

# FrachtNEWS

## LOGISTICS MARKET REPORT



GLOBAL MARKET

OCEAN FREIGHT

## GLOBAL CONTAINER MARKETS ADJUST TO PROLONGED DISRUPTION DESPITE EASING EUROPEAN TRENDS

Recent insights from Xeneta indicate that while container rates on some European trade lanes have softened, the broader market remains far from stable. Ongoing geopolitical pressure —particularly the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz—is still reshaping global shipping dynamics and preventing a full return to pre-crisis conditions. Carriers have adapted by restructuring service networks, implementing alternative routing strategies, and leveraging inland and regional relay solutions to maintain cargo flows. A key development is the growing impact on US-bound cargo rate level increases. Challenges in the Middle East are extending into Southeast Asian transshipment hubs, where congestion and operational strain are creating downstream effects across the supply chain. According to Xeneta’s Chief Analyst, Peter Sand, “Shippers moving cargo to the US via these hubs are paying the

price for bottlenecks created thousands of miles away” (Sand, 2026). Volume control strategies are also playing a significant role in shaping current market conditions. Ocean carriers are actively calibrating available space to balance demand fluctuations and prevent sharp market corrections. Strategic capacity control, combined with extended transit times and congestion at alternative hubs, continues to support elevated pricing conditions relative to historical norms. While interim solutions have helped stabilize flows, the absence of secure and predictable passage through critical chokepoints means structural disruption remains a defining feature of the market.

**Source:** Hennessey, P. (2026, April 23). *Xeneta Weekly Ocean Container Shipping Market Update – 23.4.2026*. Xeneta. <https://www.xeneta.com/news/xeneta-weekly-ocean-container-shipping-market-update-23.4.2026>

# CONSOLIDATION MOMENTUM BUILDS AS HAPAG-LLOYD AND ZIM SIGNAL STRATEGIC SHIFT

The container shipping sector appears to be moving toward another consolidation cycle, with Hapag-Lloyd's proposed acquisition of Zim Integrated Shipping Services underscoring a growing emphasis on operational size as a key competitive advantage. In contrast to earlier merger activity fueled by financial strain, the current landscape reflects a more deliberate, strategy-driven approach, where carriers are actively enhancing their market position from a foundation of financial stability. Analysts emphasize that industry pressure is intensifying across the sector. "As a result, midsize carriers — even those firmly within the top 10 — are realizing the urgency of building scale to remain competitive with the top carriers" (Tirschwell, 2026). This urgency is driven by the growing dominance of the largest global lines, which continue to expand both fleet capacity and service offerings.

**Source:** Tirschwell, P. (2026, April 13). *Hapag-Zim deal could ignite another merger wave in container shipping*. Journal of Commerce. <https://www.joc.com/article/hapag-zim-deal-could-ignite-another-merger-wave-in-container-shipping-6203514>



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# RISING VESSEL ORDERS SIGNAL A NEW PHASE IN GLOBAL FLEET EXPANSION



GLOBAL MARKET

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IMCO's latest analysis indicates "the global shipping order book has climbed to its highest level in nearly two decades, as a wave of tanker contracting and sustained newbuilding demand across the 2020s continues to reshape fleet dynamics" (Schuler, 2026). A sharp increase in crude tanker contracting, alongside renewed activity in LNG carrier orders, has elevated the sector's share of total newbuild demand. This trend is closely tied to an aging tanker fleet, where a significant portion of vessels are approaching or exceeding 20 years of service—an inflection point that typically leads to accelerated scrapping and replacement cycles. Chinese shipbuilders continue to dominate global order intake, while South Korean yards maintain a strong position in specialized vessel construction, particularly LNG carriers.

