TRADE NEWS WEEKLY

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A summary of international business news prepared by the Hawaii Foreign-Trade Zone 9 with the collaboration of the Research and Economic Analysis Division of the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, and based on research and information from various trade publications, which track news and events related to global trade. Other information sources may occasionally be included when appropriate.

Matson Profit Surges 30% on China Shipping Demand

Matson reported second-quarter earnings that significantly exceeded Wall Street expectations, driven by robust demand and higher freight rates in its premium China service. The Honolulu-based carrier posted net income of $129.4 million, or $4.27 per diluted share, up 36.6% and 46.2% respectively from a year earlier, while raising its full-year operating income outlook. Revenue totaled $969.4 million, up 16.7% from $830.5 million in the same quarter last year, with EPS beating consensus by roughly 45 to 55 cents and revenue topping expectations by about $75 million.
Matson's China service saw container volume surge 15.2% year-over-year to 37,200 forty-foot equivalent units, fueled by tighter trans-Pacific capacity as international carriers managed tonnage without triggering large backlogs or blank sailings. Cargo originating from Southeast Asia now makes up 20% to 25% of China service volume, reflecting the carrier's expansion beyond traditional China-origin shipments. Ocean transportation segment operating income jumped 46% to $144 million, and the company raised its full-year 2026 outlook, projecting consolidated operating income above 2025's $499.8 million total.

Matson's results show a premium trans-Pacific carrier capturing outsized pricing power from tight capacity, a signal that ocean rates on the China lane still have room to run into peak season.
Source: FreightWaves

White House Extends Jones Act Waiver in Longest Suspension in Law's History

On Monday, August 10, 2026, President Donald Trump has extended for 90 days a waiver allowing foreign-flagged ships to transport oil and other commodities between U.S. ports, but imposed new limits after shipbuilders and their allies in Congress argued the policy was undermining the domestic maritime industry, the White House said.

The extension comes as the war with Iran disrupts global crude flows and pushes up fuel costs, increasing pressure on the administration to find ways to ease transportation bottlenecks and keep gasoline and other energy prices from rising further.

The 90-day extension ensures the U.S. military and key industries maintain uninterrupted access to critical resources, White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers said on Monday.

"Data shows the waiver has driven a significant increase in domestic deliveries of essential products such as gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel," Rogers said in a post on the social media platform X.

Under the new terms, the administration has narrowed the scope of the relief, requiring individual voyages to undergo case-by-case review rather than allowing foreign ships to receive blanket exemptions from the Jones Act, a White House official confirmed.

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The Jones Act requires cargo moving between U.S. ports to be carried on ships built in the U.S., owned by U.S. companies and crewed by American workers, and the waiver aims to lower gas prices by increasing shipping flexibility and reducing transport bottlenecks.

The waiver was set to expire on August 16, 2026, without the extension. It is the longest suspension of the more than a century-old law in its history.
Source: Reuters

U.S. LCL Imports Rebound

U.S. seaborne imports have rebounded in 2026, with a notable rise in less-than-containerload (LCL) cargo driven in part by e-commerce drop-shipping activity. The average number of shipments per forty-foot equivalent unit (FEU) containers for shipments from mainland China and Hong Kong reached 2.10 per FEU in July 2026, up from the long-term average of 0.93 per FEU but still below the 5.34 per FEU reached in April 2025 before de minimis duty rules were introduced. However, a return to drop shipping may not be widespread as one firm, August Amber HK Ltd. that is potentially associated with Temu-related shipments, accounted for 26.4% of U.S. seaborne import shipments in 2026 through the end of July, while representing only 0.1% of containers.
Source: S&P Global Market Intelligence

CBP Reports More Than $1 Billion in Duties Owed Under EAPA

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) recently announced that it has uncovered more than $1 billion in additional duties owed under the Enforce and Protect Act (EAPA), which aims to prevent importers from evading antidumping and countervailing duties on imported goods. Though CBP did not specify the associated time frame, it appears to be within the last year, as an agency press release said the $1 billion figure is "a first in the program's 10-year history" and "300% above the program's annual average."

