on one flag's exports — but not a shut Strait.

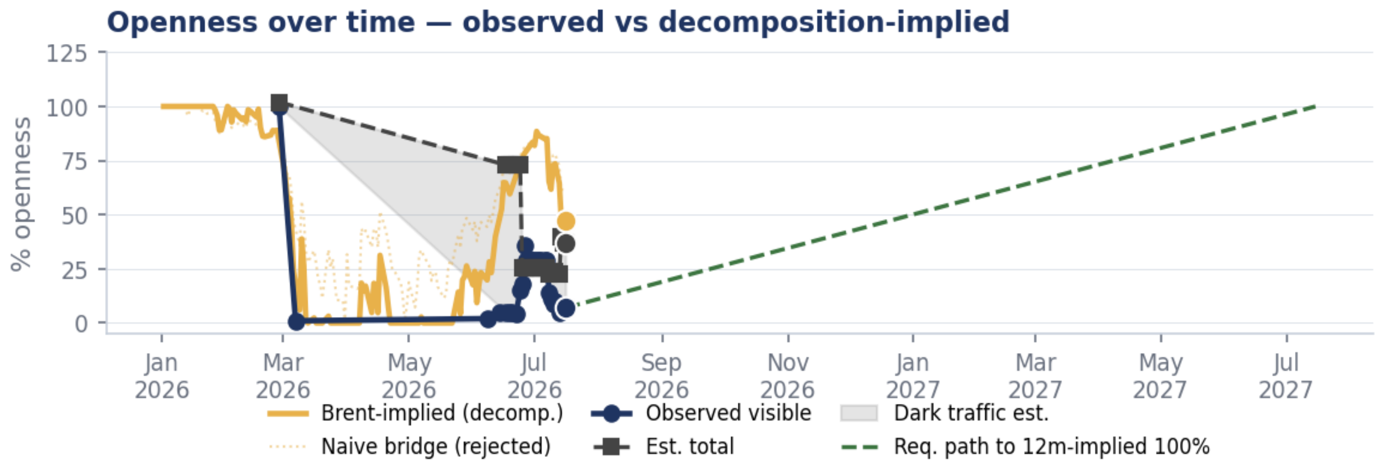
As of 2026-07-16 · **Sources:** visible transits (Windward / hormuzmonitor) · dark-share (Vortexa) · throughput (EIA Q1 avg) · Brent (ICE) · diplomatic (analyst principal-scored). Baselines: 138 ships/day · 20 mb/d.

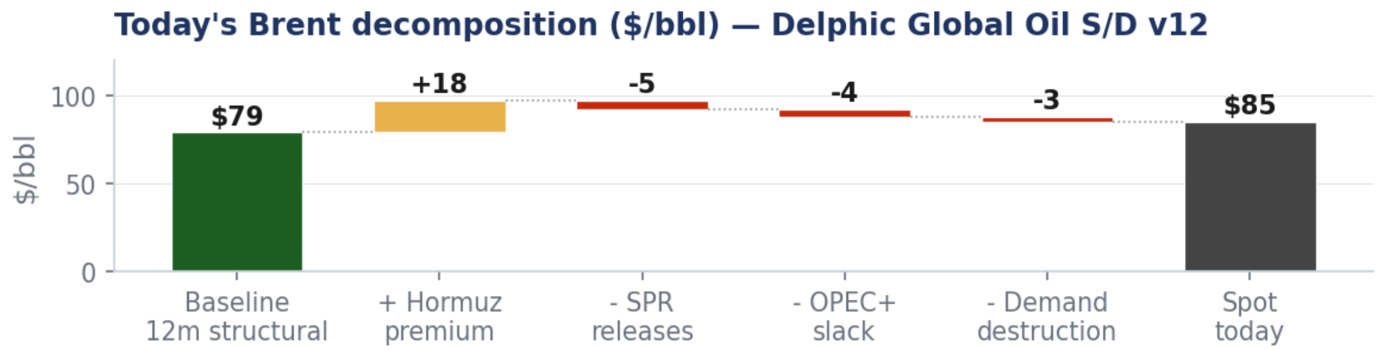
SYNTHESIS

What this means · oil-pricing consistency check

Two readings — the physical openness curve and the oil pricing curve — tell parallel stories. The gap between them is the central tension and the value of the monitor.

