

Suez Canal obstructed by a container ship, Egypt

S5P TROPOMI acquired on 23 March 2019
Sentinel-3 OLCI acquired on 24 March 2019

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Sentinel-2 MSI acquired on 24 March 2019
Sentinel-1 CSAR IW acquired on 24 March 2019

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Keyword(s): Wind, atmosphere, sand storm, accident, marine trafic, ship, security, Egypt.

Fig. 1 - S5P TROPOMI (23.03.2021) - Aerosol Index - On 23 March, a powerful wind was blowing sand and dust over northern Egypt.

[2D View](#)

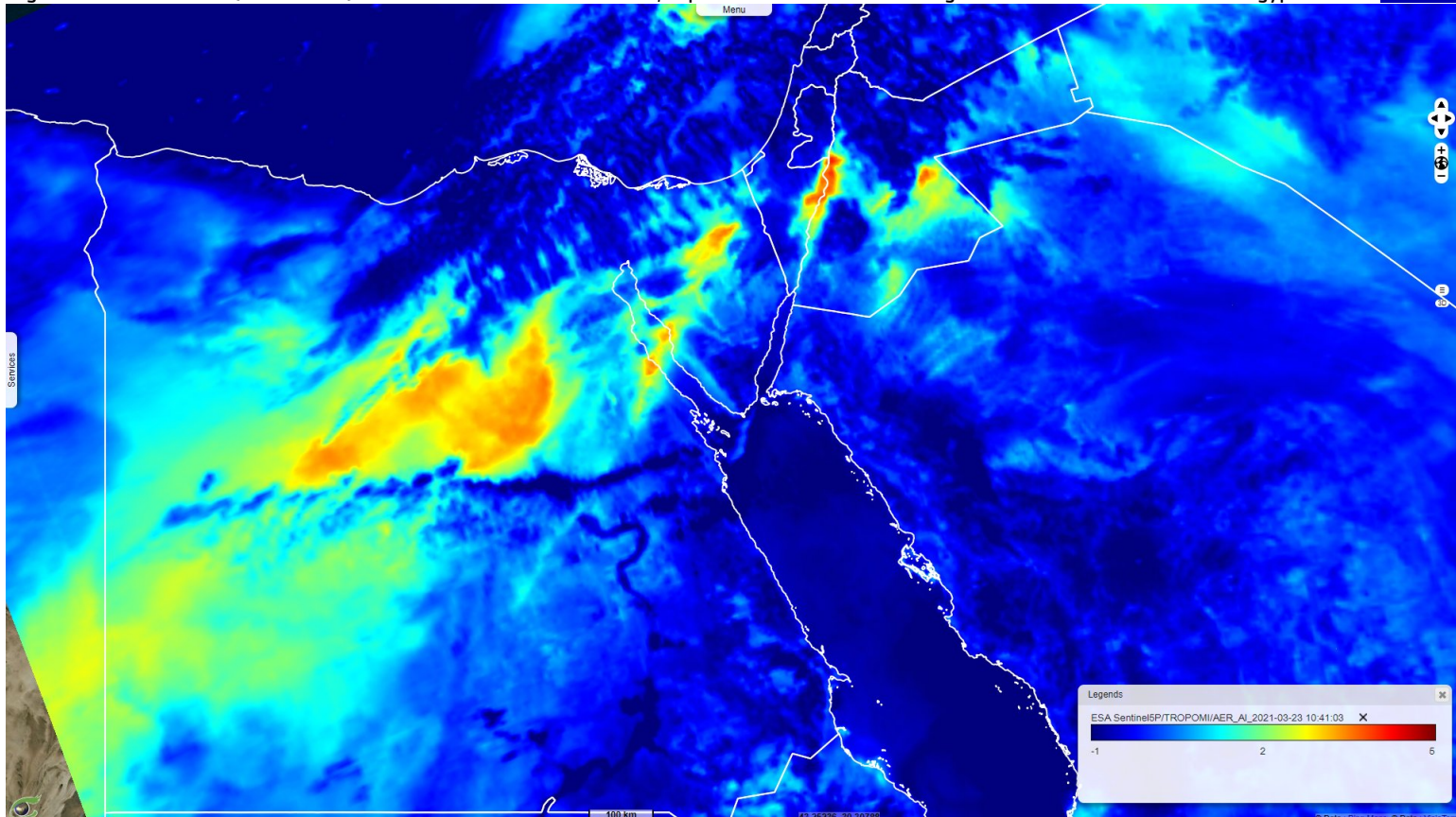
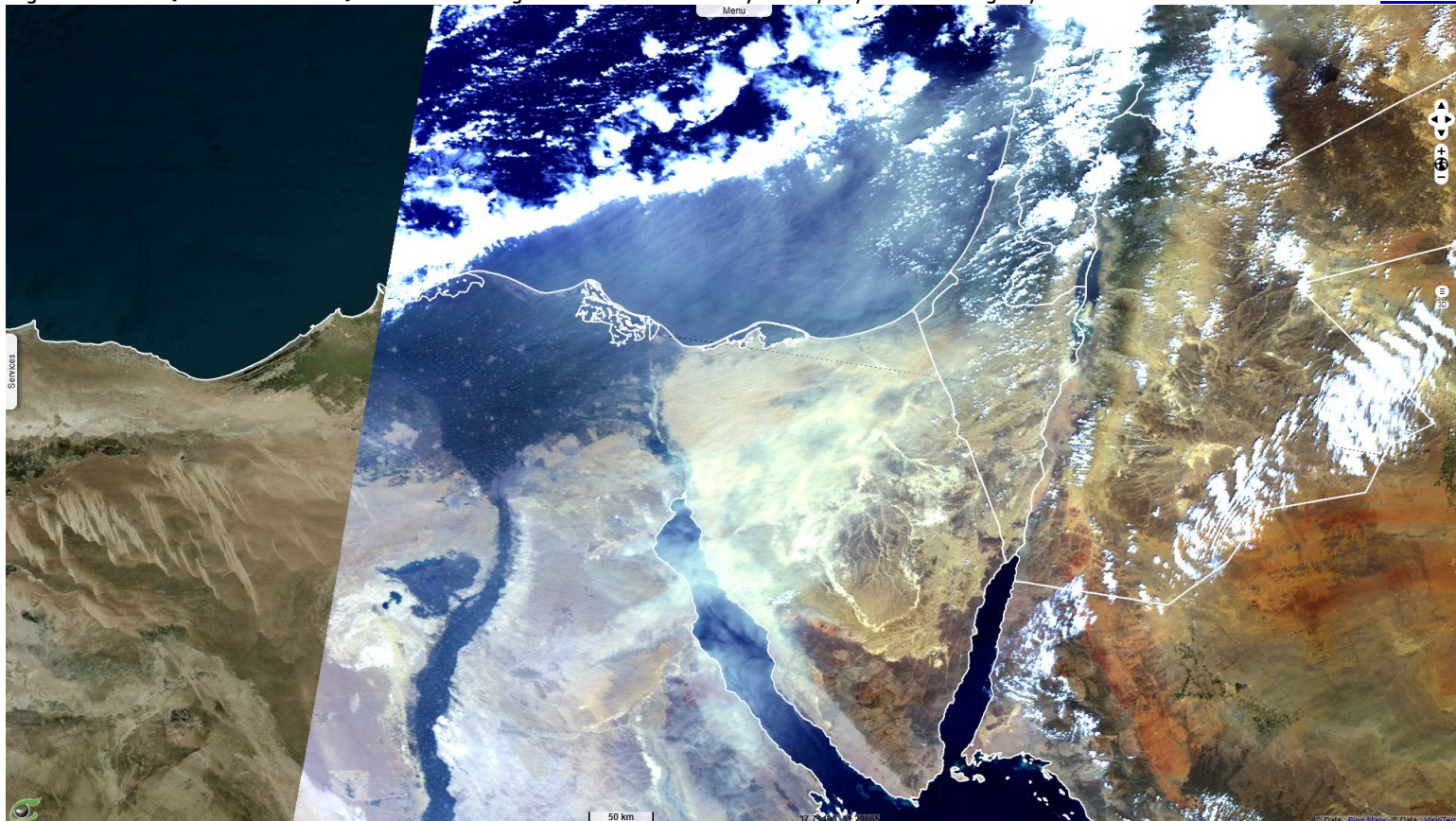


