



GLOBAL APERTURE

Ocean container shipping markets remained volatile through mid-May 2026, according to analysts, as ongoing Middle East conflict [continued to disrupt global supply chains](#) and create uncertainty across Transpacific trade lanes. Market researchers also noted that far East to Europe trade lanes have adjusted more effectively to the disruptions through rerouting and alternative service networks, allowing conditions on some corridors to move closer to pre-crisis operating patterns.

Daily reports continue to show [increased vessel traffic through the Strait of Hormuz](#) as Iran selectively permits ships from countries including China, India, and Japan to transit the waterway amid ongoing regional tensions. Maritime analysts warned that transits remain tightly controlled and unpredictable, with selective access, elevated security risks, and continued military activity contributing to uncertainty for global energy and shipping supply chains.

Airlines across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East [continue to extend flight suspensions](#) and reduce services due to ongoing regional conflict and airspace disruptions linked to the Middle East crisis. Passenger and cargo operations are being adjusted across key Gulf destinations, contributing to longer routings, reduced capacity, and continued disruption to global airfreight networks.

REGIONAL FOCUS – AMERICAS

United States: The Port of Long Beach reported April 2026 cargo volumes [were down 5.7% year over year](#) as geopolitical instability, rising fuel costs, and ongoing disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz crisis continued to pressure global supply chains. Port officials warned that

elevated bunker costs, longer voyage routes, and continued uncertainty across international trade lanes are contributing to volatile cargo flows and transportation planning challenges for shippers.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Freight Transportation Services Index (TSI) [increased 0.4% in March 2026](#) from February and rose 0.7% year over year, marking the second consecutive month of growth in domestic freight activity. The increase was driven by gains in rail carloads, rail intermodal, trucking, and water transportation volumes, while air freight and petroleum and natural gas pipeline volumes declined during the month.

Panama: The Panama Canal Authority said [it does not currently plan to impose vessel transit restrictions](#) in 2026 despite forecasts that El Niño conditions could develop later this year and increase drought risks across Central America. Canal authorities stated they have implemented water conservation measures since 2025 and are maintaining historically high reservoir levels to help avoid a repeat of the severe drought-related disruptions and vessel backlogs experienced during 2023 and 2024.

Mexico: Air cargo volumes in [Mexico increased 5.4% year over year](#) in March 2026, according to the latest data from the Federal Civil Aviation Agency (AFAC), with growth driven by strong performance at airports including Guadalajara and Monterrey. International cargo volumes continued to expand during the first quarter of 2026, supported by increased throughput at major logistics hubs and continued growth in cross-border and international airfreight activity.

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

Bangladesh: Airfreight operations at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport [are experiencing delays](#) after three of the airport's four Explosive Detection System (EDS) scanners used for Regulated Agent Third Country (RA3) screening became non-operational, reducing screening capacity for exports bound for the United Kingdom and European Union. Industry representatives warned that the disruption could lead to shipment backlogs, missed flights, and increased storage and detention costs during upcoming garment export peaks and festival-related volume surges, while authorities work to manage operations with additional canine screening.

China: Construction of the fifth phase of the Nansha Port began on May 16, [expanding capacity at one of China's major shipping hubs](#) and adding infrastructure designed to support ultra-large container vessels and growing international trade volumes. Once completed, the expansion is expected to significantly increase container handling capacity, strengthen ocean and river intermodal connectivity in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and further support Guangzhou's role as a global logistics gateway.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Middle East: According to Airports Council International Asia-Pacific and Middle East, nine major Middle East airports [operated at just 53% of pre-conflict flight capacity](#) during March and April 2026 as ongoing Gulf conflict continued disrupting one of the world's busiest aviation

corridors. The report estimated that approximately 620,000 metric tons of cargo were affected during the two-month period, while elevated fuel costs and reduced airline competition continued pressuring global aviation networks.

Carriers including Maersk, MSC, CMA CGM, and Hapag-Lloyd [are increasingly using overland trucking routes](#) across Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates to move cargo as severe disruption continues through the Strait of Hormuz. Freight rates on the Shanghai-to-Gulf and Red Sea trade lane reached record highs during the week of May 15, while industry representatives warned that limited trucking capacity, port congestion, and rerouted cargo flows are contributing to extended transit times and significant supply chain backlogs across the Gulf region.