**Source:** Schuler, M. (2026, April 9). *Global Ship Order Book Hits 17-Year High as Tanker Orders Surge*. gCaptain. <https://gcaptain.com/global-ship-order-book-hits-17-year-high-as-tanker-orders-s>

# GLOBAL AIR FREIGHT ENTERS A NEW ERA OF VOLATILITY AS NORMALIZATION REMAINS DISTANT

**D**espite a fragile ceasefire, air freight markets are unlikely to stabilize anytime soon. Industry analysts warn the sector has entered a more volatile, supply-constrained phase, with the Baltic Air Freight Index rising more than 25% over four weeks to early April. Asia-Europe and transpacific lanes have emerged as key beneficiaries as airlines reconfigure networks away from disrupted Gulf hubs, with Anchorage and Central Asia growing as alternative routing points. Cargo Facts Consulting identified March as an “inflection point” where geopolitical risk and capacity constraints overtook seasonality as primary market drivers. As one industry expert warned, air cargo is no longer moving synchronistically but has become “a fragmented system shaped by capacity reallocation and external shocks” (Lennane, 2026).

**Source:** Lennane, A. (2026, April 10). *Air freight «very, very far» from normalisation, despite ceasefire.* The Loadstar.  
<https://theloadstar.com/air-freight-very-very-far-from-normalisation-despite-ceasefire/>

GLOBAL MARKET

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## A350 FREIGHTER PROGRAMME ADVANCES WITH KEY CARGO DOOR MILESTONE



GLOBAL MARKET

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**A**irbus has marked another milestone in the A350F programme with the arrival of the main deck cargo door at its Toulouse assembly line, keeping development on schedule ahead of its planned first test flight in Q3 2026. The programme continues to advance toward certification and market entry, reinforcing confidence in next-generation freighter capacity. As Joel Rocker chief engineer for the A350F, the aircraft is progressing in line with expectations, noting that “We are well on track,” (Jeffrey, 2026) adding that “Certification is targeted by mid next year, and this is a common certification with EASA and FAA, so we expect to get them concurrently” (Jeffrey, 2026) highlighting a clear timeline as the programme moves closer to going live.

**Source:** Jeffrey, R. (2026, April 16). *Airbus’ A350F cargo door arrives with first flight set for Q3.* Air Cargo News.  
<https://www.aircargonews.net/airlines/2026/04/airbus-a350f-cargo-door-arrives-with-first-flight-set-for-q3/>

# MULTIPURPOSE SHIPPING MARKET REMAINS BALANCED DESPITE EXTERNAL PRESSURES

**T**oepfer Transport's April 2026 multipurpose shipping rate update indicates a period of relative stability across the heavy-lift segment, even as broader geopolitical dynamics continue to influence global logistics sentiment. The firm's Transport Multipurpose Index (TMI) showed minimal movement month-over-month, reflecting a market that remains balanced despite underlying uncertainty. According to Toepfer, "this may be due to the fact that the majority of cargoes not destined for the Middle East are still being shipped, as expected, and thus fleet utilization remains high" (Kershaw, 2026). Logistics providers and project cargo stakeholders should continue to evaluate routing options, monitor regional developments, and maintain adaptable capacity strategies to navigate potential shifts in market conditions.

**Source:** Kershaw, D. (2026, April 8). *Toepfer Transport's monthly multipurpose shipping rate update*. Heavy Lift & Project Forwarding International. <https://www.heavyliftptfi.com/shipping/2026/04/08/toepfer-transport-s-monthly-multipurpose-shipping-rate-update/>



# FORECASTED WEATHER PATTERNS MAY CHALLENGE PANAMA CANAL RELIABILITY



**LATAM MARKET**    **OCEAN FREIGHT**

**W**hile recent attention has largely centered on geopolitical chokepoints in the Middle East, evolving climate patterns are once again placing the Panama Canal under scrutiny as a potential constraint on global trade flows. "There is essentially a 50/50 risk that by the end of the year we will have an El Niño pattern of a magnitude that historically has a high likelihood of significantly reducing the water levels in Lake Gatun" (Jensen, 2026). While weather forecasts remain inherently probabilistic, organizations with exposure to transits via the Panama Canal should evaluate contingency routing, adjust lead time expectations, and assess network flexibility. Early preparation may prove critical in maintaining service reliability should environmental constraints once again impact one of the world's most vital maritime corridors.