Under CBP regulations implementing the EAPA, any interested party, including competing importers and federal government agencies, may submit allegations that AD/CVD duties are being evaded; e.g., by misrepresenting the goods' true country of origin, submitting false or incorrect shipping and entry documentation, or misreporting the goods' physical characteristics. CBP has broad authority to investigate these claims and can impose initial remedial measures that can interrupt a supply chain in as little as 90 days. Any final determination of evasion may be met with not only AD/CVD duties but also other enforcement measures such as civil or criminal investigations.

CBP said that so far this year it has issued 14 notices of determination involving a variety of products, including solar cells, tow-behind lawn groomers, lumber, pipes, xanthan gum, metal lockers, and wooden furniture, imported from countries across the globe. CBP investigators have traveled to Mexico, Thailand, India, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom to inspect production facilities and verify that importers are importing from legitimate businesses.
Source: Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A.

Companies Get Warning, Not Penalties, for False "Made in USA" Claims

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recently issued warning letters to seven companies that it said appear to have misrepresented certain products as "Made in USA" despite indications that the products were imported in whole or in significant part.

FTC rules prohibit marketers from labeling products as "Made in USA" unless (1) the final assembly or processing, and all significant processing that goes into the products, occur in the U.S. and (2) all or virtually all ingredients or components of the products are made and sourced in the U.S. The rule also requires all "Made in USA" labels appearing in mail order catalogs to be truthful and non-misleading.

In March 2026 President Trump issued an executive order (EO) directing the FTC to prioritize enforcement of this rule, and a month later the FTC announced three related penalty actions. The FTC did not indicate why it issued warning letters instead of penalties in the most recent case.

The EO also directed other actions regarding "Made in USA" claims that do not appear to have been taken yet, including (1) the FTC proposing regulations providing that the failure of an online marketplace to establish procedures for verifying country-of-origin claims may constitute an unfair or deceptive act or practice under the FTC Act, (2) all other agencies with country-of-origin labeling oversight considering new regulations and consistent guidance promoting voluntary country-of-origin labeling for products made or manufactured in the U.S., and (3) federal agencies overseeing government-wide acquisition contracts and schedules periodically reviewing and verifying U.S.-origin claims for products sold to the federal government and referring violators to the Department of Justice for False Claims Act actions.
Source: Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A.

Port of Long Beach, MARAD Launch First U.S. Partnership on Nuclear-Powered Shipping

The Port of Long Beach has become the first U.S. seaport to formalize a partnership with the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) aimed at advancing small modular reactor (SMR) technology for commercial maritime applications, marking another step in the Trump administration's push to revive nuclear-powered shipping.

The nonbinding Memorandum of Cooperation establishes a framework for the Port and MARAD to work together on the development of nuclear technology for commercial vessels, port operations, and other maritime assets.

The agreement follows MARAD's May 2026, request for industry input on designing a U.S.-built, commercially viable small modular reactor for the nation's marine transportation system. It also comes as interest in nuclear propulsion has grown across the shipping industry, driven by the need to decarbonize long-distance shipping while improving energy security and operational endurance.

Maritime Administrator Stephen Carmel said the partnership aligns with the administration's broader efforts to rebuild U.S. shipbuilding capacity while expanding the nation's energy capabilities.

The agreement represents the latest federal effort to explore nuclear propulsion for commercial shipping. Recent industry studies have concluded that advanced small modular reactors could eliminate carbon emissions from oceangoing vessels while allowing ships to operate for decades without refueling, although significant regulatory, public acceptance, and infrastructure hurdles remain before commercial deployment becomes a reality.
Source: gCaptain

China Launches First Scheduled Weekly Arctic Container Service to Europe

China's Sealegend Shipping plans to launch the first scheduled weekly container shipping service between China and Europe via the Northern Sea Route (NSR) this summer, marking a significant step toward regular commercial container operations across the Arctic following last year's record-setting transit.

