Contingency Strategies for Procurement and Business Continuity Under a Persistent Chokepoint Disruption

Condensed Lessons from the 2026 Strait of Hormuz Crisis (Days 1–59)

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Abstract

The 2026 Strait of Hormuz crisis has now run for 59 days with no clear path to resolution. The chokepoint is neither open nor closed — it has settled into a third state in which transit is technically possible at any given moment but the rules can change within 24 hours. On 17 April, Iran declared the strait reopened and Brent crude fell 11.5 percent in a single trading session; within 24 hours the strait was closed again. On 22 April, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps strikes hit Gulf shipping during the window in which a US-Iran ceasefire was being extended.

This article distils what worked and what failed during these 59 days into two practical checklists: six actions for procurement and purchasing managers, and six for business continuity teams. The recommendations are calibrated for organisations that need to keep operating through a disruption that keeps returning rather than ending cleanly. The Japanese case is given particular attention because Japan's deep crude reserves have, for now, masked a deeper exposure in the helium and naphtha chains that supply Japanese semiconductor and chemical industries.

Keywords: *supply chain resilience; chokepoint disruption; force majeure; contingency planning; business continuity; Strait of Hormuz*

1. The Crisis on Day 59

> **About the data.** This article draws on a series of situation reports the author has published from Day 1 of the crisis (28 February 2026 onward), which integrate primary-source data from Kpler, Lloyd's List, the IEA, Argus, S&P Global Platts, Windward Maritime, Vortexa, and other named providers with original cascade modelling. Citations of the form "Resilience Engineers, 2026" refer to specific reports in this series; full citations appear in the reference list.

Three facts frame what follows.

The chokepoint is no longer simply open or closed. It has occupied a third state — transit technically possible, but the rules changing within 24 hours — for roughly half of the past 30 days. This is not a transitional phase before normalisation; it is a stable feature of the situation. War-risk insurance underwriters will not return to a market that has shown it can re-close in a day, regardless of what is announced diplomatically (Lloyd's List, 2026).

The cascade has reached the European production floor. LyondellBasell (Netherlands), Orlen (Poland), OMV Burghausen (Germany), and Ineos Styrolution (Cologne) all declared force majeure between 10 and 28 March. Japanese chemical producers — Mitsui Chemicals, Sumitomo Chemical Asia, ENEOS — declared between 9 and 11 March (Resilience Engineers, 2026a). The crisis is no longer external to

industrial Europe and Japan; it has reached their manufacturing lines.

Forecasts have been consistently late by weeks, not days. The cascade-modelling frameworks most published forecasts rely on — including Atlantic Council scenarios (Burnett et al., 2026) and IMF agent-based GDP impact models — have produced central estimates that confirmed events have arrived 15 to 32 days ahead of. In practical terms, procurement actions taken on the median forecast date have arrived after the breach they were intended to prevent. Throughout this article, the planning anchor is therefore the earliest plausible breach date (the date at which the fastest 10 percent of forecast paths produce the breach), not the central estimate.

Japan occupies a particular position in this picture. About 72 to 80 percent of Japanese crude transits Hormuz, but the country also holds 254 days of combined crude reserves and 90 days of LNG buffer — by some distance the deepest position of any major Asian importer. The crude line is therefore protected for the modelled duration of the crisis. The structural risk to Japanese industry sits one analytical level deeper, in the helium chain (where JSR Corporation, Shin-Etsu Chemical, Mitsubishi Gas Chemical, Tokyo Ohka Kogyo, and Ajinomoto Fine-Techno hold near-monopoly positions in semiconductor-grade specialty gases that depend on Qatari LNG byproduct now under five-year force majeure) and in the naphtha chain feeding Japanese petrochemical crackers (QatarEnergy, 2026; Kornbluth Helium Consulting, 2026). The buffered crude position has obscured these deeper exposures — the same lesson Park, Hong, and Roh (2013) and Matsuo (2015) extracted from post-3.11 Toyota.

2. What Makes This Crisis Different

This crisis fits no familiar template. It is not the 1973 oil embargo (which was politically stable once declared), the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake (which had a clear recovery curve), or the 2021 Suez Canal Ever Given grounding (which lasted six days). It carries elements of all three but matches none. Three features distinguish it, and each requires a specific corrective in procurement and business continuity practice.