Backing out SPR releases, OPEC+ slack and demand destruction ($12/bbl combined, per Global Oil S/D v12), today's Brent implies Hormuz is 47% open. Observed visible openness is 7%, total flow estimate 37%; the residual Hormuz risk premium in Brent is $18/bbl. Forward Brent has the premium decaying to $-2/bbl by 12m (100% implied openness).





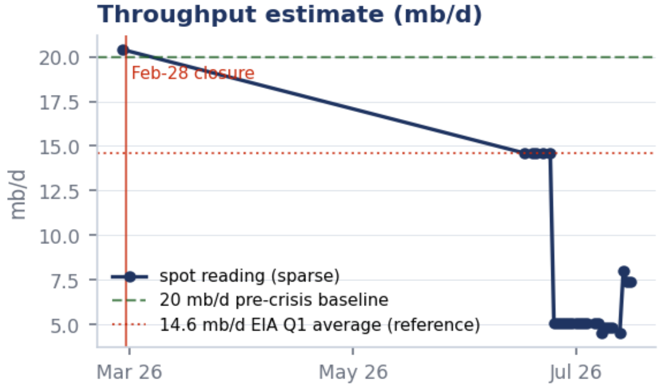
HOW BRENT TRANSLATES TO OPENNESS — Delphic decomposition

- **DECOMPOSITION** — Brent_spot = baseline + Hormuz_premium - non-Hormuz_offset. Baseline = $79/bbl (Delphic 12m structural fair-value, full normalization). Peak Hormuz premium = $34/bbl (Strike scenario vs baseline). Solving for premium and mapping linearly 0..peak gives implied openness 0..100%.
- **NON-HORMUZ OFFSETS TODAY** — $12/bbl backed out of today's Brent (per Global Oil S/D v12): $5 from active US/IEA SPR releases (172 mb US commitment, ~164 mb of 400+ mb deployed by May 8); $4 from deployed OPEC+ slack (UAE coiled-spring flush, Saudi paper quota); $3 from permanent demand destruction (~0.5-0.8 mb/d, teapot exits + electrification).
- **SPOT vs FORWARD** — SPOT $85: implied premium $18/bbl, openness 47%. 12m-FORWARD $72: offsets shrink to $5/bbl (SPR refill demand reverses release pressure above $85; demand recovers +1.0 mb/d by 12m); premium $-2/bbl, openness 100%.
- **WHY NOT THE NAIVE BRIDGE** — A linear bridge from observed crisis-peak ($118) to pre-crisis avg ($64) would imply 61% openness today — attributing 100% of Brent's decline to Hormuz reopening. That is analytically wrong: SPR / OPEC+ / demand destruction have done the heavy lifting. The decomposition method (47%) is the honest answer.

