

APERTURE & FOCUS

WEEK 1 | 4 JAN 2024



GLOBAL APERTURE

Global calls for the United Nations to intervene in the ongoing attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea have intensified, with [an emergency UN Security Council meeting](#) on January 3, attended by governments including the UK and the US, warning of potential consequences if the attacks persist. In response to [the increased frequency of these attacks](#), several shipping lines have suspended operations through the passage, opting instead to take the longer journey around Africa. While the Red Sea route offers faster delivery of goods, the danger that is still present [has increasingly led vessels to turn off their AIS transponders](#) to evade Houthi attacks, a practice that poses challenges for collision-avoidance and container monitoring.

REGIONAL FOCUS - AMERICAS

Unites States: After shutdowns that have been ongoing since November 27, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) [resumed full commercial operations](#) at the Eagle Pass, Texas, international bridge, along with two Mexico crossings in Arizona and an international pedestrian border crossing in San Diego on January 4. The resumption follows a drop in migrant crossings that had led to operational disruptions affecting commercial cargo truck movements, including

increased wait times at the Eagle Pass port of entry, impacting freight movements from Mexico to the U.S.

Mexico: In a project aimed to compete with the drought-stricken Panama Canal, [Mexico has initiated operations on a new passenger and cargo railroad](#) connecting the Gulf coast to the Pacific Ocean in a three-hour journey from Coatzacoalcos to Salina Cruz. While analysts suggest the rail line's capacity will be a fraction of the canal's, additional connections to the Mayan Train and collaboration with major rail operator CPKC are also in the works.

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

China: On December 29, [the first direct cargo rail link connecting China, Thailand, and Laos was launched](#) under the New Land-Sea Corridor project, cutting routine freight transport between Chongqing and Thailand [by as much as 20 days](#). As part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, this milestone in regional transportation infrastructure development is expected to enhance trade routes and economic cooperation between Southeast Asia, China, and Europe.

India: The unveiling of a new cargo berth at Chennai on January 2 [has increased the cargo handling capacity at Kamarajar Port in Chennai by three million metric tons](#). The updated infrastructure aims to boost the port's automotive handling with a 9,6000 vehicle parking facility.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

The new year marks the introduction of [new rules for the European Union Emission Trading System](#), now set to include emissions from larger ships (5,000 gross tons and above) at European ports. These changes involve a cap-and-trade system, a transition period for allowances, and an additional surcharge for voyages to the EEA and EFTA regions.
