

APERTURE & FOCUS

WEEK 51 22 DEC 2023



GLOBAL APERTURE

Due to better-than-expected November rains, the Panama Canal Authority has announced that it will [increase its daily ship allowance from 22 to 24 starting in January](#). The prolonged drought has forced shippers to face delays, pay hefty fees to expedite passage, or opt for the longer route around the southern tips of Africa and South America.

The Suez Canal Authority is closely monitoring tensions in the Red Sea following recent Houthi attacks on vessels, with [55 ships rerouting via the Cape of Good Hope since November 19](#). Major freight firms, including MSC, Maersk, and Hapag Lloyd, [are avoiding the Suez Canal](#) due to heightened Houthi assaults. Suez Canal officials, however, maintain that maritime traffic is currently normal despite the ongoing tensions in the region.

REGIONAL FOCUS - AMERICAS

Mexico: After a temporary five-day suspension that put was in place amid an increase in cross-border smuggling operations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection [reopened three international border bridges at Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas](#) on December 22. While rail freight operations

have been allowed to resume, the backlog will take days to clear with more than 10,000 rail cars waiting to cross.

Brazil: Unprecedented port congestion in Brazil has prompted calls from the shipping industry [to adopt new efficient methods for managing ship arrivals](#). With the average waiting time for vessels at Brazilian ports reaching 15 days, advocates suggest the adoption of virtual arrival or just-in-time systems to reduce waiting times, save fuel costs, and cut carbon emissions

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

China: Amid concerns over western withdrawals and increased competition from India and Mexico, [Chinese officials announced the development of new measures to strengthen China's supply chain resilience](#) during its Central Economic Work Conference in Beijing. While specific measures were not disclosed, China's leadership acknowledged the need to overcome challenges and boost its economy, emphasizing solid progress in high-quality development in 2023, particularly in sectors like automotive where the US has sought to reshore sourcing.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Iceland: Meteorologists are closely monitoring a volcanic eruption near Grindavík, Iceland, acknowledging potential impacts on aviation if a volcanic ash cloud is generated. While no such cloud has been observed yet, meteorologists suggest that if ash is lofted, winds in the lower to middle atmosphere could direct it over Northern Germany, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Belarus, and Russia, [possibly affecting air travel and prompting airspace reconfigurations or closures](#).

Germany: Lufthansa Cargo [has issued a warning to customers](#) about severe delays and cancellations until the end of the year, attributing the disruption to an exceptionally high level of staff sickness and recent extreme winter weather conditions at its Frankfurt and Munich hubs. As delays increase, the airline stated that additional measures have been implemented due to ongoing challenges in the labor market since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.
