



KWE
Global Logistics Partner

GLOBAL APERTURE

Data-center investment is driving strong growth in [hi-tech air cargo](#), according to industry consulting firm Aevean, with volumes reaching 3 million metric tons in the first seven months of 2026, [up 22% year over year](#). The surge is particularly pronounced on routes from Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and South Korea to the US, while the resulting imbalance between outbound and return cargo flows is creating new capacity challenges.

Traffic through Chile's Strait of Magellan increased [more than 70% year over year](#) in both August and September, with drought-related restrictions at the Panama Canal cited as a primary factor behind the increase. The diversion is significant, adding substantial distance and transit time for vessels using the longer southern route, with the shift beginning in July.

Meanwhile, The Panama Canal Authority [is expanding its long-term transit reservation program](#) to Panamax vessels for the first time, covering voyages from January 3 through April 3, 2027. The expanded program will provide 339 reserved transit slots across the Panamax and Neopanamax locks, giving carriers greater predictability during the dry season following previous drought-related capacity restrictions.

REGIONAL FOCUS – AMERICAS

United States: Container imports [are beginning to slow](#) after an unusually long peak season that extended through the summer and early fall, with September and October volumes still expected to remain above last year. The National Retail Federation and Hackett Associates now expect imports to ease further through November as most holiday merchandise has already arrived and retailers shift toward replenishment.



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Canada: A shift toward European trade is driving [increased air cargo demand](#) in Canada, with Edmonton International Airport expecting record European cargo flows in 2026 as exports to the US decline. However, limited transatlantic capacity, particularly for Western Canada, could constrain growth as passenger airlines reduce winter services, while additional freighter capacity and airport infrastructure are being developed.

Latin America: A strong El Niño is [reshaping crop conditions across South America](#), with potential impacts on soybean, corn and wheat production and changing the direction and timing of agricultural freight flows into 2027. The weather pattern is also contributing to higher demand for alternative grain supplies, while Panama Canal restrictions and longer routing options are adding further pressure to dry bulk transportation.

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

Philippines: Customs brokers and truckers in Manila began a planned [three-day work stoppage](#) on October 5 amid a year-long buildup of empty containers that has severely reduced cargo movement at the city's ports. Hapag-Lloyd has suspended bookings to Manila, Batangas and Subic Bay through December 31, citing the ongoing congestion and operational disruption.

Sri Lanka: Colombo's growing role as a transshipment hub [is contributing to congestion](#) and increasing the risk of rolled cargo on India-US routes, particularly for shipments from southern Indian ports. Transshipment volumes rose 7.8% year over year in August, while Hapag-Lloyd warned of two- to three-day vessel waits as terminal yard density exceeded 130%, with disruption expected to continue into October.

India: Air cargo operations in Mumbai [are facing congestion](#) at both the existing airport and the new Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) as freighter services shift between the two hubs. Lufthansa Cargo suspended its six weekly freighter flights on September 20 and was expected to resume at NMIA on October 1, while other carriers have moved scheduled services to alternative Indian airports amid reported delays and long truck waits.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Belgium: Belgian unions and airport workers are planning strikes on October 9 and 12, according to KWE sources, with the actions expected to disrupt aviation, customs and public services. Local reports suggest that Brussels Airport could see [around 140 flight cancellations](#) on October 9 due to a ground-handler strike, while public-sector and rail workers are expected to disrupt train services nationwide on October 12.

Germany: A planned strike at the ports of Hamburg, Bremerhaven, Wilhelmshaven and other German gateways [has been averted](#) after dockworkers accepted new contract terms, reducing the risk of additional cargo backlogs. The agreement follows warning strikes in August and September that disrupted cargo handling at several ports, although final approval from employers is still pending.