Entelligencia.

The Gulf

Two strategies, one strait, and a bet on demand that has not arrived.

Across the GCC, public reporting tracks more than 174 projects worth over USD 93 billion. The UAE is building the region's most globally connected AI platform. Saudi Arabia is building its largest state-backed domestic compute economy. Both treat data centres as instruments of power rather than real estate, and both route through one strait, one set of imported chips and one neighbourhood at war.

UAE · LIVE	GCC · AI PIPELINE	TRACKED · RECORD	RISK · HORMUZ
400 MW+	30 USD bn+	174 projects	25 %
Operating capacity, 2025	AI data centres to 2030	Over USD 93bn in public reporting	Of world helium at risk

READ THE FULL CHAPTER

A summary of market chapter 01 of The Next Hotspot.
The full chapter, its interactive instruments and all sourcing remain open at entelligencia.report

Three named seats, on the record.

A market report is an aggregate. These are the practitioners the aggregate is about. Positions are reported as given and summarised in house style rather than quoted verbatim, with the desk's framing stated separately from the contributor's claim.

G01 · SEAT 01 ON THE RECORD

Amrik Sangha

Senior Partner · Gateley Middle East

The gap is evolving, not stopping.

A practising partner on what actually decides a Gulf data-centre deal. His answers do not all run with the grain of the questions put to him: he reframes regulatory mismatch, resists the idea that contracts are routinely unfit for AI, and rejects the notion of one dominant procurement structure.

The gap · Jurisdiction · The contract · The counterparty · Procurement

OPEN THE COUNSEL →

G02 · SEAT 02 ON THE RECORD

Rich Farrell

Power and digital infrastructure

Not a building that draws power. A power system that holds.

The chapter counts megawatts. He counts lead times. His read puts the binding constraint in the delivery queue for generation, transformers and grid connection, which is what sets the date behind an announced megawatt.

Generation · Transformers · Grid connection · Lead times

OPEN THE FILE →

G03 · SEAT 03 JOINING SHORTLY

Louis Charlton

Group Chief Executive · GCV Group

What has to be true on site.

A delivery and assurance read on the Gulf build, drawn from the Mind the Gap chapter. Where the ledger records what was committed, this file asks what has to be true on site for the commitment to become capacity.

Publishing to the chapter shortly · in full in Edition 02

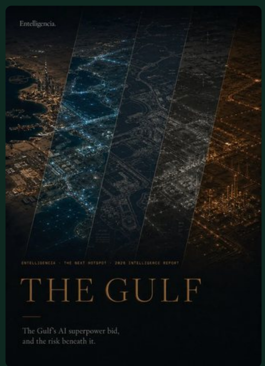
READ MIND THE GAP →

The register stays open. Operators, counsel, financiers and policy voices are added as they come on the record, and each edition of this brief carries whoever has joined since the last. See the register.

Ten instruments, one summary.

This brief condenses the Gulf chapter into twelve pages. Every section below runs live and in full on the report, with the interactive models, the complete source record and the contributor files. Each entry here links straight through.

CONTENTS



MARKET CHAPTER 01 OF 10

The Gulf

Compute supremacy, and the strait it depends on.

Entelligencia desk · Middle East
Maintained live

HOW TO READ IT

The grading taxonomy

Every figure carries the same grade it carries in the report. Announced figures are commitments, not delivered capacity.

- VERIFIED — On the public record and confirmed by the primary party.
- ANNOUNCED — Stated intent or commitment; not yet delivered capacity.
- CONTESTED — Sources disagree, or the figure has been publicly disputed.
- ESTIMATED — An Entelligencia desk figure, modelled and framed as such.

Live links

Anything set in gold is a link. The scenario desk, the threat map and the Success Index cannot be printed, so they are summarised here and linked in full.