Disruptions move through three waves; each demands a different response. Wave 1 is price — the commodity is still on the shelf but costs more (the right response is hedging, contractual price pass-through, and demand reduction). Wave 2 is allocation — distributors begin rationing, long-term contracts get filled first, lead times that were three days become three weeks (the right response is qualifying alternative suppliers and locking forward contracts). Wave 3 is absence — the commodity is unavailable at any price for some users (the right response is operational mode change: schedule cuts, rationing, demand destruction). The airline industry shows how badly the wave distinction can be missed: most European carriers entered the crisis hedging 70 to 84 percent of their Q2 fuel exposure against crude oil — a Wave 1 instrument. The actual exposure became the gap between crude and jet fuel, which widened from $21 per barrel before the crisis to $115 per barrel by Day 40 (S&P Global, 2026). The hedge was correct for a Wave 1 disruption and structurally wrong for the Wave 2/3 disruption that materialised. Each wave needs its own instrument.

The chokepoint is flickering, not switching. Replace the binary open/closed flag in supplier-risk dashboards with a three-state variable: open, closed, and the third state in which transit is technically possible but the rules can change within 24 hours. Plan against the probability-weighted state path on a 14-day rolling horizon, not against the spot state. Procurement teams that placed emergency orders on the 17 April reopening signal and unwound them on the 18 April re-closure incurred cancellation costs in

both directions.

The actionable resolution signal is not a ceasefire announcement. It is sustained safe transit for at least 14 consecutive days plus visible evidence of mine-clearance operations in the Gulf of Oman. As of Day 59, neither has obtained. The 7 April ceasefire was followed by 18 April re-closure; the 22 April ceasefire extension was followed within hours by IRGC strikes. Decisions deferred on the assumption that diplomatic resolution would normalise flow have been deferred to the wrong horizon. The right one is determined by insurance underwriting, which lags kinetic stability by two to four weeks and political announcements by considerably more.

3. Lessons from the First 59 Days

Five practices have performed; five have failed in identifiable ways. The pairings inform the contingency protocols in §§4–5.

Domain	Practice that performed	Practice that failed
Strategic reserves	**IEA-coordinated 400 Mbbl release** (Japan 80 Mbbl, US 172 Mbbl, EU national contributions). Brent compressed from $128 peak to $95.75 on Day 53; ~120-day integration window (DOE, 2026; IEA, 2026; METI, 2026).	**Buyers reading price compression as resolution**. Underbought during the bridge window. Reserve releases are bridging not curing — the underlying problem is unchanged.
Routing redundancy	**Saudi Petroline-to-Yanbu re-routing** at ~5 mb/d (525% of baseline; Vortexa, 2026), absorbing what would otherwise be a much larger physical shortage.	**Single-redundancy infrastructure mistaken for redundancy**. Petroline bypasses one chokepoint by creating dependence on Bab al-Mandeb. Topology, not nameplate capacity, is what matters under multi-chokepoint risk.
Substitution	**2022 Stellantis trading-house precedent reapplied**. Auto procurement teams with institutional memory of the 2022 PGM substitution activated within 21 days; teams without it took 35–45.	**Single-source helium dependence**. Airgas (22% US market share) FM on Day 22 cascaded production into distribution. MRI quench and EUV fab risk are now active (ASML, 2025; Kornbluth, 2026).
Demand-side management	**Pre-emptive demand destruction** in Pakistan (4-day workweek), Bangladesh (rolling power cuts), Philippines (emergency declaration Day 24), Slovenia (first EU fuel rationing Day 32). Lufthansa's 20,000-flight pre-emptive cut is the corporate analogue.	**Reactive allocation under physical shortage**. Where governments waited, rationing was imposed by absence rather than policy — uncontrolled cancellation rather than managed schedule reduction (IATA, 2026).
Hedging discipline	**Crack-spread hedges deployed where structurally appropriate**. ICE gasoil-Brent or kero-Brent crack contracts protect refined-product exposure that flat crude cannot.	**Crude-only hedging on jet fuel exposure**. European carriers at 70–84% flat-crude coverage carry an unhedged jet leg; the Q3 hedge cliff arrives in mid-June (Resilience Engineers, 2026e).
Visibility & modelling	**Japan's Asian energy partnership** — METI-led, draws on post-3.11 industrial coordination architecture (Park et al., 2013; Matsuo, 2015). A structural-overhang investment, not a scramble response.	**Just-in-time without Tier-2/3 visibility**. EU automotive entered the crisis with <30% Tier-2/3 visibility (NQC, 2026); the Bahrain Steel and DRI cascade reached production via channels OEM dashboards did not see.

Source: synthesised from Resilience Engineers SITREP series Days 1–59 (2026a, 2026b, 2026c, 2026d, 2026e); supporting citations as listed in references.