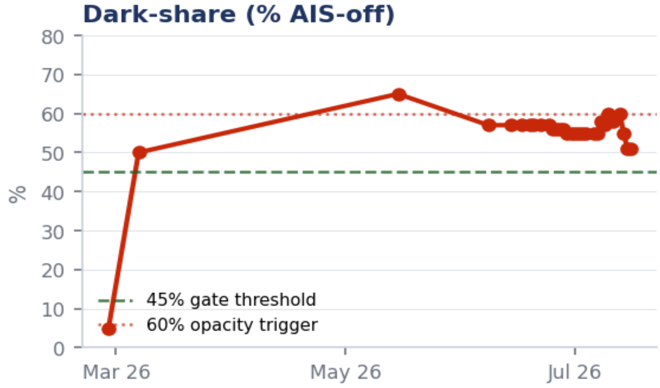
TRAJECTORY

Where we are vs where we have come from

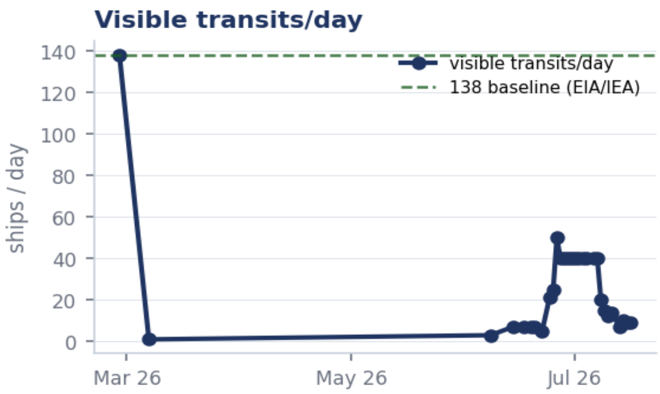
Dark-share and visible transits are the reliable trajectory signals. Throughput is shown as a reference (EIA Q1 average), not a daily spot.



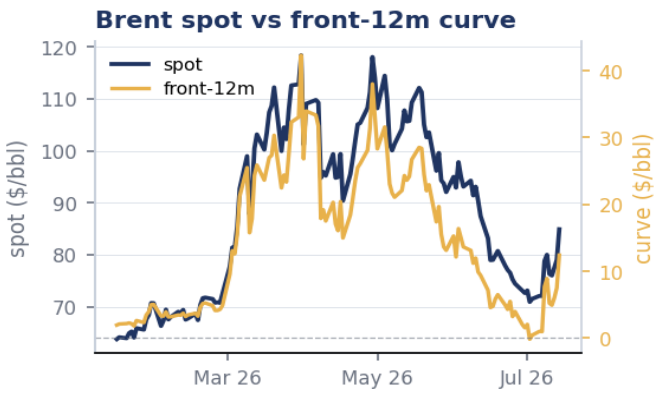
Throughput estimate vs 20 mb/d baseline · 14.6 EIA-Q1 reference line is an average, not a spot. The line is sparse because daily spot is genuinely uncertain while dark-share is high.



% of vessels with AIS off — the observability gap (Vortexa). Falling = visibility returning. Gate clears below 45.



Visible transits/day vs 138 baseline — the reopening curve and the headline openness metric (Windward / hormuzmonitor). The slope is the reopening velocity.



Brent spot + front-12m curve over the last 6 months (ICE, parquet). Falling spot + flattening curve = war-premium discharging.

ANALYSIS

Read · triggers

Thesis. HOLD — Phase 2 (Fragile ceasefire, ESCALATING). The blockade FIRED, but it is a MANAGED siege, not a closure. CENTCOM's blockade of Iran's ports is in force and biting (a vessel disabled off Bandar Abbas; the US struck Abadan/Mahshahr) — but Trump DROPPED the toll, Iran's Kuwait reply was INTERCEPTED, the US SPARED Kharg, and GL X survives. The flow is the feedback: throughput DIPPED 8.0 -> 7.4 mb/d as the siege cuts Iran's dark export trickle (dark 55 -> 51) — ~37% of the ~20 mb/d norm, degraded not shut, the GCC through-corridor holding. The blockade is measurably draining Iran's EXPORT leverage (the Two-Clock), NOT a corridor closure. Phase-1-proper triggers (a Kharg strike, a mine detonation, Brent through ~$95) armed but UNFIRED.