**Source:** Jensen, L. (2026, April 10). *El Niño forecast suggests risk of low water levels along Panama Canal*. Journal of Commerce. <https://www.joc.com/article/el-nino-forecast-suggests-risk-of-low-water-levels-along-panama-canal-6202618>

# BRAZIL EXPORT NETWORKS FACE RENEWED PRESSURE AMID MIDDLE EAST DISRUPTIONS

**E**scalating tensions linked to Iran are creating renewed volatility across Brazil’s export logistics landscape, with containerized shipping conditions tightening across multiple trade lanes. Industry data from Solve Shipping indicates that “prices for container exports from Brazil to the Mediterranean, a route that serves the Middle East, were up 67% in April from March levels” (Hirata, 2026). Perishable exports, including refrigerated goods, are especially vulnerable due to extended transit times and equipment constraints. While Brazil’s import flows have so far remained relatively stable, evolving inventory patterns and delayed procurement decisions suggest that additional pressure may emerge in the near term. While expanded vessel supply has helped absorb some disruption, ongoing uncertainty continues to challenge network reliability and planning.

**Source:** Hirata, T. (2026, April 10). *War drives up Brazilian export shipping rates.* Valor International.  
<https://valorinternational.globo.com/business/news/2026/04/10/war-drives-up-brazilian-export-shipping-rates.ghtml>



LATAM MARKET

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# CARRIERS REBALANCE NETWORKS AS ASIA-WEST COAST SOUTH AMERICA TRADE FACES SOFTENING DEMAND



ASIA MARKET

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**S**hifting demand patterns across the Asia–West Coast South America (WCSA) trade are prompting ocean carriers to adjust network strategies, redeploy vessels, and reconsider service commitments. While earlier data pointed to strong structural growth, recent market sentiment suggests a softening environment that is influencing operational decisions. “Volumes remain light, limiting carriers’ ability to defend higher rates” (van Marle, 2026). This shift underscores the fragile balance between supply and demand, particularly as carriers attempt to stabilize utilization levels. Carriers are balancing near-term demand softness with long-term trade lane growth potential, while shippers must navigate evolving service configurations and port dynamics. As network configurations evolve and demand signals fluctuate, maintaining agility will be essential to navigating ongoing uncertainty across this key trade lane.

**Source:** van Marle, G. (2026, April 14). *Carriers shift capacity as demand slows on Asia-Latin America west coast.* The Loadstar.  
<https://theloadstar.com/carriers-shift-capacity-as-demand-slows-on-asia-latin-america-west-coast/>

# TRUCKLOAD SECTOR SEES UPTICK AS FUEL COSTS IMPACT RATE STRUCTURES

**R**ecent data from DAT Freight & Analytics highlights a notable increase in freight activity across van, refrigerated, and flatbed segments, reflecting a seasonal uptick tied to retail replenishment cycles, agricultural harvests, and construction demand. “Strong March freight demand combined with a spike in fuel costs pushed both spot and contract truckload rates to their highest levels in more than two years” (Heavy Duty Trucking, 2026). Fuel surcharges emerged as the primary driver behind elevated rates, with carriers adjusting pricing structures to offset rising diesel expenses. This increase played a central role in elevating both spot and contract rates. Stakeholders should continue monitoring fuel trends alongside demand indicators to better anticipate market shifts.

**Source:** Heavy Duty Trucking. (2026, April 14). *Trucking Rates Hit Two-Year Highs as Diesel Costs Surge, DAT Says*. Heavy Duty Trucking. <https://www.truckinginfo.com/news/truckload-rates-hit-two-year-highs-as-diesel-costs-surge-dat-says>



# FAA CRACKS DOWN ON UNSAFE HAZMAT AIR SHIPMENTS WITH MAJOR PENALTIES



**T**he US Federal Aviation Administration has moved to fine three companies a combined total of nearly \$430,000 for violating hazardous materials shipping regulations. One company faces penalties for tendering lithium-ion battery shipments without proper classification, packaging, markings or emergency response information. A second company faces the largest penalty after employees at a sorting facility discovered a smoking package with a burn hole. A third violation involved radiopharmaceutical shipments where staff lacked proper hazmat training. The FAA noted that undeclared lithium batteries currently present “one of the biggest threats to flight safety due to their fire risk” as there remain few means to physically detect them (Kulisch, 2026).

