



Muscat Airport as a resilience hub for Middle East aviation during the current conflict

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Alhambra Advisors
Transforming Infrastructure Globally



Regional conflict triggered cascading FIR closures across the Gulf, disrupting aviation operations

Conflict timeline

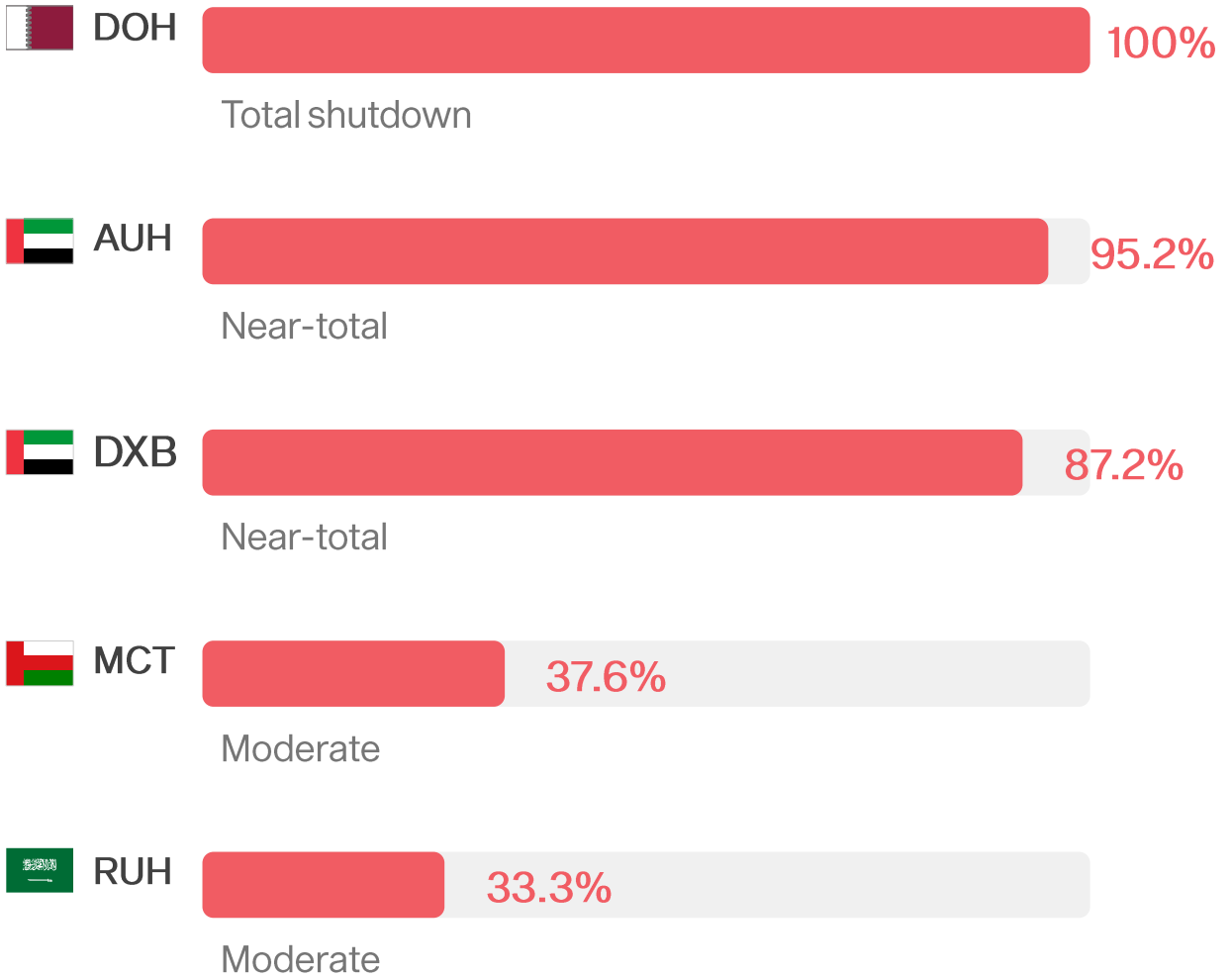
- **28 Feb**
 - **Regional conflict** triggers aviation security measures across the Middle East
 - **Airlines begin avoiding the Gulf airspace**
- **1 Mar**
 - Multiple Gulf states introduce **airspace restrictions and route limitations**
 - Europe–Asia traffic begins **large-scale rerouting**
 - Gulf hubs start experiencing **major inbound cancellations**
- **2–3 Mar**
 - **Airspace restrictions** continue in the Gulf airspace
 - Airlines implement **widespread cancellations and schedule adjustments**
 - **KSA and Oman** emerge as key open corridors for rerouted traffic
- **4 Mar**
 - **Emirates suspends** scheduled flights until 7 March
 - **Ethiad maintains** suspension until 6 March
 - Regional airspace remains **partially restricted across multiple FIRs**
 - Gulf aviation operates under **limited routing corridors**
- **5 Mar**
 - **Qatar Airways** operations remain suspended
 - **Emirates maintains** suspension of multiple routes until 7 March
 - **Limited relief and repositioning** flights begin
 - Regional aviation remains **heavily disrupted**