READ — Openness * phase * velocity

- **IS IT OPEN? A BLOCKADE IN FORCE ON IRAN'S PORTS — BUT THE SHARED CORRIDOR FLOWS** — The distinction that matters this print: the blockade targets IRAN'S EXPORT OUTLET (Bandar Abbas, Abadan, Mahshahr), not the through-corridor. The GCC crude that is the bulk of Hormuz volume (Saudi, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar) keeps moving — CENTCOM says the Strait remains open to lawful transit — while Iran's own barrels are throttled. ~7.4 mb/d still transits. Reduced, contested, and now with a live blockade on one flag's exports — but not a shut Strait.
- **TRANSITS + THROUGHPUT — the flow is the feedback: throughput DIPPED 8.0 -> 7.4 mb/d** — The blockade is measurably biting: throughput fell from ~8.0 to ~7.4 mb/d as Iran's dark export trickle is cut (the Iranian-port barrels are precisely the ones being blocked), and dark share fell 55 -> 51 with them; visible transits ~9. That is the actual-flow signal the monitor exists to catch — a real, quantified dent in Iranian exports, NOT a corridor closure. ~7.4 mb/d = ~37% of the ~20 mb/d all-liquids norm.
- **HOW OPEN — implied ~high-60s%, physical ~37% — both say REDUCED, not SHUT** — IMPLIED openness (pricing) sits high-$60s% — Brent ~$86 carries a wide premium but prices a CONTESTED corridor, not a catastrophe (no $100+ break; Goldman: >$100 only if closure persists a month). OBSERVABLE throughput ~7.4 mb/d = ~37% of the ~20 mb/d norm — above the ~20% a genuine closure implies. Price and flow agree: degraded and dangerous, with the loss now measurably Iranian-specific — not shut.
- **PHASE** — HOLD — Phase 2 (Fragile ceasefire, ESCALATING). The durability composite sits below the -0.5 line, so the mechanical rule would TIP to Phase 1 — the DOWNGRADE-RISK trigger fires. We OVERRIDE and HOLD Phase 2: the blockade targets Iran's export OUTLET, not the shared corridor, which still moves ~7.4 mb/d; Kharg is spared, mining is armed-not-fired, and the market is not pricing closure. This is the pricing-vs-physical divergence the monitor exists to surface. Phase-1-proper triggers (a Kharg strike, a mine detonation, Brent through ~$95) ARMING, unfired.
- **VELOCITY — the read shifts from escalate-vs-de-escalate to WHOSE CLOCK RUNS OUT FIRST** — The blockade fired (negative) but Trump DROPPED the toll, Iran's reply was intercepted, and Kharg was spared (the restraint is the signal). The Two-Clock frame: the blockade drains Iran's finite export leverage (arsenal spend-down + the bypass build-out) — its clock runs down. The swing (24-72h): a Kharg/terminal strike or a mine detonation (tip to Phase 1) vs a visible settlement-from-weakness signal (a strike pause, a fees-regime understanding) that starts the path back to Phase 3.