4. Contingency Strategies for Procurement

The six actions below are calibrated to the 14- to 30-day decision horizon now binding for most Hormuz-exposed procurement organisations. They are ordered from foundation to finer-grained adjustment: action 1 is a precondition for the rest.

1. Map your Gulf exposure across all supplier tiers within 14 days. Most procurement organisations entered this crisis with clear visibility of their direct (Tier-1) suppliers but limited visibility of where those suppliers source from. The European automotive sector entered February 2026 with under 30 percent Tier-2/3 visibility on average (NQC, 2026), and the Bahrain Steel force majeure on 29 March reached production lines through channels OEM dashboards did not see. Run an exposure audit covering at least the top 20 inputs. For each input, document: country and plant of origin; the Tier-2 supplier's country of origin where known; share of total volume that touches Hormuz, Bab al-Mandeb, or Gulf production capacity; and substitution lead time from the nearest qualified non-Gulf source. Any input where the Tier-2 question cannot be answered within 14 days is itself a finding. The audit is the foundation for actions 2 to 6; without it, the calibration of those actions will be wrong.
2. Order to the earliest plausible breach date, not the central forecast. Where a published demand or breach-date estimate is given as a central (median) forecast, treat the earliest 10 percent of the forecast distribution as the operative planning date. The empirical record of this crisis supports this: confirmed cascade events have arrived 15 to 32 days ahead of central forecasts. The European AdBlue case is operative. The earliest plausible allocation-constraint date is 3–8 May. Emergency tenders for non-Gulf technical urea — from Hyundai Oilbank or S-Oil in South Korea, DCM Shriram in India, or CF Industries or Nutrien in the United States — have lead times of 4 to 6 weeks. Orders placed today arrive just before the allocation constraint binds. Orders placed after 21 April arrive after it (ISO 22241, 2017).
3. Decompose every critical commodity three levels upstream and two downstream. Commodity tree analysis exposes the true bottleneck, which frequently differs from the visible product. Helium is illustrative: the visible bottleneck is helium itself, the true bottleneck is QatarEnergy LNG Train availability (helium is a byproduct), and the recovery constraint is gas turbine lead time — currently 2–4 years following damage to Trains S4 and S6 (QatarEnergy, 2026; Wood Mackenzie, 2026). The Theory of Constraints (Goldratt, 1990) is the relevant framing: the procurement question is where the constraint that gates flow actually sits, not what the visible input costs.
4. Activate non-Gulf qualified suppliers now, not at breach. For every Wave 2 or Wave 3 commodity, qualify alternatives during the current procurement window. The empirical rule: order today, take delivery just before the earliest plausible breach date. For ammonia, EU Council Regulation 2026/506 (23 April) caps Russian ammonia at 688 kt/year from the second half of 2026; the substitution decision must be made before the cap binds, not against it (European Council, 2026). For helium, dual-sourcing with a Russian or US backup (where compliance permits) is the only viable path; the alternative is fab-side rationing in 6–10 weeks.
5. Hedge the right basis. Where exposure is structurally a refined product or specialty chemical rather than a flat crude, hedge the relevant spread. Jet fuel: ICE gasoil-Brent or kero-Brent crack. Petrochemicals: naphtha-Brent or LPG-Brent crack. Aluminium: LME with optionality on the cell-

freeze tail risk — if EGA or ALBA smelters take further kinetic damage, smelter pots cooling below 750°C are catastrophic capital writeoffs and LME could spike to $4,500+/t (LME, 2026; Resilience Engineers, 2026b). Crude-jet fuel correlation has fallen to ~0.4 in the current period against a long-run baseline near 0.85; a hedge is only as useful as its correlation with the actual exposure.

6. Stockpile low-cost commodities with outsized downstream impact. AdBlue is the textbook 2026 case: technical urea is ~€720/t; a 3-month European fleet buffer is 420–480 kt or €290–345 million; the cost of EU logistics disruption from SCR derate (25–40 percent power-cut on Euro 6 trucks, buses, and tractors) is at least an order of magnitude larger (Yara International, 2022). Sulfur (+159% YoY, China export halt confirmed for May 2026) and helium are in the same category for fertiliser/EV battery and medical/semiconductor downstream. The procurement criterion is the commodity's downstream marginal-loss impact, not its own price.

5. Contingency Strategies for Business Continuity

Business continuity teams operate on a longer horizon than procurement — typically 30 to 180 days — and have a different toolkit: maintaining scenarios, mapping supplier networks, coordinating with national authorities on demand-side measures, and preparing legal documentation. The six actions below address each of these levers.

