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MID-APRIL RATE HIKES LIFT TRANSPACIFIC BOX PRICES TO 5-MONTH HIGH

HONG KONG's EASTBOUND transpacific container trades experienced major hikes April 17, bringing rates to five-month highs after general rate increases were implemented, reported London's S&P Global. This was largely expected by the market in the weeks leading up to April 15, when increases were set to come into force. While carrier nominations called for increases ranging between US\$600/FEU and \$3,000/FEU, with the bulk of mainline carriers at the \$1,000/FEU level, few if any expected full-measure increases to come into effect. S&P Global Commodity Insights has seen increases averaging between \$400/FEU and \$600/FEU for most carriers and NVOCC spot offers on a port-to-port basis. Platts Container Rate 13, North Asia to West Coast North America, jumped 32 per cent April 17, to be assessed at \$1,650/FEU, S&P Global data showed. This is the highest value seen on this lane since October 31. Still, the rate is off nearly 80 per cent year on year after rate declines gathered pace in the second half of 2022.

(Source: Shipping Gazette)

DROUGHT PROMPTS PANAMA CANAL TO LOWER DRAFTS TO 47.5 FEET

THE Panama Canal Authority (ACP) has lowered the maximum draft of vessels transiting the expanded Panama Canal's neopanamax locks due to an ongoing drought, reports Ventura, California's Captain. The level of Gatun Lake has been falling faster than expected, putting pressure on the critical shipping route, the ACP said. In response, it has updated maximum drafts for the neopanamax locks in Advisories to Shipping A-14-2023 and A-16-2023. The first 11 days of April saw precipitation levels in the Canal watershed plummet to 70 per cent below the historical average, with the water supplied by rivers to the watershed falling 80 per cent below average. Effective April 19, 2023, the maximum authorised draft for vessels transiting the neopanamax locks has been set at 14.48 metres (47.5 feet) Tropical Fresh Water (TFW). Further reductions will take effect on April 27, May 5, and May 12, bringing the maximum authorised draft to 14.02 metres (46 feet) TFW.

(Source: Shipping Gazette)

GLOBAL PORTS' VOLUMES NEARLY HALVE IN FIRST QUARTER 2023

GLOBAL ports have reported a decrease in its consolidated marine container throughput during the first quarter of 2023, with a total of 186,000 TEU, which represents a 48.8 per cent drop compared to the same period in the previous year, reports London's Port Technology. The decrease is attributed to the high base effect of the first two months of 2022. But the figure also showed a four per cent increase compared to the previous quarter, indicating a gradual recovery in the container supply chain. The Russian container market also suffered a significant decline of 16 per cent compared to Q1 2022, with total marine container throughput of Russian ports amounting to 1.09 million TEU compared to 1.3 million TEU in the first quarter of the previous year. Nonetheless, the market increased 8.4 per cent compared to the previous quarter, as direct vessel calls at Baltic ports continued to increase, and there was a strong demand in both Far Eastern and south basins.

(Source: Shipping Gazette)

CREWLESS CONTAINERSHIPS ON HORIZON IN YEARS TO COME

BEFORE long, the 120-TEU Yara Birkland will be sailing crew-free, reports BBC News. The plan is to gradually reduce the number of crew members on board from five to two by the end of the year. If everything goes smoothly, the ship's bridge will be removed in two years, resulting in a fully autonomous vessel with no crew on board. For now, the ship is being captained by Svend Odegard and measures 80 metres in length. "We are taking big steps towards autonomy. There's a lot of installed technology there that is not on existing ships," said Mr Odegard. "We have situational awareness - cameras on the side, front, and stern of the ship. It can decide whether to change its path because something is in the way." The duties of the captain will be transferred to a remote operation centre located 80 kilo metres away, where multiple ships could be monitored simultaneously.