The edition cycle

Edition 01	August 2026	This document
Edition 02	November 2026	Update and revision log
Edition 03	January 2027	Campaign close

The chapter is not gated. This brief is a portable summary. The full Gulf chapter, every instrument and every source stays open to anyone at entelligencia.report/gulf.

The Gulf is provisioning compute ahead of its own demand.

Both states treat data centres as instruments of power rather than real estate, and both are buying a position rather than meeting a demand curve. What decides whether the position holds is not capital. It is chip access, sea lanes and the delivery queue behind an announced megawatt.

MARKET · TO 2030

9.5 USD bn

From roughly USD 3.5bn today

SAUDI · TEN-YEAR TARGET

6.6 GW

Secured land across 211 plots

UAE · CHIP STATUS

A:5 NATO tier

Licence-free from July 2026

HORMUZ · 2026

Closed to allied shipping

Under the IRGC blockade

Capital outruns the market

The GCC data-centre market is forecast to move from roughly USD 3.5bn to USD 9.5bn by 2030. That revenue is a fraction of the announced capital pipeline. The gap is the wager.

Two models, not one region

The UAE optimises for connection: US chips, hyperscaler capital, export workloads. Saudi Arabia optimises for sovereignty: state vehicles, domestic demand, Vision 2030 anchoring.

The risk layer became physical

The 2026 Iran war produced the first wartime drone strikes deliberately aimed at commercial data centres, hitting sites in the UAE and Bahrain. Exposure stopped being theoretical.

The chokepoint prices everything

Hormuz carries roughly a fifth of seaborne oil and a quarter of world helium. A lane closure reaches the build through insurance, lead times and cooling inputs, not through the rack.

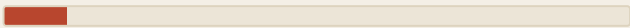
Read the announcement as a projection

The Gulf delivery curve has a consistent shape: maximal reveal, quiet rescoping, then a smaller but still substantial build. The render is the marketing. The megawatt is the asset.

The wager, drawn

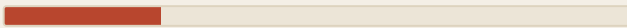
ANNOUNCED CAPITAL AGAINST THE MARKET IT SERVES

MARKET AGAINST ANNOUNCED CAPITAL **9.5** USD bn by 2030



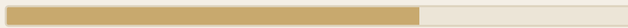
The GCC data-centre market is forecast to reach roughly this by 2030. The tracked pipeline sits an order of magnitude above it.

WORLD HELIUM THROUGH HORMUZ **25** per cent



A quarter of world supply, and roughly a fifth of seaborne oil, through one strait. The exposure reaches the build through insurance and lead times.

SAUDI LAND SECURED **6.6** GW across 211 plots



A ten-year target with the land already taken. Provisioning is running well ahead of any demand curve that can be evidenced today.

Entelligencia desk · Middle East · market chapter 01 of 10 · figures graded under the report taxonomy · full chapter and sources at entelligencia.report/gulf

An AI gateway and a compute state, sharing a fault line.

United Arab Emirates

CONNECTION

The region's most globally connected AI and cloud platform, plugged into US chips and hyperscaler capital. Compute is positioned as the strategic export.

Stargate UAE Abu Dhabi campus	1 GW ambition · USD 8 to 10bn
Microsoft UAE commitment	USD 7.9bn, 2026 to 2029
G42 chip authorisation	35,000 advanced chips
MGX Fund I state AI vehicle	Roughly USD 49bn
Barakah nuclear baseload	5.6 GW · four APR-1400
OPEC exit, April 2026	After 59 years

> **The tell.** On 10 July 2026 US Commerce upgraded the UAE to Country Group A:5, NATO-tier, clearing licence-free advanced-chip exports to G42, Core42 and MGX. Access, not capital, was the binding constraint, and it moved.

Saudi Arabia

SOVEREIGNTY

The region's largest state-backed domestic compute economy, anchored to Vision 2030 and sovereign capital, built around a single national champion.