Fig. 2 - S3 OLCI (24.03.2021 07:40) - This OLCI image shows the cloudless yet hazy sky the following day.

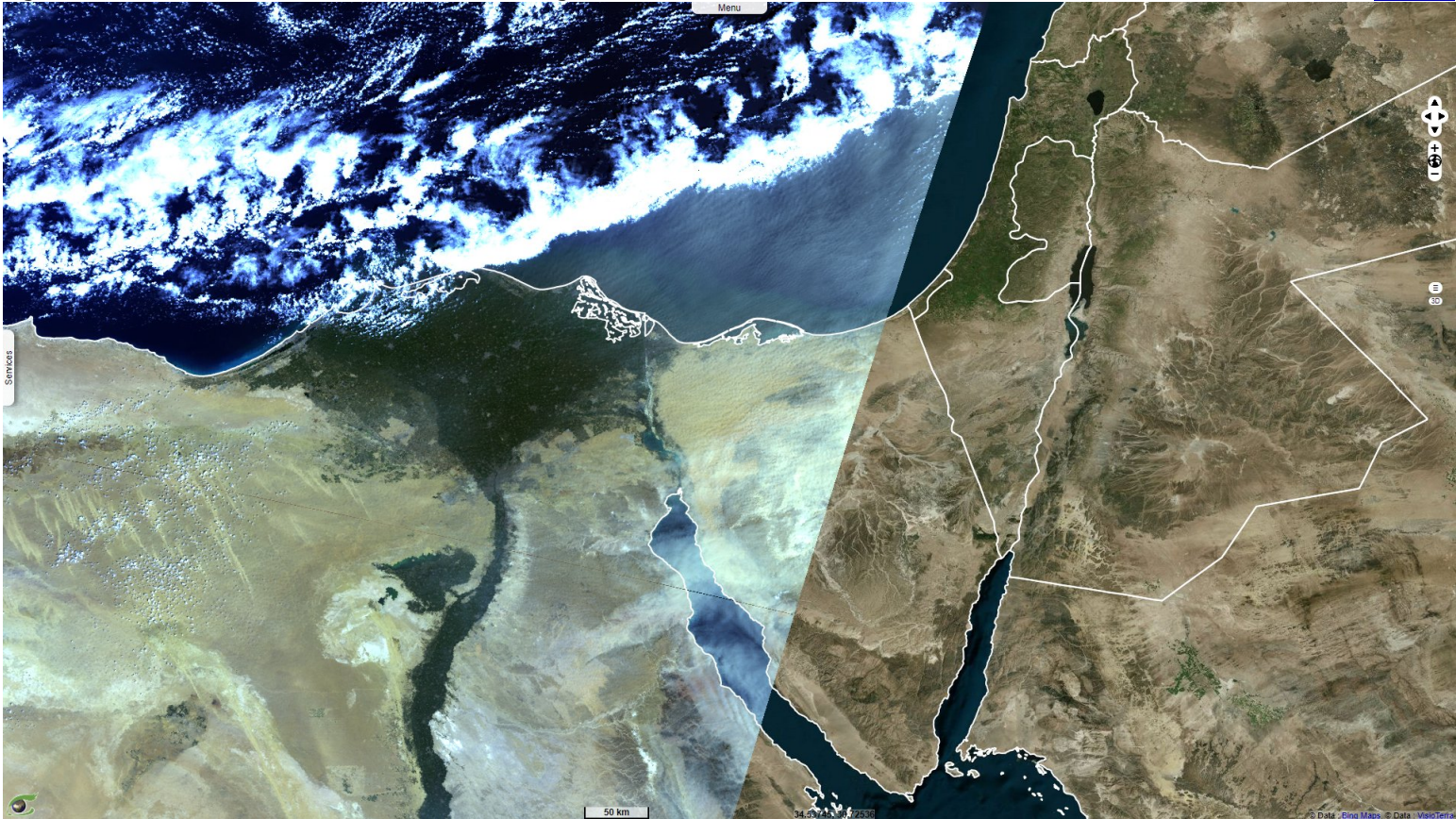
[2D View](#)



BBC News (British Broadcasting Corporation) [reported](#) Suez Canal was being obstructed by the Ever Given container ship, in Egypt: "A giant container ship the length of four football pitches has become wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal, blocking one of the world's busiest trade routes. Dozens of vessels are stuck, waiting for rescue boats to free the 400m-long ship, which was knocked off course by strong winds. Egypt has reopened the canal's older channel to divert some traffic until the grounded ship can move again."

Fig. 3 - S3 OLCI (24.03.2021 08:20) - It made maneuvering in the Suez Canal more difficult.

[2D View](#)

