CONFLICTS

Monday, 16 November 2026 · 07:30

- **Section:** Conflicts / Conflictos
- **Window covered:** 15 November 2026, 14:58 to 16 November 2026, 05:37 Europe/Madrid (2026-11-15T13:58Z to 2026-11-16T04:37Z), continuing from the 15 November Defense News brief
- **Compiled from:** the CEAFE Conflicts section brief, the shared logs and @F_CEAFE posts.

> **EARLY WARNING**
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> **Observed / officially reported** - **Three US carrier strike groups in CENTCOM.** USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) entered the US Central Command area on Sunday 15 November, joining USS George H.W. Bush and USS George Washington, according to US officials quoted by ABC News, Axios (Barak Ravid), the New York Times and Al Jazeera. The NYT says this is the first time since the 2003 Iraq war that the US has three carriers in the Middle East. Russian state agency TASS repeated the report. - **Black Sea:** four merchant ships hit by drones in or near Romanian territorial waters off Sulina between 13 and 15 November (Romanian MoD, Reuters). Romania scrambled F-16s twice. France has deployed a maritime patrol aircraft, and Bucharest is asking NATO for more surveillance patrols and counter-drone kit. - **Mediterranean ASW:** ItaMilRadar reported an RAF P-8A Poseidon patrol over the Ionian Sea after two Poseidons arrived at Sigonella (13 November).
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> **Unverified OSINT leads (not confirmed by a primary tracker or official source)** - @HormuzReport said two US KC-46 tankers were orbiting over the Gulf near Kish Island while it reported US strikes on missile launchers at Bandar Lengeh and Sirik. There is no US or Iranian official confirmation of those strikes. - @MenchOsint posted a flight-tracking screenshot of an RAF Voyager KC2 tanker over Saudi Arabia near Yemen, alongside Saudi A330 MRTT and GlobalEye aircraft. It said this has happened daily for nearly two months. - @MenchOsint also tracked a Russian Il-76TD (RA-76360) flying Moscow–Tehran–Moscow overnight 15–16 November. The cargo is unknown.
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> **Interpretation:** Three carriers, tanker activity and reported strikes near the eastern approach to Hormuz follow two IRGC drone raids on Bahrain. Together they show a higher readiness for further US strikes on Iran's coastal missile belt and for Iranian retaliation against Gulf bases. That is an assessment, not a prediction of an imminent attack. Many military aircraft fly without transponders, so missing tracking data proves nothing either way.
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> **Counter-space:** No new rendezvous or proximity incident was found in this window. On the watch list: Reuters reported on 5 November that two sibling satellites of Russia's Kosmos 2612 were drifting toward the orbit of ICEYE-X37 (US-registered, operated by Finland's ICEYE, LEO about 560 km), after

> Kosmos 2612 came within a few hundred metres of ICEYE-X36 in mid-October (COMSPOC, Integrity ISR).

Iran war: a third US carrier arrives, US strikes are reported but unconfirmed, and the IRGC claims more tanker fires in Hormuz

The United States now has three carrier strike groups in the Middle East after USS Theodore Roosevelt entered CENTCOM's area on 15 November, a US official told the NYT, Axios and Al Jazeera.

This follows two IRGC drone attacks on Bahrain in three days. CENTCOM said US forces shot down the first two drones with no damage, and Bahrain said it intercepted the second wave. Late on 15 November, OSINT accounts (@HormuzReport, relayed by @F_CEAFE) reported fresh US airstrikes on Iranian missile launchers at Bandar Lengeh and Sirik. Fact-checkers and wire searches found no official US or Iranian confirmation by the time of writing. On 12 November IRNA had reported an "enemy" strike on Sirik without naming the attacker. IRNA's Telegram channel posted that "Iran will not leave any strike unanswered", and Tasnim reported that Iran's army had found the wreckage of an "Orbiter 4" surveillance drone in western Iran.

At sea, the IRGC Navy, via Tasnim (Iranian state-affiliated), claimed that two more tankers on what it calls an "illegal southern route… under the direct guidance of US officers" hit naval mines and exploded. It called this the sixth tanker to "catch fire and sink" since the previous day and warned shipowners that the route is "lined with mines". OSINT accounts said the Greek-owned tanker AMETHYST crossed with its AIS on, and the IRGC said a tanker caught fire at about 19:00 UTC. Neither claim was confirmed by UKMTO or the operator in this run. Tasnim also relayed a UKMTO report of a security incident 430 nautical miles east of Socotra. Markets, however, read the strait as functioning: Reuters reported Brent near $95 a barrel, with shipments through Hormuz approaching pre-war levels and the IEA forecasting a Q4 supply surplus of 1.7 million barrels a day.