(Source: Shipping Gazette)

CHINA CONTAINERIZED FREIGHT INDEX

ROUTE	LAST PERIOD 2023/4/14	THIS PERIOD 2023/4/21
CCFI	942.14	934.39
(JAPAN SERVICE)	860.35	880.88
(EUROPE SERVICE)	1177.7	1160.94
(W/C AMERICA SERVICE)	708.93	676.48
(E/C AMERICA SERVICE)	931.72	867.65
(KOREA SERVICE)	642.67	600.76
(SOUTHEAST ASIA SERVICE)	666.7	653.62
(MEDITERRANEAN SERVICE)	1661.47	1659.32
(AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND SERVICE)	727.74	661.47
(SOUTH AFRICA SERVICE)	882.33	834.36
(SOUTH AMERICA SERVICE)	618.38	655.69
(WEST EAST AFRICA SERVICE)	558.07	557.41
(PERSIAN GULF/RED SEA SERVICE)	996.18	1135.86

STEADY CONTAINER EXPORT GROWTH ENJOYED BY PORT HOUSTON

PORT Houston's eight public terminals have seen a steady level of activity through March, with a year-to-date increase of four per cent in total tonnage, reaching 12,850,330 short tons, reports the American Journal of Transportation. While imports across the nation have weakened, Port Houston has continued to witness significant demand for loaded export containers. Port Houston recorded a year-to-date increase of 26 per cent in loaded export volumes, reaching 349,964 TEU in the first quarter of 2023 compared to last year, and up 10 per cent compared to March 2022, making it the highest monthly volume for loaded exports in Port Houston's history. Moreover, the month of March saw a growth of 111 per cent in empty import volumes compared to the same month in the previous year, as carriers relocate containers to Houston to cater to the high demand for resin and petrochemical exports.

(Source: Shipping Gazette)

GLOBAL AIR CARGO DEMAND STABILISES WITH RATES HOLDING FIRM

PRELIMINARY WorldACD figures for March indicate air cargo demand and pricing may be stabilising, with rates holding firm and year-on-year tonnages down just eight per cent, reports Bahrain's TradeArabia. This compares with a 13 per cent decline for Q4 2022 and a drop of 11 per cent expected for Q1 2023 as a whole. Despite a market softening in the last 12 months, early 2023 worldwide revenues remain the third-highest in the last 15 years, and rates are around 50 per cent above pre-Covid levels, WorldACD analysis reveals. Preliminary figures for March indicate that global air cargo demand and pricing may start to stabilise, with average rates holding firm at around 50 per cent above pre-Covid levels and year-on-year tonnages down eight per cent in March - compared with double-digit percentage declines in the final quarter of 2022 and in early 2023, according to WorldACD Market Data.

(Source: Shipping Gazette)

PORT OF LOS ANGELES SUFFERS WEAK QUARTER AS BOX VOLUME FALLS 32PC

THE Port of Los Angeles reported handling 623,234 TEU in March, ending a weak first quarter, reported Ventura, California's Captain. "We are beginning to see some signs of improvement, including nine consecutive months of inflation declines," said Port of Los Angeles executive director Gene Seroka. In the first three months, the port handled 1,837,094 TEU, down 32 per cent year on year as the Covid import surge continued in the first half of last year. First quarter volumes came in 19 per cent below the five-year average of 2.2 million TEU - a trend that M.r Seroka said "needs to be reversed". March 2023 loaded imports reached 319,962 TEU, down 35 per cent compared to the previous year. Loaded exports came in at 98,276 TEU, a decline of 12 per cent compared to last year. Empty containers landed at 204,996 TEU, a 42 per cent year-on-year decline as demand from Asia subsided. On a positive note, March saw a 28 per cent increase in volume compared to February.

(Source: Shipping Gazette)

HIKE IN AIR FREIGHT RATES COMING ON THE TRANSPACIFIC IN MARCH

TRANSPACIFIC air freight rates picked up in March, although there were further declines from Hong Kong to Europe and across the Atlantic, according to London's Air Cargo News. The latest statistics from the Baltic Exchange Airfreight Index (BAI) show that prices from Hong Kong to North America in March increased by nine per cent compared with February to US\$5.38 per kilo. Prices from China to the US were also up, increasing by 7.8 per cent in March compared with February. "Sources cited an 'end-of-quarter rush' particularly in ecommerce and garments ahead of Easter - though [they are] also expecting prices to soften again," stated data provider TAC Index in its weekly market round-up. Forwarder Flexport, meanwhile, reported that airlines have begun retiring freighters and some charters have been cancelled, leading to capacity being nearly on par with pre-Covid numbers.

(Source: Shipping Gazette)

CHINA PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

China offices will be closed from April 29th, 2023 for Labour Day, and resume work on May 4th, 2023.

(Qingdao, Shanghai, Ningbo, Xiamen, Shenzhen)

Hong Kong will be closed on May 1st, 2023 for Labour Day, and resume work from May 2nd, 2023