DXB, AUH and DOH experienced near-total shutdowns during the first days of the conflict, while MCT and RUH remained largely operational

Flight disruption rate across major Gulf hubs



Source: FlightRadar24
Period: Tue 3 March – Thu 5 March



~1,870,000 passenger seat capacity lost across Gulf hubs on Tuesday–Thursday (3–5 March), representing 80% of scheduled capacity

Estimated seat capacity impact

1.87M

total seat capacity lost over 3 days
80% of scheduled capacity

20.5%






of seats actually operated
across the 5 airports

878K

Seat capacity lost at DXB alone
47% of total regional loss

84%

of operated DXB flights served
Europe and the Indian subcontinent

Airport	Scheduled	Est. seat cap. lost	% Lost
 DXB	1,007,778	878,311	87.2%
 DOH	512,402	512,402	100.0%
 AUH	315,070	299,844	95.2%
 RUH	391,097	130,298	33.3%
 MCT	123,913	46,652	37.6%

MCT emerged as the primary diversion hub for UAE residents and visitors during the first days of the conflict

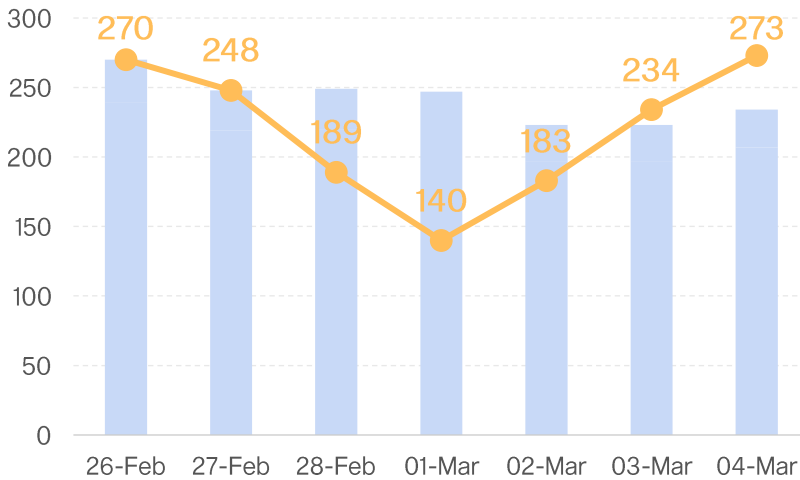


Source: OAG, FlightRadar24



Muscat's extra traffic was driven by a private jet surge, as passengers and VIPs from the UAE scrambled to leave the Gulf via the closest open hub

OAG scheduled vs FR24 actual movements at MCT, Feb 26 – Mar 4 ■ OAG¹ ● FR24 Actual



Private jet movements

Daily average

5



TUE 4 MAR

84

Key findings

+39 additional movements vs expected baseline on Mar 4

MCT handled 39 more movements than expected, reflecting diverted flights and crisis-driven traffic from Gulf hubs disrupted by regional airspace restrictions

Private traffic surged sharply: from ~5/day to 84 movements on Mar 4

High-net-worth individuals from the UAE traveled to Muscat to depart the region via private aviation, using MCT as an alternative exit point while Gulf hubs were disrupted

Pre-conflict drop followed by rapid traffic rebound

Feb 28–Mar 1 saw sharp pre-cancellations (–43% vs expected). By Mar 4, MCT reached 273 movements, the busiest day of the week, exceeding normal pre-conflict levels

Source: OAG, FlightRadar24

1. OAG schedule data is adjusted to account for charter and private flights not captured in schedules



Muscat emerged as a key resilience hub during the Gulf aviation disruption

Key takeaways

1

The Gulf hub system proved highly exposed to regional conflict

DXB, AUH and DOH share the same airspace corridor and experienced simultaneous disruption when regional airspace restrictions were introduced

2

Traffic rapidly shifted toward airports that remained operational

Passengers and airlines rerouted through airports outside the main disruption corridor, particularly in Oman and Saudi Arabia

3

Alternative aviation channels expanded rapidly during the disruption

Private aviation and charter traffic increased sharply as passengers sought flexible ways to leave the Gulf while commercial networks were constrained

4

Muscat became a key exit point for UAE-origin passengers

With UAE hubs largely shut down, many residents travelled to Oman to access the nearest functioning international airport





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**What lessons
should Gulf
aviation learn from
this disruption?**

Comment Below

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