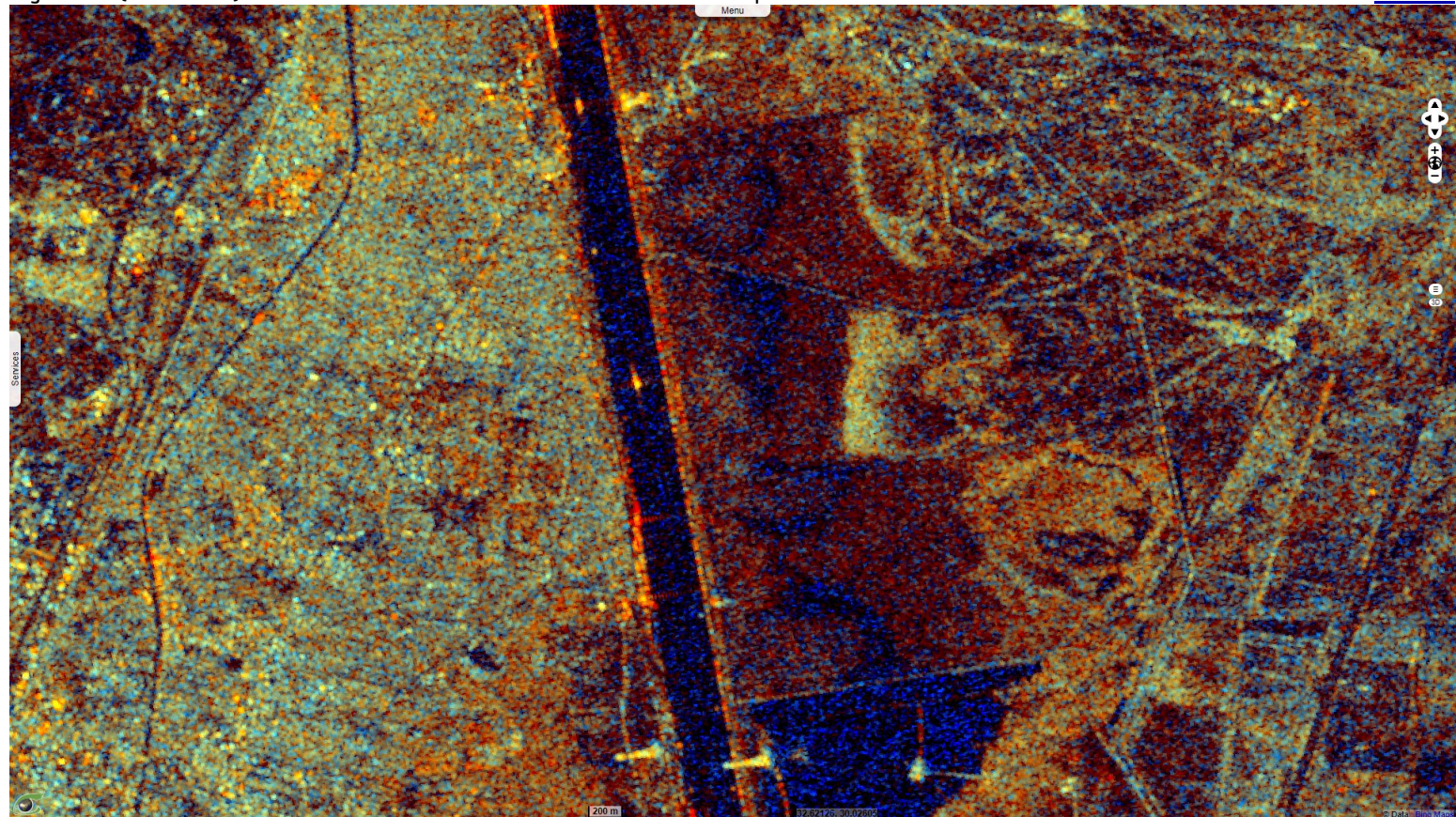


At right of the ship, one can see a digger for size reference

"The Ever Given, registered in Panama and operated by the shipping company Evergreen, was bound for the port city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands from China and was passing northwards through the canal on its way to the Mediterranean. The 200 000 tonne ship, built in 2018 and operated by Taiwanese