The company plans eight sailings between August 12 and October 27, 2026, using a fleet of seven small - medium-sized container ships, according to a published sailing schedule and company promotional material. The service follows the success of last year's pioneering voyage by the Istanbul Bridge, which completed the journey from Ningbo to Felixstowe in about 20 days, setting what the company described as a record transit time for the route.

Unlike previous Arctic container voyages, which have largely been one-off demonstrations or chartered shipments, Sealegend's 2026 operation is designed as a scheduled liner-style service with departures every week during the Arctic navigation season.

The sailing program begins with the 1,740-TEU Dubai Tower, departing China on August 12, 2026, and arriving in Felixstowe on September 5, 2026. It will be followed by the 2,872-TEU Riyadh Mukaab, the 1,829-TEU Athens Odeon, the 4,890-TEU Istanbul Bridge, and the 1,528-TEU vessels Tiger Maanshan, Tiger Bintulu and Tiger Lianyungang. The Dubai Tower is scheduled to make a second Arctic voyage later in the season, concluding operations with an October 27, 2026, arrival in Britain.

Cargo will be consolidated through Ningbo-Zhoushan Port after feeder services from Dalian, Qingdao, Shanghai, Taicang, Fuzhou and Nansha. European destinations include Felixstowe in Britain, Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Wilhelmshaven in Germany and Gdynia in Poland.

Sealegend also says the Arctic route produces roughly 50% lower carbon dioxide emissions than conventional southern routes because of the significantly shorter sailing distance between Asia and northern Europe. The company says the service will accommodate standard containers, refrigerated cargo, oversized freight and hazardous battery materials.

The launch comes as China steadily expands its commercial and strategic interests in the Arctic under its “Polar Silk Road” initiative. While Chinese research vessels and icebreakers have become increasingly active in Arctic waters in recent years, container shipping through the NSR has remained limited because of seasonal ice conditions, high insurance costs, uncertain icebreaker availability and a short navigation window.

The scheduled service represents an important milestone for Arctic shipping.

Its summer 2026 operation may prove an effective test whether seasonal scheduled container services can become commercially viable as shipping companies seek alternatives to increasingly geopolitically vulnerable southern trade routes.
Source: gCaptain

FedEx Moves Closer to Deploying Robots That Can Load Trailers

FedEx Corp. announced it is scaling up use of a specialized robot for loading truck trailers at its Hagerstown, Maryland, hub after validating the technology from startup Dexterity Inc. over several years — one of several automated-loading breakthroughs to land the same day. The expanded deployment lets FedEx continue evaluating Dexterity’s AI-enabled trailer-loading system at a larger operational scale in a high-volume logistics environment, with the same technology also running at a facility in Tracy, California.

Loading and unloading trailers is one of the most physically demanding tasks in FedEx’s package operations and automating it has been difficult given the variability of package sizes, weights and loading conditions across thousands of trailers systemwide. Dexterity’s dual-armed “Mech” robot is guided by an AI model called Foresight that combines vision, depth and touch to reason across three spatial dimensions and time, optimizing how packages are placed for space, stability and speed. “We’re not looking for humanoid robots. We're looking for super humanoid robots because maybe they need to have a couple of elbows,” CEO Raj Subramaniam said in a January 2026 interview, calling the technology “not ready for prime time yet.”

The same day, Pickle Robot Company and Ambi Robotics said they’ve integrated their systems into an end-to-end trailer-to-warehouse automation pipeline, pairing Pickle’s trailer-unloading robots with Ambi’s AmbiStack stacking solution to scan and stack packages without requiring facility redesigns. FedEx separately continues piloting Berkshire Grey's Scoop autonomous unloader, first announced in February 2026, with plans for it to run in a live environment this year — part of a broader FedEx-Berkshire Grey relationship dating to 2021’s robotic package sortation rollout.

Automating the process of loading and unloading trailers could unlock huge savings for trucking companies and reduce heavy lifting for employees.
Source: FreightWaves