On the diplomatic and political side, Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf said Tehran "will not accept a prolonged state of neither war nor peace" and demanded that the US accept Iran's seven-point plan. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Islamabad for the ECO ministerial (IRNA) and will go on to Oman (CGTN). Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei rejected Germany's demand that Iran stop enriching uranium (Al Jazeera, reposted by @F_CEAFE). The IRGC also clashed with the Kurdish group PJAK near the Iraqi border; PJAK said one fighter was killed (AP). @F_CEAFE reposted a 60 Minutes analysis saying Iran has hit at least 31 US military and diplomatic sites since the war began.

Why it matters for Europe. Europe gets oil, LNG and shipping costs from a war it is not running, and its only roles are diplomatic statements such as Berlin's enrichment demand and individual naval contributions. Three US carriers set against a handful of European statements show the gap between Europe's exposure and its ability to influence events.

What to watch. Any CENTCOM statement on Bandar Lengeh and Sirik, and the IRGC response against Gulf bases. Watch UKMTO and JMIC for confirmation of the tanker claims, Araghchi's talks in Muscat, and the Iran item on the 19 November Shenzhen agenda.

Sources

- @EricSchmittNYT via @shashj (1)

- @EricSchmittNYT via @shashj (2)
- @AJEnglish); (@FaytuksNetwork, ABC News (1)
- @AJEnglish); (@FaytuksNetwork, ABC News (2)
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- @MenchOsint, AMETHYST
- @FaytuksNetwork, Reuters on oil
- @F_CEAFE repost of @AJEnglish on Baghaei
- @F_CEAFE repost of @60Minutes

Yemen: government forces leave Bab al-Mandab and the Houthis move to about 60 km from Aden

The Saudi-backed Southern Armed Forces announced on 15 November that they were redeploying "from Dhubab Airport and the Bab el-Mandeb area" to make securing Aden the priority.

Reuters called it the apparent end of a six-week counteroffensive to retake the coast at the mouth of the Red Sea, which the Houthis seized in September. Government and military sources told AFP that the Houthis took the Al-Maqatirah and Al-Madaribah districts in Lahj and were at the Al-Kharaz camp, about 60 km from Aden. A government source told Xinhua (Chinese state media) that "the offensive has failed, and there is no clear plan for what comes next." Xinhua's sources blamed the poor performance of the Giants Brigades and the rift between Riyadh and the Southern Transitional Council. Government forces have dug in around Aden with sandbags and tunnels.

The Houthis also escalated against Saudi Arabia. Military spokesman Yahya Saree claimed two ballistic missiles at Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport and the King Abdullah Financial District, drones at pumping stations 5 and 6 on the East–West pipeline, and six ballistic missiles at coalition forces in Lahj. These are Houthi claims. The coalition said it intercepted a drone over the Medina region, and Reuters reported that Gulf stock markets fell. Saree said Saudi aircraft carried out 75 air strikes in 24 hours. The ICRC confirmed that the Houthis unilaterally released 600 detainees in Sanaa, outside the Stockholm agreement. The US Embassy warned Americans in Bahrain about possible attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthis.

Why it matters for Europe. If the Houthis hold both shores of the Bab al-Mandab chokepoint, Suez traffic to European ports stays hostage, and the EU's own Red Sea mission (EUNAVFOR Aspides) faces a harder environment. The reported daily presence of a British tanker supporting the Saudi air campaign is a European military involvement with little parliamentary visibility.

What to watch. Whether the Houthis push on Aden or stop to consolidate, Saudi air and diplomatic moves, any Houthi statement on shipping through the strait (they say they will target only Saudi vessels), and Aspides posture.

Sources

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- bbc.com
- Reuters
- Chinese state medi
- @AJEnglish; @F_CEAFE repost (1)
- @AJEnglish; @F_CEAFE repost (2)
- @MenchOsint summary of the Houthi claims); (@F_CEAFE repost of @Yah_Saree (1)
- @MenchOsint summary of the Houthi claims); (@F_CEAFE repost of @Yah_Saree (2)
- @FaytuksNetwork on the ICRC release
- @MenchOsint, RAF KC2

Black Sea: four ships hit in Romanian waters in three days, and Bucharest asks NATO for help

Drones hit the Greek-flagged tanker Evia Petrol V (21:10 local time, 14 November, about 4 nautical miles south-east of the Sulina canal), the bulk carrier Marsol (21:45, about 5 nautical miles south-east) and the product tanker Ali Najafov (near midnight, St Kitts and Nevis flag), all inside Romanian territorial waters.

The general cargo ship Larissa 1 had been hit on 13 November. Crews put out the fires and nobody was hurt (Romanian MoD, Reuters). Prime Minister Luca Niculescu called the attacks "unacceptable" and a violation of international law, and blamed the "deteriorating security situation caused by Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine" without naming the attacker. Defence Minister Ștefan-Radu Oprea said he would ask allies in Brussels for surveillance aircraft and counter-drone equipment, and that Thales would deliver Gap Filler radars early. Reuters notes that Russia denies targeting Ukraine's neighbours. The Russian MoD's Telegram said on 15 November that it had struck "port infrastructure facilities, and vessels used in the interests of the AFU". Maritime Executive reports that Russia has claimed attacks on 15 Ukraine-linked ships in the past week.