HUMAIN PIF national champion	Created 2025 · full AI stack
AWS AI Zone Riyadh	USD 5.3bn · up to 150,000 GPUs
Google and PIF hub	USD 10bn
AMD compute deal	USD 10bn · 500 MW
STC and xAI joint ventures	1 GW and 500 MW
Ten-year target secured land	6.6 GW · 211 plots

> **The tell.** The Kingdom's data-centre market is forecast to move from about USD 1.33bn in 2024 to USD 3.9bn by 2030. The announced capital sits an order of magnitude above the market it serves. Saudi Arabia is buying a position, not meeting a demand curve.

Two models, two ways of failing

THE DISTINCTION THE CHAPTER TURNS ON

THE EMIRATI RISK IS EXTERNAL

The platform is only as good as its chip access and its export customers, and both sit outside the country's control. That is why the July 2026 licence-free decision mattered more than any capital commitment.

THE SAUDI RISK IS INTERNAL

Capital is committed against domestic demand that must now be created. Nothing external has to go wrong for the position to be early.

What the split means. The two models fail differently. The UAE's risk is external, since its platform is only as good as its chip access and its export customers. Saudi Arabia's risk is internal, since its capital is committed against domestic demand it must now create. Four instruments read this in full: The Exposure, a threat map, The Brief, and a comparison.

The exposure beneath the boom.

Once semiconductors enter the model, the Gulf's build depends on secure shipping lanes, imported hardware and strategic materials, all routed through the world's most militarised water. Five files map where that exposure sits. The production desk then models it.

01

The chokepoint

One strait, three lifelines

02

The strike

When the risk hits the racks

03

The supply line

Helium, bromine, lead times

04

The capital

What war does to nerve

05

The hedge

The resilience premium

THE SCENARIO MODEL

Three scenarios, each read across five outputs: investment momentum, capacity at physical risk, insurance and financing cost, build-timeline slippage and expat talent retention.

Ceasefire holds	Lanes reopen
Sustained standoff	Intermittent strikes
Full-scale war	Hormuz contested

The model weighs the UAE's exposure as the most visible international platform against Saudi Arabia's landmass and inland depth.

WHO CAPTURES THE FLIGHT

When the Gulf looks risky, capital does not vanish. It relocates toward markets with chip access, scale, safety or neutral positioning.

United States	Reshoring · chips at home
India	Scale · cost · neutral
Europe and the Nordics	Safety · clean power
Singapore and Malaysia	Asian hub · Johor
China	State demand · constrained

THE MITIGATION LEVERS

Six hedges, ranked by how far each lifts modelled viability. The figures are directional weightings on the desk's own scale, not percentages, and layered hedges return less than the sum of their parts.

+20	Multi-country redundancy
+18	Inland site diversification
+18	Supplier diversification
+18	De-escalation diplomacy
+14	Strategic stockpiles
+12	Cable-route diversification

OPEN THE PRODUCTION DESK

Entelligencia scenario model, June 2026. Inputs include Reuters and CNBC reporting on Hormuz, helium and strikes, and Analysis Mason GCC AI capital. Directional, not a forecast. Severity ticks are an editorial read of physical and financial exposure, not a precise index.

The compute, the bases and the targets, on one map.

The Gulf's data centres sit beside the world's densest concentration of US military infrastructure, the region's oil and gas spine, and a strait roughly a quarter of the world's seaborne oil moves through. Sixteen real sites are plotted and colour-coded as compute clusters, US bases or energy targets, with overlays for the Hormuz chokepoint, cross-Gulf strike reach and the subsea corridor.

RIYADH · DAMMAM · JEDDAH · AL-KHARJ · NEOM / OXAGON · ABU DHABI · DUBAI / AJMAN · DOHA · KUWAIT CITY · AL UDEID · AL DHAFRA · NSA BAHRAIN · CAMP ARIFJAN · PRINCE SULTAN · ABQAIQ · RAS TANURA

SITES IN VIEW	WITHIN STRIKE REACH	BINDING CONSTRAINT
16	most	Sea lanes and chips

OPEN THE MAP

THE INCIDENT RECORD

2019
Abqaiq and Khurais struck
A drone and missile attack briefly knocked out a large share of Saudi oil output, proving energy infrastructure on this coast is reachable.