OFFICIAL RECORD * SoH — Statements * decisions - as regards the Strait

- **BLOCKADE FIRED — in force and biting (15 Jul)** — CENTCOM's blockade of Iran's ports went live and bit: a vessel was disabled leaving Bandar Abbas, and the US struck oil-infrastructure at Abadan and Mahshahr. This is the named Phase-1 trigger firing — but aimed at Iran's EXPORT OUTLET, not the shared corridor. It is the first physical action this cycle to actually dent the flow data (throughput 8.0 -> 7.4), and it does so by cutting Iranian barrels specifically.
- **KHARG SPARED — the one clean closure trigger, deliberately UNFIRED** — The US struck Abadan/Mahshahr but pointedly SPARED Kharg — Iran's single export terminal (~90-96% of crude through one node). You do not spare the one asset whose loss would actually shut the corridor if your aim is to shut it. A confirmed strike on Kharg, a mine detonation, or the blockade cutting the through-corridor to near-zero are the lines that convert this into a genuine supply loss. None is fired.
- **TRUMP DROPPED THE 20% TOLL — the midterm clock spoke** — The 20% 'Guardian of the Strait' toll floated 13 Jul is OFF: Trump dropped it as crude firmed, because a Hormuz price spike hits the US consumer before November. The asymmetry is the tell — he can wield a blockade (which bleeds Iran) but not a toll (which bleeds his own voter). The IMO had in any case said there was 'no legal basis' for tolling an international strait.
- **IRAN'S KUWAIT REPLY — INTERCEPTED and telegraphed** — Iran's retaliation for the blockade — 6 missiles and 33 drones at a US base in Kuwait — was intercepted, low-casualty, and telegraphed, squarely in the settled face-saving doctrine (Ain al-Asad 2020, Al Udeid 2025) that historically PRECEDES de-escalation. With a finite, non-replenishable arsenal, every intercepted salvo is a spend-down — which is why the SALVO risk compresses even as the siege hardens.
- **FLOW — throughput DIPPED 8.0 -> 7.4 mb/d; the blockade is working on Iran's exports** — The GCC through-corridor (Saudi/UAE/Kuwait/Qatar) holds — but Iran's own dark export trickle is being cut, taking total throughput from ~8.0 to ~7.4 mb/d (~37% of the ~20 mb/d norm) and dark share 55 -> 51. Reroute cushions (Saudi East-West ~5 mb/d spare, UAE Fujairah ~1.5 mb/d, expanding) sit BEHIND Hormuz and are the structural cap on Iran's leverage — the bypass build-out that makes the Strait matter less to everyone but Iran.
- **PRICE — Brent ~$86, NOT pricing closure** — Brent ~$86 — up modestly on the blockade firing but FAR below the $100-130 a genuine closure implies, and capped by the dropped toll, the spared Kharg, OPEC+'s fifth hike and a soft-demand glut (Goldman: >$100 only if closure persists a month). Gold soft, the curve only mildly backwardated — a risk premium on a throttled-but-open corridor, not a supply-loss repricing. War-risk hull cover ~5% of vessel value.

- **DIPLOMACY — the channel persists; GL X survives** — Araghchi's Muscat channel with Oman's al-Busaidi survived the escalation (Qatar mediating), and OFAC's GL X oil-waiver (to Aug 21) is intact — both left standing amid the blockade, which is itself part of the metered-coercion read. The end-game the channel points to is a managed-corridor / fees regime reached from Iranian weakness as the siege drains Tehran's leverage — a 6-18 month horizon, not this week.

WHERE WE'VE COME FROM — Trajectory

- **2026-07-07/11** — IRGC tanker strikes (7 Jul) and a two-way exchange (8 Jul) end the ceasefire era; a contained mourning-week cycle, oil to ~$76; a brief 10-11 Jul pause (Araghchi to Oman). Phase 4 -> Phase 3.
- **2026-07-13** — The policy track escalates: Trump floats a 20% Hormuz toll + a resumed blockade of Iranian ports; two UAE tankers struck (first fatality); Brent gaps ~+4% to ~$79. Phase 2 held — the vector turns sharply negative.
- **2026-07-14** — HOLD Phase 2 (escalating). Throughput corrected 4.5 -> ~8.0 mb/d (the 4.5 was a stale Q1 average); corridor open, no terminal struck, mining armed-not-fired, market not pricing closure. Brent ~$85. Phase-1 triggers arming, unfired.
- **2026-07-15** — The blockade FIRES — in force and biting (a vessel disabled off Bandar Abbas; Abadan/Mahshahr struck). But a MANAGED siege: Trump DROPPED the toll, Iran's Kuwait reply intercepted, Kharg SPARED, GL X intact. Flow is the feedback: throughput dipped 8.0 -> 7.4 mb/d (dark 55 -> 51) as the siege cuts Iran's exports. HOLD Phase 2. Brent ~$85. The read shifts to the Two-Clock frame — whose leverage runs out first.
- **2026-07-16** — Blockade in force, DAY 2 — the state holds: throughput ~7.4 mb/d (unchanged; the siege bites Iran's exports at the same rate), Kharg still spared, the through-corridor open, Brent ~$85. HOLD Phase 2. No new Phase-1 trigger fired; the Two-Clock grind continues — Iran's leverage drains as its arsenal spends down and the bypass build-out advances.

