



Stocks and Oil Prices Steady Ahead of US-Iran Ceasefire Talks

Description

U.S. stocks experienced a modest rise on Tuesday, following better-than-expected profit reports from major companies such as UnitedHealth Group. This development is significant as it signals resilience in the financial markets, even amid ongoing geopolitical tensions, particularly between the United States and Iran.

The S&P 500 rose by 0.3%, recovering from its second decline in two weeks, and is nearing another historical peak. The Dow Jones Industrial Average increased by 309 points, approximately 0.6%, while the Nasdaq composite saw an uptick of 0.4%. UnitedHealth led the charge with a substantial gain of 9.4% after it exceeded analysts' profit and revenue forecasts for the first quarter, also raising its earnings outlook for the full year of 2026.

This positive financial performance from companies tends to correlate with rising stock prices over time. When firms not only surpass earnings expectations but also project future growth, investor confidence typically increases. Following suit, Quest Diagnostics also reported a profit increase of 5.9% after surpassing profit expectations, making a similar upward adjustment to its full-year profit forecast.

Contrasting this optimism, Tractor Supply saw an 8.7% decline, as its earnings and revenues fell short of expectations. Despite fluctuations in oil prices due to the Middle Eastern conflict, other economic indicators suggest stability in the U.S. economy. A recent report revealed that U.S. retailers outperformed profit expectations for March, marking positive growth excluding sales from gasoline stations.

As geopolitical uncertainties loom, particularly concerning the Strait of Hormuz—a vital oil transportation route—the price of Brent crude oil remains closely monitored. Recently, it declined by 0.5% to \$95.05. Both the U.S. and Iran have indicated intentions to engage in fresh ceasefire discussions, fostering cautious optimism regarding future developments.

Vocabulary List:

1. **resilience** //rɪˈzɪljəns// (noun): ability to recover quickly after problems
2. **geopolitical** //dʒiəʊ.pəˈlɪtɪkəl// (adjective): about politics and power between countries
3. **uptick** //ˈʌptɪk// (noun): a small increase or rise in something
4. **correlate** //ˈkɒrələɪt// (verb): show a relationship or connection with something
5. **surpass** //səˈpæs// (verb): to go beyond or be better than
6. **ceasefire** //ˈsiːs.faɪə// (noun): an agreement to stop fighting for some time



Comprehension Questions

Multiple Choice

1. Which company reported a substantial gain of 9.4%?
Option: Quest Diagnostics
Option: Tractor Supply
Option: UnitedHealth Group
Option: Dow Jones
2. What was the percentage increase of the Dow Jones Industrial Average?
Option: 0.3%
Option: 0.6%
Option: 0.4%
Option: 1.0%
3. In which year did UnitedHealth raise its earnings outlook for the full year?
Option: 2023
Option: 2025
Option: 2026
Option: 2024
4. What did U.S. retailers achieve in March?
Option: Negative profit expectations
Option: Exceeded profit expectations
Option: Maintained profit levels
Option: Decreased sales
5. What percentage did Tractor Supply decline?
Option: 8.7%
Option: 9.4%
Option: 5.9%
Option: 6.1%
6. What is closely monitored regarding oil prices?
Option: Brent crude oil



- Option: Gold prices
- Option: Natural gas
- Option: Geopolitical tensions

True-False

- 7. The S&P 500 fell by 0.3%.
- 8. Quest Diagnostics reported a profit increase of 5.9%.
- 9. The Dow Jones Industrial Average increased by 309 points.
- 10. Oil prices declined due to a rise in economic indicators.
- 11. Both the U.S. and Iran have indicated intentions to ceasefire discussions.
- 12. UnitedHealth Group failed to exceed analysts' profit forecasts.

Gap-Fill

- 13. The S&P 500 rose by _____ after a modest rise on Tuesday.
- 14. Tractor Supply experienced a decline of _____ after falling short of expectations.
- 15. UnitedHealth raised its earnings outlook for the full year of _____ after exceeding forecasts.
- 16. Geopolitical tensions are particularly noticeable between the United States and _____.
- 17. A recent report showed that U.S. retailers outperformed profit expectations for _____.
- 18. The price of Brent crude oil recently declined by _____ to \$95.05.



Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. UnitedHealth Group 2. 0.6% 3. 2026 4. Exceeded profit expectations 5. 8.7% 6. Brent crude oil

True-False: 7. False 8. True 9. True 10. False 11. True 12. False

Gap-Fill: 13. 0.3% 14. 8.7% 15. 2026 16. Iran 17. March 18. 0.5%

CATEGORY

1. Business - LEVEL6

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