Source · Reuters, EIA · 2019

2023
Saudi and Iran restore ties
A China-brokered restoration of diplomatic relations created a de-escalation channel the region still references.

Source · Reuters · 2023

2024 to 2025
Shipping risk repriced
Heightened tension and attacks on shipping pushed Gulf and Red Sea risk premia higher and put insurers on alert.

Source · Public reporting · 2024 to 2025

2026
Strikes reach the racks
Reported drone strikes damaged data centres in the UAE and Bahrain during the crisis, moving the risk from theoretical to demonstrated.

Source · CNBC, Reuters · 2026

2026
Materials warning
South Korea's chip industry flagged the crisis as a threat to helium and bromine supply routed through Hormuz.

Source · Reuters · 2026

2026
Capital under scrutiny
Renewed scrutiny of big-tech AI investment in the region, including Microsoft's UAE strategy and AWS's Saudi commitments.

Source · Reuters · 2026

Positions on the map are approximate. It is a strategic schematic, not a survey. Conflict figures vary by source and are treated as contested.

UPDATED 13 JULY 2026

The Gulf build, as it stands.

The load-bearing numbers behind the Gulf's compute push, each graded and sourced. The story they tell together: chip access has been granted, the capital is committed, and the strait is shut.

A:5
VERIFIED

Export status, unlocked

On 10 July 2026 US Commerce upgraded the UAE to Country Group A:5, NATO-tier, clearing licence-free advanced-chip exports to G42, Core42 and MGX.

Source · US Bureau of Industry and Security · July 2026

Closed
VERIFIED

Strait of Hormuz

Shut to US and Israel-allied shipping under the IRGC blockade declared during the 2026 Iran war. The chokepoint for roughly a fifth of seaborne oil.

Source · Press reporting · 2026

Exit
VERIFIED

UAE leaves OPEC

April 2026, after 59 years. The clearest signal yet of a pivot from oil quotas toward compute as the strategic export.

Source · Wire reporting · April 2026

5.6 GW
VERIFIED

Barakah nuclear

Four APR-1400 reactors supplying roughly a quarter of UAE electricity, the carbon-free baseload underwriting the campuses.

Source · ENEC

5 GW
ANNOUNCED

Stargate UAE

Abu Dhabi campus with G42, OpenAI, Oracle, Nvidia, Cisco and SoftBank. A first 200 MW cluster is due online in 2026, building toward 1 GW.

Source · G42 / OpenAI

~$49bn
ANNOUNCED

MGX Fund I

The Abu Dhabi state AI vehicle's first fund, raised to back compute and model builders across the stack.

Source · MGX

$5.3bn
ANNOUNCED

AWS AI Zone, Riyadh

With HUMAIN, up to 150,000 GPUs targeted, part of the Kingdom's hyperscaler build-out.

Source · AWS / HUMAIN

1.5 GW
ANNOUNCED

DataVolt, Oxagon

A $5bn green data campus at NEOM, with a first 300 MW phase targeted by 2028.

Source · DataVolt / PIF

480 MW
ANNOUNCED

Hexagon, Riyadh

HUMAIN's flagship government supercomputing campus, anchoring Saudi sovereign compute.

Source · HUMAIN

3,000 MW
ANNOUNCED

Saudi 2030 target

PIF's data-centre capacity goal for the Kingdom by 2030, part of a plan to draw 12 per cent of GDP from AI.

Source · PIF

$1.4tn
ANNOUNCED

UAE and US framework

The ten-year Emirati investment commitment into US technology and infrastructure underpinning the chip deal.