**Source:** Kulisch, E. (2026, April 1). *FAA fines companies \$430K for sending unsafe hazmat shipments to airlines*. FreightWaves. <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/faa-fines-companies-430k-for-sending-unsafe-hazmat-shipments-to-airlines>

# ALASKA'S AIR CARGO NETWORK SEEKS FLEXIBILITY AMID FUEL AND VOLUME PRESSURES

Anchorage's dominance as a transpacific air cargo hub is being quietly tested. Cargo landings at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport fell 8% year-on-year in March, with Atlas Air recording a sharper 13% decline. Fuel vulnerability is compounding the challenge — over 70% of Anchorage's aviation fuel arrives by sea from Asian refining centres now disrupted by Strait of Hormuz tensions. Fairbanks is increasingly emerging as a supplementary node, offering faster turnarounds and reduced congestion. NorthLink CEO Sean Dolan noted: "ANC is the backbone of the transpacific air cargo supply chain" — but underscored the need for greater infrastructure investment (Lennane, 2026).

**Source:** Lennane, A. (2026, April 16). *Atlas Air trims Anchorage operations as Fairbanks emerges as fallback*. The Loadstar.  
<https://theloadstar.com/atlas-air-trims-anchorage-operations-as-fairbanks-emerges-as-fallback/>

NORTH AMERICA MARKET

AIR FREIGHT



# NATIONAL AIRLINES EXPANDS GLOBAL FREIGHTER FLEET WITH FIRST BOEING 777F DELIVERY

Florida-based National Airlines has taken delivery of its first newbuild Boeing 777-200F, the first of four aircraft ordered in 2024 to modernize its fleet and expand long-haul capacity. The carrier, part of National Air Cargo, officially received the aircraft at Boeing's Everett facility in Seattle, with three further deliveries expected in the coming months. The company stated: "With enhanced range, efficiency, and capacity, the B777F strengthens our ability to serve global markets and deliver expanding service opportunities to our customers worldwide" (Jeffrey, 2026). National Airlines operates global cargo charter, ACMI and CMI services across hubs in the US, Europe, Middle East and Asia.

**Source:** Jeffrey, R. (2026, April 15). *National Airlines adds first of four 777Fs*. Air Cargo News.  
<https://www.aircargonews.net/airlines/2026/04/national-airlines-adds-first-of-four-777fs/>



NORTH AMERICA MARKET

AIR FREIGHT

# UNION PACIFIC AND NORFOLK SOUTHERN ENHANCE MERGER PROPOSAL TO ADDRESS CONCERNS

Union Pacific Railroad and Norfolk Southern Railway are preparing to submit a revised merger application to federal regulators, incorporating updated analysis and targeted adjustments designed to address earlier concerns and strengthen the proposal's competitive positioning. "UP and NS believe the revised filing will convince regulators that combining the rail networks to create the US' first transcontinental railroad would enhance competition and pull traffic off US highways" (Ashe, 2026). The revised application signals a more collaborative and transparent approach emphasizing operational improvements, competitive balance, and infrastructure optimization. The outcome of the regulatory review will play a critical role in shaping the future structure of U.S. rail transportation and intermodal connectivity.

**Source:** Ashe, A. (2026, April 10). *Revised UP-NS merger application will address deficiencies, critics concerns.* Journal of Commerce. <https://www.joc.com/article/revised-up-ns-merger-application-will-address-deficiencies-critics-concerns-6202653>

**NORTH AMERICA MARKET**
**RAIL FREIGHT**


# TRANSATLANTIC SHIPPING DISRUPTIONS DRIVE RATE VOLATILITY AMID ESCALATING SURCHARGES

Market data indicates that while multiple trade lanes are experiencing mixed performance, the most notable shifts are occurring across the Atlantic corridor, where pricing pressure has intensified considerably. According to the latest Freightos Baltic Index update, transatlantic ocean rates surged significantly following the activation of emergency surcharges. This sharp movement reflects broader cost pressures tied to constrained fuel access and operational uncertainty. As noted in the report, "Rising fuel costs have impacted container rates across the market, even for lanes where fuel availability is not yet a factor" (Freightos, 2026). Overall, the global freight market remains in a state of recalibration. Carriers are actively managing capacity, adjusting networks, and implementing surcharges to offset rising operational challenges.

