

APERTURE & FOCUS

WEEK 8 | 23 FEB 2024



GLOBAL APERTURE

With an end to low water conditions at the Panama Canal in sight, the Panama Canal Authority announced plans to [invest over \\$8.5 billion in sustainability projects over the next five years](#) to address the severe water crisis caused by drought and climate change. Facing reduced rainfall and increased demand, the Canal Authority aims to enhance water management, implement water-saving measures, and invest in infrastructure upgrades, including solar panels and electric vehicles, to mitigate the impacts on the critical waterway.

REGIONAL FOCUS - AMERICAS

United States: On February 21, The White House announced [plans to issue an Executive Order enhancing the nation's port security](#), including investing over \$20 billion in U.S. port infrastructure and returning domestic crane manufacturing capacity to the U.S. to address cybersecurity concerns. This action aims to bolster national security and strengthen supply chains.

Canada: Negotiations between Canada's major rail operators and Teamsters Canada, the union representing 9,300 rail workers, [have deadlocked over working conditions and wage increases](#). With both sides filing notices of dispute, the rail operators face accusations from workers of prioritizing profits over safety, potentially leading to disruptions in rail services critical for supply chains and public safety. This filing also means that work stoppages may begin as early as May.

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

Australia: Cargo pilots have [suspended their planned four-day strike due to the threat posed by Tropical Cyclone Lincoln](#). The decision was made to enable evacuation flights if required, with talks between the pilot's union and the state government facilitating the suspension.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Germany: In what may become a recurring issue, [another strike is set to begin this evening at Lufthansa Cargo](#) that will disrupt a significant number of freighter flights to and from Germany. Trade union ver.di's call for ground staff participation in the strike, following previous disruptions just two weeks ago, reflects dissatisfaction with Lufthansa's offers, with negotiations stalling over salary increases and other conditions, indicating a protracted labor dispute that could further impact operations and prompt additional strikes.

Italy: According to KWE sources, a work stoppage at Milan Malpensa Airport that began on February 9th and severely delayed the delivery of cargo was ended on February 16th after a temporary agreement was reached with striking unions. While operations resumed following the announcement, high warehouse volumes left backlogged goods that continued to impede traffic for the following 72 hours.

The Italian government [has launched legal action against Austria's 2021 anti-transit measures](#) along the Brenner corridor, a critical 448-kilometer transport route connecting Verona to Munich that facilitates passenger and freight movement between Austria, Germany, and Italy. The corridor's importance underscores the urgency for resolution amid escalating tensions over traffic congestion and safety concerns, prompting Italy's move to address infringement of EU fundamental rights and barriers to the free movement of goods, despite unsuccessful negotiations with the European Commission and appeals from various stakeholders.