1. Restate scope: this is sustained operations, not disaster recovery. The standard ISO 22301 framework is calibrated for a discrete event followed by a recovery curve. The current crisis has run 59 days with no recovery curve and Scenario C (6+ months) at 50 percent probability and rising (Resilience Engineers, 2026b). Replace the recovery time objective with a sustained-operations target on rolling 30-, 60-, and 90-day operating envelopes (Sheffi, 2015; ISO 22301, 2019).
2. Re-baseline scenario weights monthly, weekly during decision windows. Probability-weighted scenario sets for this crisis have moved substantially over time. At Day 30, the published weights were: Scenario A (no Houthi activation in the Red Sea, Brent crude $85–105) at 40 percent; Scenario B (moderate, Red Sea attacks plus insurance withdrawal) at 45 percent; Scenario C (extended infrastructure strikes, six months or more) at 15 percent. At Day 59, they were: A at 0 percent (eliminated when the first ceasefire failed and the US blockade was added), B at 15 percent, C at 50 percent, and a newly added Scenario D (a structural toll regime in which Iran retains permanent gating control of the chokepoint) at 35 percent (Resilience Engineers, 2026b). A scenario weight that has not moved in 30 days during this crisis is more likely a tracking failure than a stable assessment. Track the delta as a metric in its own right.
3. Map suppliers by their position in the system, not just by tier. Most BC dashboards classify suppliers by tier (1, 2, 3) and by criticality (high, medium, low). This is necessary but not sufficient under cascade conditions. A more informative classification asks where each supplier sits in the system of cause and effect: active suppliers affect many others but are themselves affected by relatively few — their failure propagates; passive suppliers are affected by upstream conditions but do not propagate downstream — their failure is contained; critical suppliers affect many others and are themselves affected by many — they are the high-leverage failure points; buffering suppliers absorb shock without propagating it (the Saudi Yanbu re-routing absorbing 5

mb/d is a buffering element of this kind at the system level). Apply this classification to the top 50 suppliers and cross-tabulate against Wave status (price, allocation, absence). The cross-tabulation identifies the highest-priority resilience investments faster than tier-based analysis alone (Vester, 2012; Ivanov & Dolgui, 2020).

4. Set dual-trigger protocols. A BC trigger that fires only on physical absence is too late. The empirical sequence is price → allocation → physical, with 2- to 8-week lags. A dual-trigger fires on either a price threshold (TTF >€70/MWh, Drewry WCI >+100%, LME aluminium >$3,500/t) or an allocation signal (Tier-1 allocation notice, upstream force majeure, regulatory cap). The Day 11 cluster of 14 force-majeure declarations was the canonical allocation trigger; a BC plan that waited for the corresponding physical signal lost ~30 days of preparation time (Resilience Engineers, 2026a).
5. Pre-position legal documentation for force-majeure disputes. The 55-plus force majeure declarations recorded in the first 31 days of this crisis have produced a counterparty-dispute backlog now reaching courts. Documentation requirements vary considerably by governing law — English, New York, Japanese, and German law all treat the elements of force majeure differently (Treitel, 2014). Business continuity functions should pre-position four documents now: the upstream supplier's force majeure declaration, with date, source, and primary documentation; the firm's own diligent-performance evidence, including records of mitigation and alternative-supplier qualification; the contractual force majeure clause and its applicable law; and the timeline of notification to downstream customers. The cost of pre-positioning is small. The cost of constructing this documentation under deposition pressure is substantially higher.
6. Coordinate early with national authorities on demand-destruction protocols. Pre-emptive demand destruction has outperformed reactive allocation in every observed case from §3. Identify the national-authority counterpart for each operating jurisdiction (in Japan, METI and MLIT; in the EU, national crisis cells and DG ENER coordination; in Austria, BMK and BMWK), pre-clear scenario plans, and align corporate demand-side options with the national framework. The Day 59 government response tracker shows 18 national governments at Confirmed, Active, or Planned status — the coordination architecture is in place; what remains is whether the firm uses it (Resilience Engineers, 2026b).

6. Watch Indicators and Trigger Thresholds

Contingency strategies are only as useful as the triggers that fire them. The indicators below are the leading signals observed across the Days 1–59 record. Each is published by a named primary source on a stated cadence; each carries an action threshold that should be embedded in the BC dashboard. Procurement and BC functions should review these signals weekly during the current decision window and daily during identified trigger periods.