transport company Evergreen Marine, ran aground and became lodged sideways across the waterway at about 07:40 local time (05:40 GMT) on Tuesday. At 400m long and 59m wide, the ship has blocked the path of other vessels which are now trapped in lines in both directions."

Fig. 4 - S1 (18.03.2021) - The sandstorm caused the Ever Given container ship to lose control.

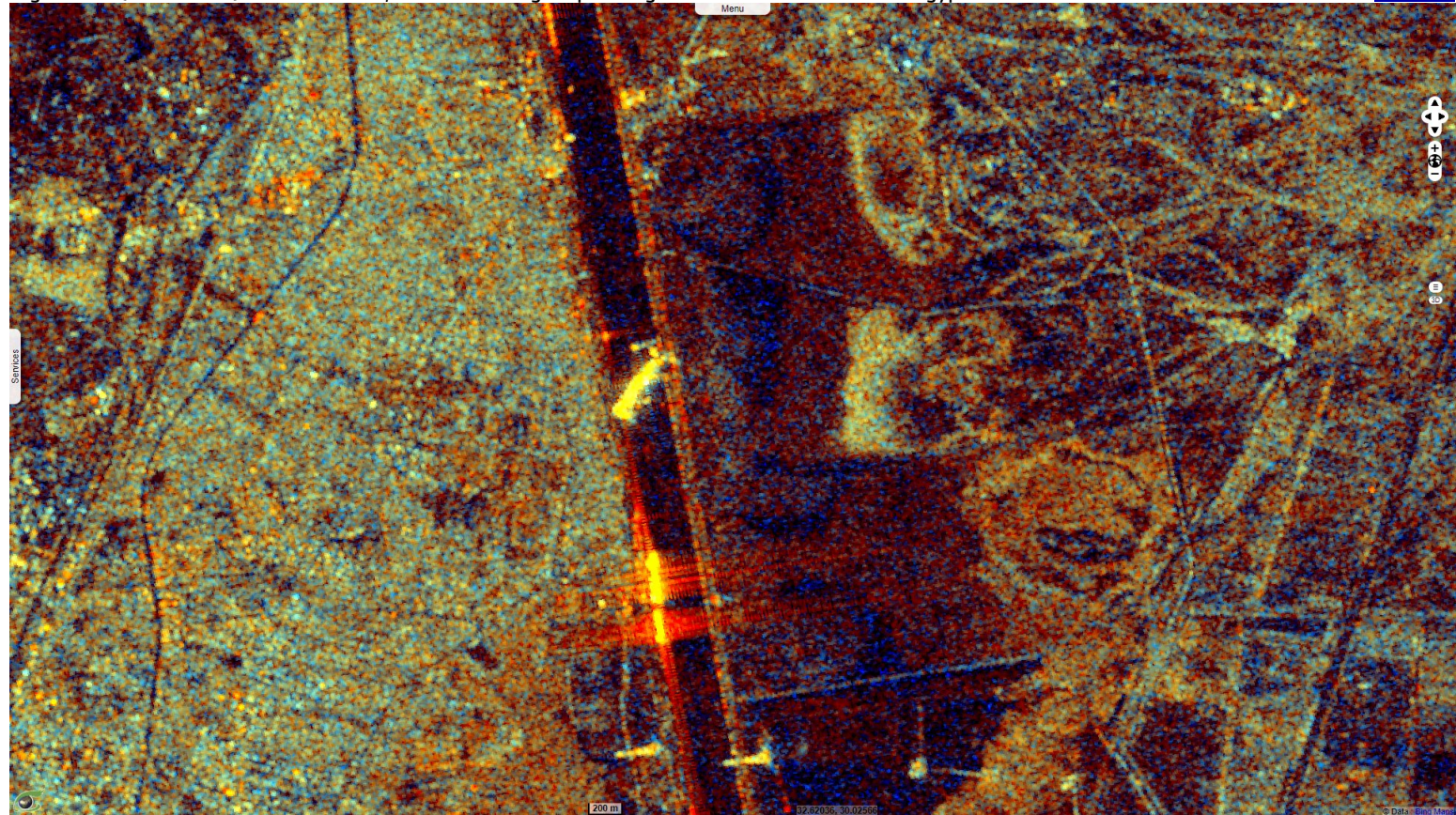
[2D View](#)