Source · UAE government

$350bn+
ESTIMATED

Sovereign AI capital

Committed to AI infrastructure worldwide since 2025, with Gulf vehicles, MGX, PIF, QIA and ADQ, behind roughly two-thirds.

Source · Entelligencia tracker

Figures are compiled by the Entelligencia desk from company statements, government releases and sector reporting, and graded under the report's Verified, Announced, Contested and Estimated taxonomy. Announced figures are commitments, not delivered capacity. The 2026 Iran war and the Strait of Hormuz closure remain live; conflict figures vary by source and are treated as contested. The maintained ledger runs at entelligencia.report/gulf.

The Success Index: who actually wins the Gulf.

Six markets, one buildout. Eight dimensions, scored 0 to 10 for like-for-like comparison. The Gulf splits into two leaders, two niche players and two smaller markets.

Market	DC BASE	ECONOMY	POWER	PEOPLE	RESOURCES	INSTITUTIONS	OPERATORS	RESILIENCE	COMPOSITE
UAE	9	9	8	8	6	9	9	6	8.0
Saudi Arabia	8	9	9	7	9	7	8	7	8.0
Qatar	6	8	8	6	8	7	6	6	6.9
Oman	4	5	7	5	7	6	5	7	5.8
Kuwait	4	6	6	5	8	5	4	5	5.4
Bahrain	5	4	5	5	3	6	6	4	4.8

The two leaders

The UAE and Saudi Arabia score level on the composite and get there differently. The UAE leads on institutions, operators and installed base. Saudi Arabia leads on power, resources and the runway its landmass buys it. Neither leads on resilience, and that is the finding.

The niche players

Qatar and Oman are not competing for the same workloads. Qatar has the economy and the power but a thinner operator base. Oman scores highest of the six on resilience, which is a function of geography rather than policy.

What the index does not do

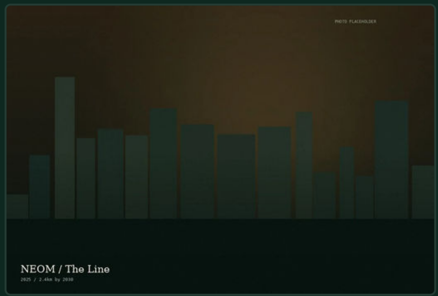
It does not rank investment attractiveness or forecast capacity. It is a comparative read of the conditions each market brings to the same buildout, and it is published so the weighting can be argued with.

OPEN THE INDEX

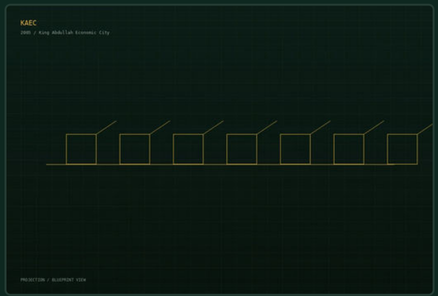
Scores are indicative editorial 0 to 10 weightings for like-for-like comparison, not a published index. Figures are compiled from World Bank, IMF, GCC data-centre portfolio reports and public reporting, 2025 to 2026, and are contested where noted.

Read every compute announcement as a projection, not a fact.

NEOM · the projection



NEOM · what stands



KAEC · the projection

KAEC · what stands

Four tracks trace how a Gulf megaproject ambition has been redrawn over time: NEOM and The Line, World Cup 2034, King Abdullah Economic City, and the sports and entertainment spend. Each opens as a full brief with a build-reality node behind every claim. Scaled-back figures are contested and framed as reported, not settled.

HOW THE PATTERN RESOLVES

The same instinct that produced a 170km mirrored city and a fifteen-stadium tournament now produces gigawatt AI campuses and sovereign-chip pledges. The ambition is genuine and the capital is real, but the delivery curve in the Gulf has a consistent shape.

01 **The maximal reveal**
A render, a headline figure and a date, released to set the terms of the conversation.

02 **The quiet rescoping**
Phasing appears, the date moves, and the figure is restated rather than withdrawn.