WHERE IT'S HEADED — Direction * accelerants * reversers

- **DIRECTION — a clock, not a ladder** — The blockade is now biting Iran's exports (throughput 8.0 -> 7.4) while the shared corridor holds. The frame is no longer escalate-vs-de-escalate but WHOSE CLOCK RUNS OUT FIRST: Iran's finite arsenal + the bypass build-out (Fujairah, East-West) drain its leverage; Trump's midterm pump is his constraint (why he dropped the toll). The siege LOWERS near-term stability but RAISES the end-game odds over 6-18 months.
- **TIP TO PHASE 1 (active closure)** — A confirmed strike on an oil-export TERMINAL (Kharg), OR a MINE DETONATION on a hull, OR the blockade widening from Iran's ports to the through-corridor, OR a Brent break decisively through ~$95. Any turns a throttled Iranian-export siege into a corridor supply-loss shock. Per the shifting-power tail, a DECLINING Iran is the one most tempted to a use-it-or-lose-it slip — the tail is highest where it looks managed.
- **PATH BACK TO PHASE 3** — A visible settlement-from-weakness signal: a strike pause, Tehran softening its posture, or a fees-regime understanding via the (still-live) Muscat channel, with the blockade eased. This is the medium-term base case — but on a 6-18 month horizon as the leverage transfer completes, not a this-week off-ramp.

SCENARIOS — Base * Bear * Bull

- **BASE** — Phase 2, escalating, holds: the blockade grinds Iran's export trickle (throughput ~7.0-7.5, dark falling) while the GCC corridor keeps flowing, Kharg is untouched, salvos are intercepted, and no counterparty can yet sign; Brent low-to-mid $80s. A modern tanker-war of attrition metered by the two clocks.
- **BEAR** — Phase 1: a Kharg/terminal strike, a mine detonation, or the blockade widening to the through-corridor halts flow; Brent +$10-25 to $95-110, a genuine supply shock. The shifting-power tail — a declining Iran's use-it-or-lose-it slip — makes this live, but it is NOT the base.
- **BULL** — A visible settlement-from-weakness turn: a strike pause, a fees-regime understanding via Muscat, the blockade eased — re-establishing a fragile Phase 3 and bleeding the premium. The channel is alive and Iran's >60% inflation argues it wants the off-ramp; but this is the 6-18 month destination, not the near-term modal path.

Bottom line. HOLD — Phase 2 (Fragile ceasefire, ESCALATING). The blockade FIRED — CENTCOM's blockade of Iran's ports is in force and biting (a vessel disabled off Bandar Abbas; Abadan/Mahshahr struck) — but it is a MANAGED siege, not a closure. Read the whole target set: Trump DROPPED the toll, Iran's Kuwait reply was intercepted, the US SPARED Kharg, GL X survives. The flow is the feedback: throughput DIPPED 8.0 -> 7.4 mb/d (dark 55 -> 51) as the siege cuts Iran's dark export trickle — ~37% of the ~20 mb/d norm, degraded not shut, with the GCC through-corridor holding. This is the blockade measurably draining Iran's EXPORT leverage, NOT a corridor closure. The durability vector would mechanically tip to Phase 1 — we OVERRIDE and hold Phase 2, because the siege targets Iran's export outlet, Kharg is spared, and price does not confirm closure (Brent ~$86 vs $100-130). The frame is now the Two-Clock: whose leverage runs out first — the siege LOWERS near-term resolution (the 90-day prob sits at a cycle low) while RAISING the end-game odds (settlement-from-weakness, 6-18 months out). Phase-1-proper triggers (a Kharg strike, a mine detonation, Brent through ~$95) ARMING, not fired.