"Evergreen Marine said the ship was 'suspected of being hit by a sudden strong wind, causing the hull to deviate... and accidentally hit the bottom and run aground'. BSM confirmed on Wednesday that all crew were 'safe and accounted for', with no reports of injuries. Eight tug boats are working to refloat the ship, and diggers on the ground have been removing sand from where it is wedged into the side of the canal bank." In addition, 11 cargo ships of livestock from Romania are also blocked. The organization Animals International speaks of a danger of death for the 130 000 animals.

Fig. 5 - S1 (24.03.2021) - On 23 March, the 400 m-long ship ran aground in the Suez Canal in Egypt.

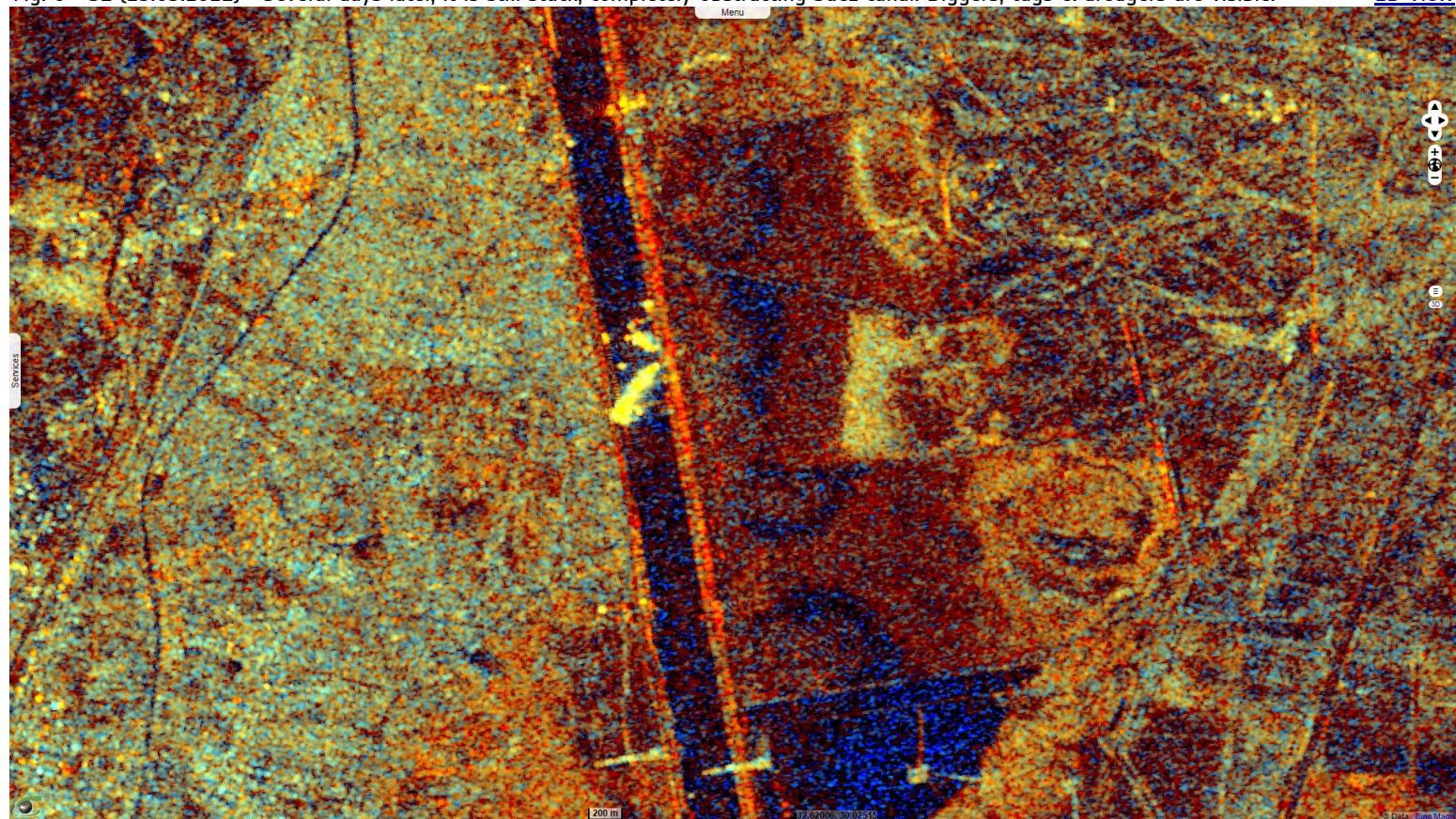
[2D View](#)



"Dr Sal Mercogliano, a maritime historian based in the US state of North Carolina, told the BBC that incidents such as this were rare, but could have 'huge ramifications for global trade'. Fears that the blockage could tie up shipments of crude oil caused prices to rise by 4% on international markets on Wednesday, Reuters reported. The Kpler energy intelligence service said that more than 20 oil tankers carrying crude and refined products were affected by the jam."