**Source:** Levine, J. (2026, April 16). *Transatlantic ocean rates spike as surcharges take effect – April 14, 2026 Update.* Freightos. <https://www.freightos.com/freight-industry-updates/weekly-freight-updates/transatlantic-ocean-rates-spike-as-surcharges-take-effect-april-14-2026-update/>


**EUROPE MARKET**
**OCEAN FREIGHT**

# EUROPE'S AIRPORT FUEL RESERVES UNDER THREAT AS MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS PERSIST

**M**iddle East supply disruptions are pushing European aviation toward a critical inflection point. The Strait of Hormuz — a conduit for approximately 20% of global oil flow — remains under pressure following failed ceasefire talks, tightening jet fuel inventories across the continent. The Middle East previously accounted for up to 75% of Europe's jet fuel imports, and alternative sources are proving insufficient to bridge the gap. IATA's Director General Willie Walsh warned: "By the end of May we could start to see some cancellations in Europe for lack of jet fuel. This is already happening in parts of Asia" (Goldstone, 2026).

**Source:** Goldstone, C. (2026, April 17). *Jet fuel supply crisis hovering over Europe's airports.* The Loadstar. <https://theloadstar.com/jet-fuel-supply-crisis-hovering-over-europes-airports/>



EUROPE MARKET

AIR FREIGHT

# LUFTHANSA CARGO'S A321 FREIGHTER FLEET GROUNDED AMID COST PRESSURES AND LABOUR UNREST



EUROPE MARKET

AIR FREIGHT

**L**ufthansa Cargo's four Airbus A321 freighters have been temporarily grounded following the immediate shutdown of sister airline Lufthansa CityLine, which operated the aircraft under a wet lease agreement. The decision stems from sharply rising fuel costs since the Iran war began, compounded by ongoing pilot strike action disrupting operations across the Lufthansa Group. Lufthansa Cargo stated: "Our strategic European network is a key component in maintaining global supply chains. We will be working with the Lufthansa Group to find a way to offer this cargo capacity to our customers again as soon as possible" (Brett, 2026).

**Source:** Brett, D. (2026, April 17). *Lufthansa Cargo A321Fs grounded due to CityLine cuts.* Air Cargo News. <https://www.aircargonews.net/airlines/2026/04/lufthansa-cargo-a321fs-grounded-due-to-cityline-cuts/>

# GULF AIR FREIGHT SHOWS SIGNS OF RECOVERY AS REGIONAL NETWORKS SLOWLY REBUILD

**D**espite ongoing Strait of Hormuz uncertainty, air freight activity across the Gulf is gradually recovering. Major express carriers are relaunching European freighter services into Dubai, adding capacity alongside existing Riyadh and Muscat operations. Commercial airspace has reopened in Iraq and Bahrain, improving regional connectivity. However, recovery remains uneven — Gulf airports are collectively operating at roughly half their pre-crisis air freight capacity, with Dubai’s main cargo airport still severely constrained. Industry analysts cautioned that while some Gulf carriers have staged meaningful recoveries, momentum has “stalled over the last couple of weeks.”

**Source:** Todd, S. (2026, April 15). *Air freight activity in the Gulf continues recovery, but pace slows.* The Loadstar. <https://theloadstar.com/air-freight-activity-in-the-gulf-continues-recovery-but-pace-slows/>



# REPOSITIONING SOUTH AFRICA AS A COMPETITIVE BUNKERING HUB AMID SHIFTING TRADE ROUTES



**S**outh Africa’s maritime sector is at a pivotal moment, with growing vessel traffic along its coastline presenting an opportunity to expand its role as a strategic bunkering hub. However, industry insights suggest that operational advancements alone have not yet translated into increased port utilization. Speaking at Exporters Western Cape, shipping expert Brian Ingpen highlighted that while port performance has improved, more deliberate efforts are needed to convert passing traffic into port calls. As he noted, “the crisis of equipment breakdowns and severe congestion at major ports had largely been stabilized through terminal upgrades and the introduction of new equipment, but this had not yet translated into increased vessel calls” (Venter, 2026). With the right policy alignment and strategic focus, South Africa is well positioned to reestablish itself as a key refueling hub along major global shipping routes.

**Source:** Venter, L. (2026, April 23). *Bunkering push needed as ships pass South Africa by.* Southern Africa’s Freight News. <https://www.freightnews.co.za/article/bunkering-push-needed-as-ships-pass-south-africa-by>