TRIGGERS — open materiality list (name · status · rule · source)

NAME	STATUS	RULE	SOURCE
RE-STRESS	**ARMED**	brent_1m > +8%	brent.parquet (ICE)
OPACITY	**ARMED**	dark_share > 60%	dark_share.json (Vortexa)
DIPLOMATIC DETERIORATION	**FIRED**	durability < 0	diplomatic_scores.json (analyst)
NEAR-CONFIRM	**DORMANT**	throughput > 12 mb/d AND dark_share < 50%	throughput_mbd.json + dark_share.json
DOWNGRADE-RISK	**FIRED**	brent_1m > +8% OR durability < -0.5	brent.parquet + diplomatic_scores.json

METHODOLOGY & SOURCES

How the monitor works

Reference page: indicator families, baselines, computed metrics, sources, and the phase state-machine rules. All upstream data lives in the Dropbox store at delphic-market-data/store/.

INDICATOR FAMILIES

- **PRICING (leads / warns)** — Brent spot + front-12m curve from ICE (parquet). War-risk premia from manual entry. Pricing leads the call — can trigger downgrades alone but cannot trigger upgrades without physical confirmation.
- **PHYSICAL (confirms upgrade / lags)** — Throughput estimate (EIA Q1 average, reference only). Dark-share % (Vortexa). Visible transits/day (Windward / hormuzmonitor). The physical gate gates upgrades past Phase 2.
- **DIPLOMATIC (durability)** — Five milestones scored -2..+2 by the principal: navigation freedom, nuclear / ballistic, sanctions / reconstruction, ceasefire compliance, succession stability. Composite is the weighted average.

BASELINES

- **138 ships/day** — Pre-crisis steady-state visible transits (EIA / IEA 2025 reference). Denominator for visible_pct.
- **20 mb/d** — Pre-crisis throughput baseline (EIA). Denominator for est_total_pct.
- **Brent endpoints (Delphic Global Oil S/D v12)** — Structural fair-value baseline $79/bbl (12m, full normalization, no Hormuz premium). Peak Hormuz premium $34/bbl (Strike scenario $113 vs baseline $79). Non-Hormuz offsets today: SPR $5 + OPEC+ slack $4 + demand destruction $3 = $12/bbl. Used by the decomposition on the synthesis page.

COMPUTED METRICS

- **visible_pct** — = visible_transits / 138 — the OBSERVABLE openness headline.
- **est_total_pct** — = throughput_mbd / 20 — estimated total including covert flow. Labelled low-confidence whenever dark-share > 30%.
- **observability_gap** — = est_total_pct - visible_pct — the unobserved share.
- **velocity_pts_per_week** — = visible_pct now minus visible_pct ~7 days ago (nearest non-today entry within +/-3 days), normalised. Labels: ACCELERATING > +3, RECOVERING +0.5..+3, STALLED within +/-0.5, CLOSING < -0.5.
- **implied_openness (Delphic decomposition)** — Brent_spot = baseline + Hormuz_premium - non-Hormuz_offset. Solve for Hormuz_premium, then implied_openness = clamp(100 * (1 - premium / peak_premium), 0, 100). Same formula on 12m-forward Brent with shrunk offsets. The naive linear bridge (without backing out non-Hormuz factors) is REJECTED.
- **phase (state machine)** — UPGRADE requires physical confirmation (throughput > 12 AND dark-share < 45) AND durability >= 0 AND pricing momentum > 0. DOWNGRADE may fire on pricing or durability alone (asymmetric).

SOURCES

- **Visible transits** — Windward and hormuzmonitor public counts; written to store/soh/visible_transits.json
- **Dark-share** — Vortexa AIS-off coverage; written to store/soh/dark_share.json
- **Throughput estimate** — EIA Q1 2026 average mb/d; written to store/soh/throughput_mbd.json. Not a daily spot reading.
- **Brent + front-12m curve** — ICE daily prints, mirrored to store/commodity/brent.parquet and store/commodity/brent_co12.parquet.
- **Diplomatic scores** — Analyst principal-scored, store/soh/diplomatic_scores.json.
- **History** — store/soh/history.jsonl. Seeded with public-record anchors (EIA, Vortexa, Windward, press). Appended every build.