Fig. 6 - S1 (25.03.2021) - Several days later, it is still stuck, completely obstructing Suez canal. Diggers, tugs & dredgers are visible.

[2D View](#)



"The Suez Canal is an artery of world trade, connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, and providing an avenue for vessels to pass between Asia and the Middle East and Europe. The main alternative, a passage round the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, takes considerably longer."

Fig. 7 - S2 (19.03.2021) - The 193 km long canal reduces the journey between the Arabian Sea and Europe by approximately 8900 km.

[2D View](#)



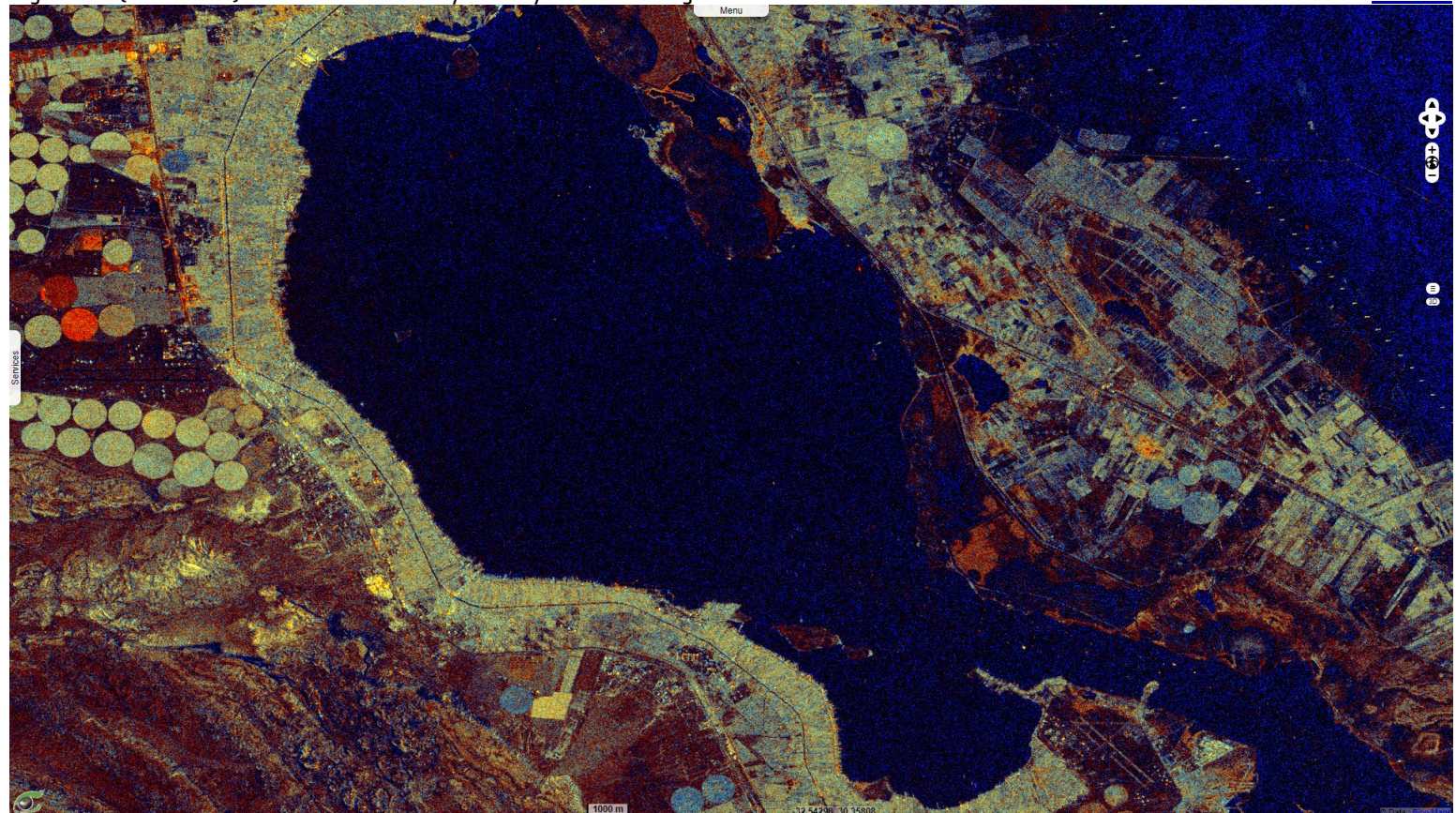
"On average, nearly 50 vessels per day pass along the canal, although at times the number can be much higher - accounting for some 12% of world trade. It is particularly important as an avenue for oil and liquified natural gas, enabling shipments to get from the Middle East to Europe.",
[published](#) BBC News.