Indicator	Source / cadence	Day 59 reading	Action threshold
ARA jet fuel stocks (kt)	Insights Global · Thursdays 16:15 CET	6-year low; IEA 6-week runway clock to 22 May	Two consecutive –5% w/w prints = 20-day cover threshold imminent. Activate Q2 schedule cuts for Mediterranean airports.
Hormuz daily transit	Kpler / MarineTraffic ·	~7 ships/day vs 130+ pre-war;	>30 ships/day sustained

Indicator	Source / cadence	Day 59 reading	Action threshold
count	real-time	oscillating	including oil tankers for 14 days = meaningful reopening. Pure bulk carriers do not count.
Crack spread (jet vs Brent)	S&P Global · Argus · daily	~$115/bbl vs $21 pre-war	Narrowing to <$80/bbl = refinery output recovering. >$120/bbl = shortage deepening; airline jet-spread overlay required.
TTF natural gas (front-month)	Trading Economics · daily	€45.17/MWh (27 Apr); €75–100 retest if past end-May (Goldman Sachs)	>€70/MWh = EU urea/ammonia plant curtailment trigger; non-Gulf urea tender activation.
Lloyd's / Aon war-risk premium	Lloyd's of London · weekly	Elevated; double-zone premium under reactivation risk	Return to pre-war ~0.125% hull value = P&I clubs re-extending. The real reopening signal — not diplomatic announcement.
Force-majeure declaration cadence	Resilience Engineers force-majeure tracker · continuous	55+ confirmed; 96% Hormuz-linked; Day 11 spike = 14 in one day	≥3 declarations in a single day = cascade signature; trigger BC allocation-trigger protocol regardless of physical status.
LME aluminium spot ($/t)	LME · daily settlement	~$3,800/t (+57% vs pre-war)	>$4,200/t = cell-freeze tail risk active; activate metal-trading-house substitution for auto Tier-1.
Drewry World Container Index	Drewry · weekly	+120% vs pre-war	>+150% sustained 4 weeks = JIT mode break; suspend just-in-time replenishment for Wave 2 inputs.
Korean Tier-1 fab helium buffer	Kornbluth Helium Consulting · monthly	Buffer to June 2026	Within 8 weeks of buffer end = MRI quench risk active; medical and semiconductor priority allocation must be locked.
Government response tracker	Internal SITREP · weekly (Resilience Engineers, 2026b)	18 countries: Confirmed/Active/Planned status	Country moving from Planned to Active = window to pre-clear corporate demand-destruction plan with national authority.

Sources: Insights Global; Kpler; MarineTraffic; S&P Global; Argus; Trading Economics; Lloyd's of London; Resilience Engineers force-majeure tracker; LME; Drewry; Kornbluth Helium Consulting. All readings cited above are confirmed primary-source data; thresholds are model-derived from the Three-Wave framework calibrated against confirmed events from the first 59 days.

Key trigger windows over the next 30 days: 28 April (Greece/Cyprus jet fuel breach window opens, Larnaca the early case); 3–8 May (EU ammonia allocation onset, earliest plausible date); 22 May (ARA hub IEA systemic threshold); end-May (TTF retest trigger if past); June (Korean Tier-1 fab helium depletion). Each represents a non-recoverable threshold. Procurement and BC actions calibrated against these dates rather than against diplomatic news flow are the operative posture for the remainder of Q2 2026 (Resilience Engineers, 2026b).

7. Conclusion

Day 59 is unlikely to be the midpoint of this disruption. The most likely outcome by Day 59 is a six-month-plus disruption (Scenario C, 50 percent probability) followed by a structural toll regime in which Iran retains permanent gating control of the chokepoint, with a Brent crude floor of $92–100 per barrel through 2028 (Scenario D, 35 percent). The earliest possible Qatari LNG partial restart is August 2026

(Wood Mackenzie, 2026). Korean Tier-1 fab helium buffers run out in June. The European jet fuel ARA hub crosses the IEA systemic threshold on 22 May.

The procurement and business continuity functions facing this crisis have a 14- to 30-day window in which decisions are still available. After that window, consequences are locked in: the spring fertiliser application missed at 5 to 15 percent EU yield deficit; AdBlue retail rationing at SCR derate cost; Korean fab helium rationing at 4- to 8-week lead-time extension; EU autumn 2026 garment shelf gaps. The cost of acting in the window is large but priced. The cost of not acting is hidden until it manifests.

Both the procurement and the business continuity literatures converge on the same recommendation under cascade conditions: the optimal action is taken in advance of the breach, against incomplete evidence, on the basis of a structured judgment about where the binding constraint actually sits. The Strait of Hormuz crisis is a costly empirical confirmation of that recommendation.

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