03 **The smaller but substantial build**
Something real is delivered. It is materially below the reveal and materially above nothing.

> For an investor or operator the discipline is to **separate the announced number from the financed one**, exactly as the ledger does for capacity. The render is the marketing. The megawatt is the asset.

Who actually decides the Gulf's build-out.

TRACE THE STACK

UAE · SOVEREIGN AI

Peng Xiao

Group Chief Executive, G42

Runs Abu Dhabi's flagship AI group, the operating core of the UAE's sovereign-AI platform and its US chip and cloud partnerships.

SAUDI · SOVEREIGN AI

Tareq Amin

Chief Executive, HUMAIN

Leads Saudi Arabia's PIF-backed national AI champion, created in 2025 to invest across the AI value chain.

UAE · CAPITAL

Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed

Chair, G42 and MGX

Sits at the centre of Abu Dhabi's AI and capital architecture, linking G42, MGX and Mubadala-adjacent vehicles.

SAUDI · POLICY

Abdullah Alswaha

Minister, Comms and IT

Senior architect of Saudi digital and AI policy, including the National Strategy for Data and AI.

UAE · POLICY

Omar Sultan Al Olama

Minister of State for AI

The world's first dedicated AI minister; shapes the UAE's AI-native government agenda and AI diplomacy.

Roles and figures are drawn from public company and government records. Positions are paraphrased from public materials and reporting, 2025 to 2026. Full profiles at entelligencia.report/gulf.

From sovereign capital to compute, who is active in the Gulf

GULF COMPUTE STACK · INTERCONNECTED

Presence on the stack records public activity in the Gulf market and does not imply a commercial relationship with Entelligencia. The live instrument traces the links between every node.

SOVEREIGN CAPITAL	
PIF	Saudi · sovereign
Mubadala	UAE · sovereign
ADQ	Abu Dhabi · sovereign
QIA	Qatar · sovereign
MGX	UAE · AI fund
KKR	Global · private equity

SUPPLIERS	
NVIDIA	GPUs
Schneider Electric	Power · cooling
Vertiv	Power · cooling
Huawei	Build · power
ABB	Electrification
AECOM	EPC · design

POWER AND ENERGY	
ACWA Power	IPP · renewables
DEWA	Dubai · utility
Saudi Electricity	KSA · grid
TAQA	Abu Dhabi · utility
ENEC	Barakah · nuclear
Masdar	UAE · renewables

The chapter is maintained, not published once.

The Gulf chapter runs live and is updated as the record moves. Five questions carry into Edition 02.

Does the A:5 upgrade convert

Licence-free chip access is granted. The question is delivered silicon, and on what schedule.

Does Hormuz reopen

The blockade shapes insurance, helium and lead times. Reopening changes every viability line.

Does Stargate hit 200 MW

The first cluster is the test of whether the 1 GW ambition has a delivery curve behind it.

Does HUMAIN's stack consolidate

AMD, Qualcomm, Cisco, STC and xAI arrived fast. Integration is the harder problem.

Does the demand curve catch up

Provisioning ahead of demand only works if the export workloads arrive. That is the wager.

THE EDITION CYCLE

Edition 01	August 2026	This document
Edition 02	November 2026	Update and revision log
Edition 03	January 2027	Campaign close

Coming to this chapter

Louis Charlton	assurance seat	Publishing shortly
Further seats	register open	Through the campaign

The rest of the series

Every market chapter, every Strata layer and every Sociogencia original-analysis case carries a brief on the same cycle.

Market chapters	Ten · the Gulf is 01
Strata layers	Seven analytical readings
Sociogencia cases	Original analysis

GULF · USA · EUROPE · INDIA · INDONESIA · MALAYSIA · CHILE · BRAZIL · SOUTH AFRICA · KENYA, MOROCCO, NIGERIA

The chapter is not gated.

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READ THE FULL CHAPTER