Fig. 8 - S2 (24.03.2021) - The Panamean flagged ship weights ~220 000 T & transports 22 000 containers, making rescue operations difficult. [2D View](#)



"But the incident has shown what can go wrong when the new generation of ultra-large vessels like the Ever Given have to pass through the relatively tight confines of the canal. Although parts of it were expanded as part of a major modernisation programme in the middle of the last decade, it remains tricky to navigate - and accidents can happen." Andrew Kinsey, a former captain who has navigated a 300-meter cargo ship through the Suez added: *"The accident will be a missed opportunity if the industry doesn't adapt. 'There will be vessels larger than this one that will be going through the Suez, the next incident will be worse."*

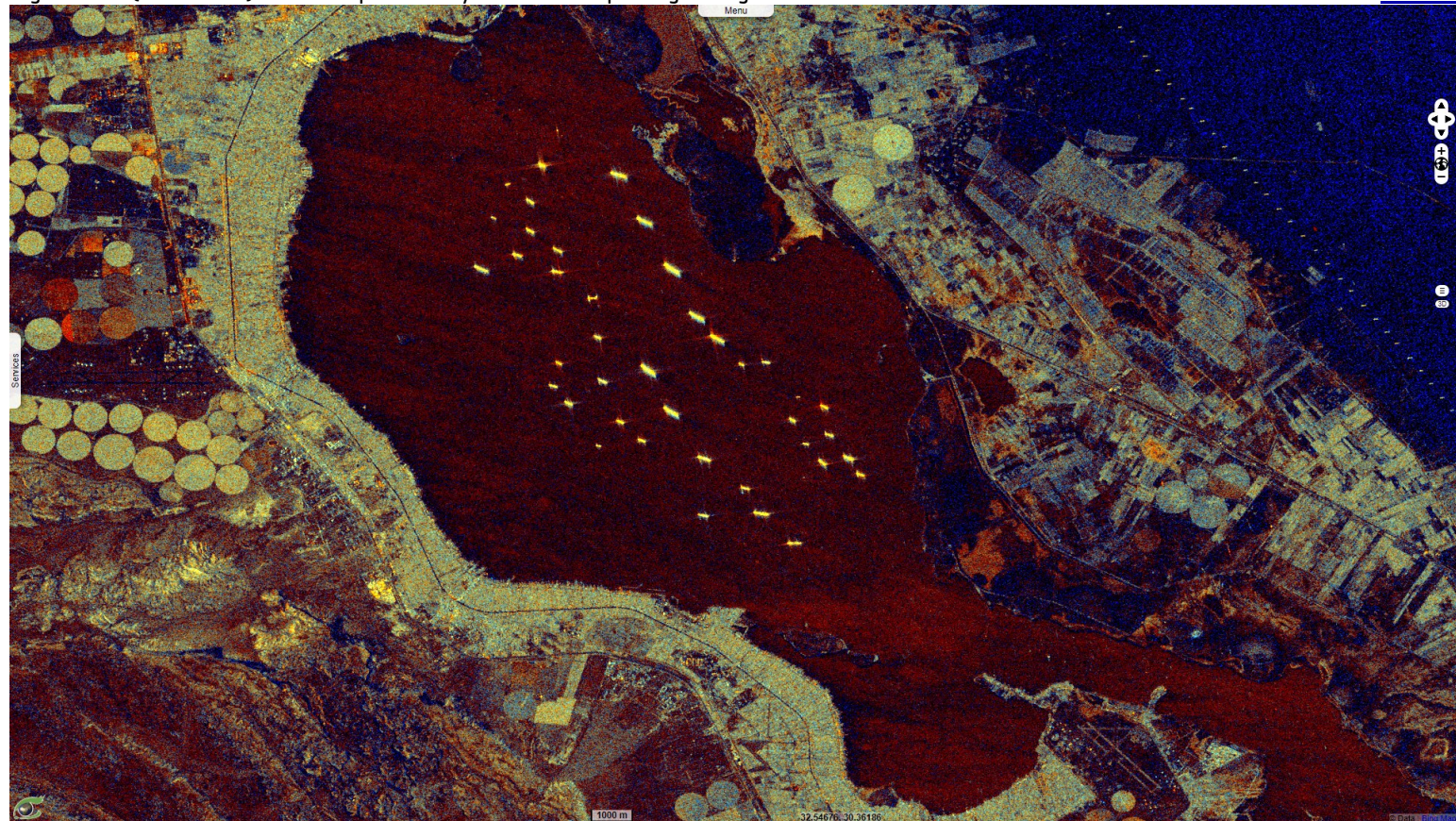
Fig. 9 - S1 (18.03.2021) - Suez Canal is usually used by ~12% of the global marine traffic. [2D View](#)



A journalist of Bloomberg Quint [gave](#) additional details: *"The day before the Ever Given grounded, the Rasheeda was among the ships approaching the canal from the southern end. Mindful of the dangers of the coming sandstorm and laden with liquefied natural gas from Qatar, the captain decided not to enter the canal after discussion with other officials at Royal Dutch Shell Plc, which manages the ship, according to two people familiar with the situation. The Ever Given also didn't employ tug boats, according to two people with knowledge of the situation, while the two slightly smaller container ships immediately ahead."*

Fig. 10 - S1 (24.03.2021) - It could prevent any vessels from passing through for weeks or months.

