

WEEK 4

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APERTURE & *FOCUS*

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GLOBAL APERTURE

As the economic outlook leading up to the holiday had suggested, Lunar New Year did not bring with it enough consumer spending to prevent [the announcement of more blank sailings](#). China's [rising Covid cases](#), a major factor in these canceled sailings due to the lack of volume they created, have also introduced problems for seafarers. In its latest Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator, The Global Maritime Forum said that [new restrictions at ports for ships arriving from China](#) is once again preventing crew changes and leaving some workers stuck aboard vessels beyond the expiration of their contracts. The International Chamber of Shipping [released its new Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit for Shipping](#) to help the maritime industry address diversity issues and cultivate a stronger workforce.

REGIONAL FOCUS - AMERICAS

New analysis [puts the Port of New York and New Jersey in the top spot for the busiest trade hub](#) in the US, joining other East and Gulf Coast ports in [reporting record cargo volumes for 2022](#). While still in the top spot in terms of volume, the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach [fell](#)

[short of breaking this record with only their 2nd busiest year](#) as trade shifted away from the West Coast due to ongoing labor issues. The overall volume drop hit the West Coast in particular, whose ports experienced their [nineteenth straight month of year-over-year volume decline](#). The advantage the West Coast holds in travel time appear to be working in their benefit, however, as [Los Angeles processed more containers than New York in December](#), a signal that trade may return with a labor deal appearing more likely.

Only one month after being called to answer before the US Surface Transportation Board (STB) for excessive use of rail freight embargoes, [Union Pacific resumed the practice with new embargoes](#) in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin citing harsh weather events. In a letter to the STB, eight members of congress, representing districts therein, implored the agency to [“exercise its statutory oversight authority”](#) and compel Union Pacific to lift these embargoes. A leaked draft of a document detailing plans to [ban cargo-only flights from Benito Juarez](#), Mexico’s busiest airport, and reroute cargo to the newly opened Felipe Angeles International Airport has prompted a response from The International Air Transport Association [who derided the decision](#) citing the lack of infrastructure from both airport and airlines.

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

Hong Kong’s exports [experienced their most significant decline in over 60 years](#) during the month of December, hurt by declining demand from both western nations and mainland China in the wake of its Covid spikes that occurred upon reopening. Early trade data in South Korea also suggest that [export declines will continue](#), but China’s reopening is [ultimately expected to help resume growth](#) when Covid rates curb.

In a bid to improve service reliability, Ocean Network Express (ONE) will replace its Southeast Asia-Australia services with a [trio of new services](#) in March 2023. Connecting the Indian Subcontinent and North America via Jeddah, the [Indamex 2 shipping service](#), is a new route jointly operated by Hapag-Lloyd and CMA CGM.

A winter storm that made landfall in Western Japan on January 24 [reportedly sank a cargo ship off the Southwestern coast](#) and led to another being run aground. [More than 50 flights were canceled at Kansai and Haneda Airports](#) due to heavy snow with more expected as strong winds continue. Pakistan’s Foreign exchange crisis has led to [significant backlogs](#) with around [6,000 containers waiting to be unloaded](#) while Pakistani banks work to secure funding with limited access to currency to pay shipping lines.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

As import volumes continue to wane in North Europe, new reports suggest that [weak performance will continue throughout the year](#). A second nationwide strike in France that includes the country’s dockworkers [shut down port operations on January 26](#) and will continue for up to 48 hours, with a second phase of industrial action planned for next week. Strike action also interrupted operations at Berlin Airport, [where all flights were canceled](#) after three rounds of failed negotiations between German airline Lufthansa and trade union Verdi.