

APERTURE & FOCUS

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GLOBAL APERTURE

Despite the recent [ceasefire](#) agreement between Israel and Hamas, container lines are unlikely to quickly return to the Suez Canal due to ongoing safety concerns and the unpredictable political and economic landscape. Carriers will wait for greater stability and clarity before considering a return, with factors like overcapacity and shifting demand further complicating their decisions.

In anticipation of potential tariffs under the new US presidential administration, companies are [accelerating shipments to the U.S.](#), particularly from China. This "frontloading" strategy aims to mitigate risks associated with proposed tariffs of up to 60% on Chinese goods, leading to increased cargo volumes at U.S. ports

According to a new report, global air cargo capacity [expanded by 10% year-on-year](#) in 2024. This growth was primarily driven by a 13% increase in belly hold capacity from passenger aircraft, while dedicated freighter capacity rose by 8%. Notably, aircraft cargo utilization reached its highest level in five years, indicating that the current global fleet is operating near its maximum capacity.

REGIONAL FOCUS - AMERICAS

United States: A disruptive winter storm [is expected to impact the Gulf Coast](#) this week, with snowfall, ice accumulation, and freezing temperatures affecting cities like Houston, New Orleans, and Mobile, Alabama. The storm, which is considered a "once in a generation" event, is likely to cause significant disruptions to transportation, power outages, and hazardous travel conditions. Several airports across the region, including Houston's George Bush Intercontinental and Hobby airports, Louisiana's Lafayette Regional Airport, and Tallahassee International Airport, [have closed](#) due to the heavy snow and icy conditions, contributing to widespread flight cancellations.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) [has withdrawn its controversial rule](#) requiring zero-emissions locomotives by 2030, citing uncertainty under the incoming administration. The decision, welcomed by the rail industry, follows opposition from organizations like the Association of American Railroads and BNSF Railway, which argued the regulation would have harmed the supply chain and hinder investments in rail infrastructure.

Mexico: The Mexican [government has announced new tariffs](#) on a wide range of goods starting January 25, 2025, aiming to close duty-free loopholes exploited by companies. This move is part of a broader effort to strengthen domestic industry and ensure compliance with trade regulations under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

Australia: Industrial action at Qube Ports, one of Australia's largest port operators, [has been called off](#) following successful negotiations. The agreement avoids further disruption to port operations, ensuring continuity in cargo handling and logistics services across key terminals. However, [delays are expected to persist](#) into early February as port operations work to clear backlogs caused by weeks of disruption.

Sri Lanka: Congestion at the Port of Colombo, driven by severe capacity constraints as container yards struggle to manage growing volumes, has intensified since late 2024, [leading to considerable delays and missed vessel calls](#). The backlog has disrupted cargo handling operations, with stakeholders urging immediate action to alleviate the pressure and restore efficiency.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Major European air cargo hubs, including Liege, Heathrow, and Schiphol, [saw significant cargo volume growth in 2024](#), driven by a recovering cargo market, the resurgence of passenger services, and increased e-commerce demand. Liege experienced a 15.6% rise, adding new cargo airline customers and diversifying its customer base. Heathrow and Schiphol also

reported strong gains of 10.4% and 8%, respectively, with volumes exceeding pre-Covid levels at Schiphol despite flight restrictions.

Austria: Vienna Airport achieved [a record-breaking 297,945 tonnes of cargo in 2024](#), marking a 22% increase from 2023 and a 5% rise over pre-pandemic levels. This growth was driven by a 44% surge in belly cargo, the return of major Asian airlines, and a 24% increase in trucked volumes.

Italy: The Frejus rail tunnel, a key link for freight between France and Italy that has been shut down since August 2023 due to a landslide, [is now expected to reopen](#) in March 2025. The reopening will restore a critical route for cargo transport in the region, alleviating pressure on alternative routes used during the closure.
