

APERTURE & FOCUS

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GLOBAL APERTURE

As the Panama Canal continues to deal with its ongoing drought along with anti-mining protests that have affected operations, [new measures have been introduced](#) that will once again reduce the number of vessels allowed to pass. Slots have been limited to 25 per day beginning November 3 and will be reduced to 18 per day by February 1.

At the Suez Canal, [authorities announced a 15% fee increase for northbound transits](#), effective from January 15. This change is expected to affect Asia-Europe and Asia-North America East Coast services that transit via the Suez Canal, with carriers potentially considering passing on these increased costs to forwarders and shippers through new surcharges. Additionally, it may influence container supply chain dynamics, possibly driving a shift in demand towards Asia-US West Coast services, as concerns about the aforementioned labor disputes and draught restrictions at the Panama Canal have led to a resurgence of container volumes returning to US West Coast ports.

REGIONAL FOCUS - AMERICAS

Canada: Members of the Unifor union, representing St. Lawrence Seaway workers in eastern Canada, [announced the ratification of new collective agreements](#) on November 2. This development follows the end of a week-long strike on the key North American trade route, which had disrupted the movement of grains and other commodities.

USA: At a union meeting on November 7, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), representing 45,000 dock workers at US East and Gulf Coast ports, [reaffirmed its commitment to strike](#) if labor contract negotiations do not yield a favorable outcome by September 30, 2024. The ILA's president told members that a strike is scheduled to begin on October 1, 2024, with high expectations for a landmark agreement, including pay raises, work allocation at new terminals, and opposition to terminal automation.

Mexico: Mexico's Lazaro Cardenas port [is set to undergo significant expansion](#) as both APM Terminals and Hutchison Ports embark on expansion projects with investments totaling more than \$300 million that will increase terminal capacity by approximately 1.8 million TEU. The port saw a resurgence in throughput in the post-pandemic period and has struggled with congestion throughout 2023. Developers cite nearshoring and increased foreign investment as key drivers of growth in the region.

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

Bangladesh: Supply chains in Bangladesh [are facing significant disruptions](#) as roads, railways, and waterways have been blocked by political protests and over 400 garment factories have been shut down by work stoppages as workers seek higher wages. In addition to throughput at the port of Chittagong being reduced by nearly half, labor protests continue to spread throughout industrial zones in Dhaka and neighboring regions.

Australia: Dockworkers at one of Australia's busiest container terminals [initiated a 24-hour work ban in an ongoing labor dispute](#)— the latest in a string of demonstrations that included work stoppages in Fremantle, Melbourne, and more. While this strike is aimed at Port Botany in Sydney, the busiest container port in Australia, plans are underway to escalate work bans at major ports across the country next week.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

European Union: According to the latest report from Container xChange, [the European Union continues to grapple with an economic crisis](#) marked by declining trade and container traffic, leading to the problem of surplus containers causing repositioning costs that exceed their asset value. The persistent issue of excess containers in European depots has worsened due to imbalanced trade, unreliable shipping services, and geopolitical challenges, impacting both the shipping industry and the broader economy in the region.

United Kingdom: On November 10, Dublin Port Company (DPC) [unveiled its refurbished Roll-on/Roll-off \(RoRo\) freight facility, T4](#). It is expected to handle over 220,000 RoRo units per year, making it the largest RoRo freight facility in the Republic of Ireland, responding to the growing demand for unaccompanied RoRo freight services following Brexit and supporting direct ferry services between Dublin and Liverpool/Heysham. This expansion modernizes the port's infrastructure and provides increased capacity to meet the needs of importers and exporters in Ireland.