

Restructuring of Global Liquefied Natural Gas Trade: Attacks on Ras Laffan (Qatar) — April 6, 2026

Liquefied Natural Gas (“LNG”). Each year, about 4.1 trillion cubic meters of natural gas heats homes, generates electricity, and fuels industry worldwide. About 13% of that natural gas is shipped internationally as extremely-cold LNG, which saves space. Until recently, about 64% of those shipments came from the United States (25%), Qatar (20%), and Australia (19%).¹ Qatar, a peninsula smaller than Connecticut, is on the Persian Gulf’s west coast.

Ras Laffan Industrial City (“Ras Laffan”). Qatar’s entire export operation flows through the 114-square-mile Ras Laffan Industrial City complex from which every LNG tanker must pass through the 21-mile-wide Strait of Hormuz before reaching open water en route to Asia, and to a lesser extent, Europe. These LNG exports have no viable alternative route — unlike crude oil, for which Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates maintain bypass pipelines.

Disruptions. In March, Iranian drone and missile strikes significantly damaged Ras Laffan, prompting Qatar to stop all of its LNG shipments for an indefinite period.² Iran has also slowed transit through the Strait of Hormuz to a near standstill. Since it may take a few years to repair some of the damage to Ras Laffan, global LNG trade will be restructured even if the war ends soon. In recent days, wholesale natural gas and LNG prices were more than 80% above February 2026 levels on Asia’s east coast, more than 40% above those levels in Europe, and relatively unchanged in the United States.

Asia. China, India, Taiwan, and South Korea had been top destinations for Qatar’s LNG exports. While China receives about 6% of its natural gas from Russia via pipeline, Japan, South Korea, India, and Taiwan receive no imports via pipeline — these five countries import over half of global LNG trade.

Europe. Pipelines from Norway, and to a lesser extent, Algeria, provide about 30% of natural gas consumed in Europe. Following Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Europe rapidly shifted away from Russian pipeline gas and became heavily dependent on LNG imports. Further, Europe’s natural gas supplies are currently lower than usual (for a variety of reasons), thereby increasing Europe’s vulnerability to disruptions in shipments from Qatar.

United States. Both world wars took place largely outside the United States (the exceptions: Pearl Harbor and the Aleutian Islands). Similarly, LNG export terminals in Texas and Louisiana are outside the current conflict zone. Since U.S. wholesale natural gas prices have been relatively stable, U.S. LNG exporters’ expanding capacity should enable them to increase shipments in response to the reduction in shipments from Ras Laffan Industrial City.³

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¹ Candace Dunn and Justine Barden, “About one-fifth of global liquefied natural gas trade flows through the Strait of Hormuz,” *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, June 24, 2025, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=65584> (accessed April 4, 2026);

Marek Grzybowski, “Qatar on the Maritime LNG Route,” *Baltic Sea & Space Cluster*, December 15, 2025, <https://www.bssc.pl/2025/12/15/qatar-on-the-maritime-lng-route-exports-will-increase-from-77-million-to-142-million-tons-in-2030/> (accessed April 4, 2026).

² Andy Hirschfeld (with reporting from Reuters), “Why QatarEnergy’s LNG Production Halt Could Shake Up Global Gas Markets,” *Al Jazeera*, March 3, 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2026/3/2/why-qatarenergys-lng-production-halt-could-shake-up-global-gas-markets> (accessed April 4, 2026).

³ Ira Joseph, “The United States has several LNG projects nearing completion that could potentially help ease global prices later this year,” *Columbia University – Center on Global Energy Policy*, March 20, 2026, <https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/us-israeli-attacks-on-iran-and-global-energy-impacts/> (accessed April 4, 2026).