Why it matters for Europe. These are strikes inside the territorial waters of an EU and NATO member, on the Danube–Black Sea route Ukraine uses for exports. They test whether Europeans can defend their own sea lanes. A French aircraft and Thales radars are a European answer, but Europe still has no common maritime surveillance and counter-drone capability for the Black Sea.

What to watch. The NATO and EU defence ministers' meetings in Brussels on 17–18 November, any attribution by Bucharest, and Bulgarian and Turkish positions.

Sources

- Reuters
- politico.eu
- maritime-executive.com
- antena3.ro

- @FaytuksNetwork, AP); (@Schizointel map (1)
- @FaytuksNetwork, AP); (@Schizointel map (2)
- post 30625, Russian MoD, official Russian source

Estonia blames GRU for sabotage at drone maker Threod and will close the Russian border on 1 December

Estonia's version: in the early hours of Saturday 14 November, intruders tried to break into drone maker Threod Systems in Viimsi, near Tallinn, to set the building on fire and cause an explosion.

Security staff and police stopped them. Eight residents of Latvia were detained, and five have been remanded (Prosecutor General Astrid Asi). The Internal Security Service (KAPO) says the attack was commissioned by Russia's GRU military intelligence. Prime Minister Kristen Michal called it "part of Russia's broader hybrid war against Europe". Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna announced that all road crossings with Russia (Narva, Luhamaa, Koidula) will close from 1 December, and said he would push for more pressure on Russia at the EU Foreign Affairs Council on Monday. Milrem Robotics was targeted in a similar way in August.

Russia's response: Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told TASS that Moscow "will verify all this to see if it's true", but that if Estonia really closes the border it would be "yet another bout of aggressive and unbridled Russophobia" (reported by AFP and Delfi from TASS). Russia did not address the GRU accusation itself. Nothing on it had appeared on the MFA's Telegram channel when it was checked.

Why it matters for Europe. European defence makers that supply Ukraine are being targeted on EU soil, and this is now the second Estonian drone or robotics firm. Protecting the industrial base and coordinating the response (Finland, Latvia and Lithuania were informed) is a common European task, not just a national one.

What to watch. The FAC decisions on 16 November, a formal Russian MFA statement, the investigation's findings on how the cell was recruited, and whether Latvia or Finland take similar steps.

Sources

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- politico.eu
- afp.com
- delfi.ee
- @F_CEAFE reposts of @Tsahk (1)
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- @RALee85 repost of @KristenMichalPM

Ukraine: Kyiv claims refinery damage and Russian losses, Moscow presses Kherson and the front, and the satellite dependency debate widens

Zelenskyy said Ukraine has "disabled more than 55% of Russia's oil refining capacity" (via @ClashReport, reposted by @F_CEAFE) and that Russia had more than 50,000 killed and wounded in October.

Both are Ukrainian claims and were not independently verified. The General Staff said it struck the Akhtubinsk airfield (929th State Flight Test Center) in Astrakhan and a drone launch site in Oryol (Kyiv Independent). The Institute for the Study of War said overnight strikes on 14–15 November on petrochemical, military-industrial and missile production sites advanced Ukraine's counterforce campaign. The Russian MoD said its forces advanced on several axes and shot down more than 50 fixed-wing drones over Zaporizhzhia. A Russian MFA envoy accused Ukrainian forces of attacking evacuating civilians near Kupiansk. These are official Russian claims. OSINT accounts reported repeated glide-bomb strikes on the bridge to Korabelnyi Island in Kherson.

On dependencies: after Zelenskyy's complaint that Starshield speed caps hamper interceptor drones (see the 15 November brief), a Ukrainian brigade commander, Kyrylo Veres (K-2 Brigade), warned that if Russia deploys its planned 347-satellite "Rassvet" constellation, it would be "the end for us". That quote was relayed by @HavryshkoMarta and has not yet been checked against the primary interview. Zelenskyy also announced a review of the coalitions supporting Ukraine, to see "which ones are truly fulfilling their tasks and which remain empty shells".

Why it matters for Europe. Ukraine's air defence depends on a US company's satellite service whose limits Kyiv cannot control, while Russia builds its own constellation. This is the case for Europe's IRIS^2 and sovereign milsatcom, and for not repeating the dependency in European forces.

What to watch. Confirmation of Russian refinery outages from Russian or industry data, any SpaceX or US move on Starshield caps, and Rassvet launch dates.

Sources

- @F_CEAFE repost of @clashreport
- @KyivIndependent
- @TheStudyofWar via @Schizointel
- @HavryshkoMarta via @GeromanAT
- @clashreport, Zelenskyy on coalitions
- posts 30621–30625); (post 33363) — official Russian sources (1)
- posts 30621–30625); (post 33363) — official Russian sources (2)

See also

- Trump–Xi–Putin summit in Shenzhen on 19 November, without Europe — see World.
- Italy raises GCAP spending to €875m — see Defence Industry.