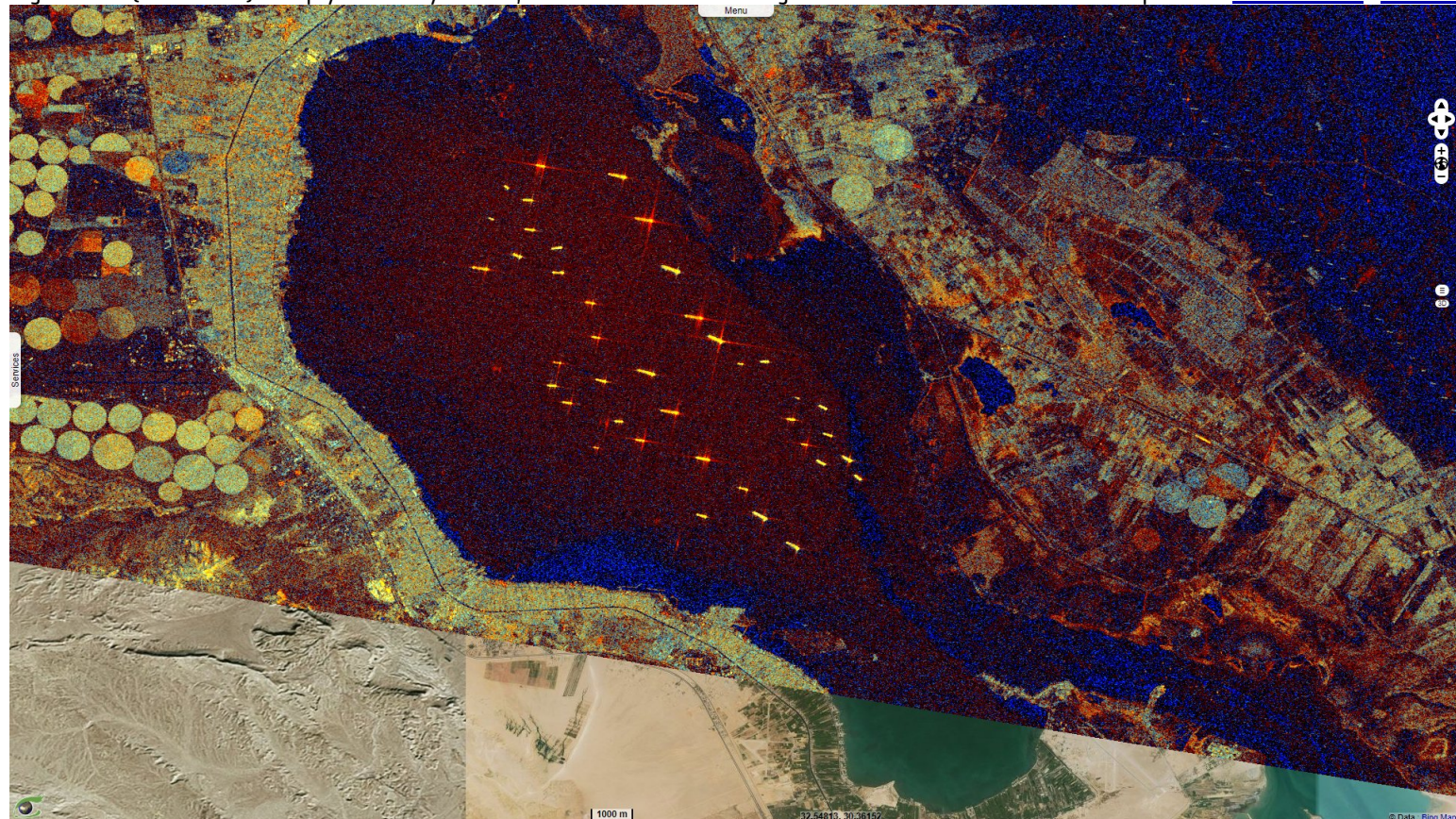
[2D View](#)















"The Ever Given captain overseeing the bridge had made the journey through the Suez many times before and handled it through gusty wind, according to a former crew member. Shipping companies say that they use their top captains for Suez because of the delicate nature of the trip. But what happened next left \$10 billion worth of goods with nowhere to go with more than 300 ships carrying products across multiple industries now stuck in the gridlock."

Fig. 11 - S1 (26.03.2021) - Empty a few days before, the Great Bitter Lake being used to anchor several tenths of ships.

[2D Animation](#) [2D View](#)



As tugs struggled in their attempts to move the ship by excavating the bow, dredgers were brought in to dig mud and sand from under the bow and stern of the ship while tugs attempted to pull and push the ship free. The Ever Given, one of the world's biggest container vessels on Earth, was finally set free on 29 March 2021.

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