



Date: 2 February 2025

Key Notes

- An average of **~11 548 TEUs** was handled per day, with **~12 123 TEUs** projected for next week.
 - Rail cargo handled out of Durban was reported at **2 757** containers, up **↑12%** from last week.
 - SARS December trade stats – exports: **↓11,2%** (m/m); imports **↓1,1%**; YTD trade surplus: **R196,1 billion**.
- i. Port operations - General**
- In our container terminals, an increased average of **11 548 TEUs** was handled per day, up from **10 368 TEUs** last week.
 - For the coming week, an increased average of **~12 123 TEUs (↑5%)** is predicted to be handled.
 - Adverse weather conditions, high swells, and equipment breakdowns and shortages characterised port operations.
 - The Port of Cape Town conceded around 50 operational hours this week due to strong winds, dense fog, and equipment breakdowns, while the main operational constraints in Durban proved to be adverse weather and continuous equipment breakdowns.
 - Operations at our Eastern Cape Ports were mainly impacted by unfavourable weather and marine equipment breakdowns, while minimal delays were reported at the Port of Richards Bay.
 - This week, the Maersk Vilnius 502N announced that it will cut and run from the Port of Cape Town as she is required to proceed to dry dock in Shanghai with a strict deadline, which has moved forward recently.
 - Due to adverse weather conditions, the Kalahari Express had to seek shelter in Europe for safety reasons. As a result, she will be delayed in South Africa.
 - Additionally, the latest reports suggest a recent derailment occurred on the ConCor line.
 - Two lines were seemingly affected, with one line already back in service and the second line to be recommissioned before the weekend.
- ii. Port operations – Performance metrics**
- CTCT for **GP containers was recorded at 31%, reefers at 57%, and empties at 44%**.
 - Additionally, the terminal operated with **seven STS cranes, 19 RTGs, and 58 hauliers**.
 - The latest reports suggest that Crane LC1 is expected back in service over the weekend, while LC3 is also out of commission with no ETR available yet.
 - Towards the end of the week, the terminal operated with four straddle carriers.
 - This week, the Maersk Vilnius 502N announced that it will cut and run from the Port of Cape Town as she is required to proceed to dry dock in Shanghai with a strict deadline.
 - CTCT handled a relatively high average of **~1 902 TEUs (↑5%, w/w)** containers a day. An increased average of **~2 059 (↑8%)** is projected this week.
 - DCT Pier 1: Stack occupancy was **55% for GP containers**.
 - The terminal operated with **four STS cranes and ten RTGs** towards the end of the week.
 - DCT Pier 1 handled **~2 007 TEUs (↑12%, w/w)** containers a day, with a decreased average of **~1 859 TEUs (↓7%)** projected this week. Consistency has been good at Pier 1 this year.
 - The **average TTT** for the week was **~105 minutes (↑19%, w/w)** and an average **staging time of ~79 minutes (↑88%)**.
 - DCT Pier 2: Stack occupancy was at **47% for GP containers**.



- The terminal operated with **11 gangs**.
- The number of available straddle carriers fluctuated between **44** and **51** out of a fleet complement of **88** this week.
 - Thus, the availability figure sat roughly at **54%** during this period.
- The most notable crane absentees towards the end of the week were Cranes 520, 522, 531 and 532.
- Crane 522 went out of commission again due to gantry faults but is anticipated to return to operations before the weekend.
- Similarly, Crane 532 is expected back before the weekend, while no ETR is available on Cranes 520 or 531
- DCT Pier 2 handled another relatively high average of **~4 304 TEUs** (↓5%, w/w) containers a day, with an increased average of **~5 044 TEUs** (↑17%) projected this week.
 - For the last week, there was an **average TTT** of **~71 minutes** (↓11%, w/w) and a staging time of **~54 minutes** (↓25%).
- South Africa's other container terminals produced the following results for the week:
 - Ngqura Container Terminal handled a high average of **~1 926 TEUs** (↑39%, w/w) containers a day, with another high average of **~2 151 TEUs** (↑12%) projected this week.
 - Port Elizabeth Container Terminal handled an average of **~267 TEUs** (↓15%, w/w) containers a day, with a decreased average of **~178 TEUs** (↓33%) projected this week.
 - Other terminals handled a combined average of **~1 143 TEUs** (↑102%, w/w), with a slightly decreased average of **~832 TEUs** (↓23%) projected this week.
- At RBCT, the daily average for the week increased significantly for the third week in a row and was around **195 000 tons** (↓11%, w/w).
 - An average of **19 trains** (unchanged from last week) were serviced on the landside, slightly below the target of 22.
- In the last week (27 January to 2 February), rail cargo handled out of Durban was reported at **2 757** containers, down by **↑12%** from the previous week's **2 467** containers.

iii. SARS Merchandise Trade Stats: December & Full Year 2024

- The SARS released its latest "*Merchandise Trade Statistics*" for December¹, showing a preliminary monthly trade surplus of **R15,5 billion**.
- Monthly trade indicates that exports decreased by **↓11,2%** from November (m/m) to **R160 billion**, while imports decreased by **↓1,1%** (m/m) to **R144,6 billion**.
- The YTD figures reveal a trade surplus of **R196,1 billion**, substantially improving from the **R130,0 billion** surplus recorded in 2023.
- Annually, export flows for December 2024 were **↓3,3%** (y/y) lower than in December 2023, while import flows were also lower by **↓1,3%**.

iv. Lebombo update

As of the week spanning January 27 to February 2, 2025, very few reported disruptions or blockages affecting operations and cargo flows at the Lebombo Border Post and along the N4 Corridor between South Africa and Mozambique. The following notes summarise the recent developments:

- Truck volumes are close to normal at **1 425 HGVs per day**, with no substantial queue and an average border time of around **2,5 hours** per crossing for the week.

¹ SARS. 31/01/2025. [Trade Statistics: December 2024](#).



- Rail to Maputo has increased to **seven trains a day** on average in the last week
- Sugar trains from Eswatini have also increased to around **two trains a day**
- There was, however, a derailment from KM7 in Mozambique that disrupted the flow for three days.

v. Local and cross-border road:

- The median border crossing times at South African borders increased by over **three hours**, averaging **~10,7 hrs (↑44%, w/w)** for the week.
- In contrast, the greater SADC region (excluding South African controlled) also increased – by around **two hours**, averaging **~5,8 hrs (↑44%, w/w)**.

1. Flood disruptions and border closures:

- Groblersbrug border closed on 14 January due to flooding.
- Operations have been restored; however, pre-dated documents were accepted at Northwest Botswana borders during closure, but new declarations must now match the correct port.

2. Oshoek border incident (South Africa - Eswatini):

- After a truck with brake failure crashed into the border last week, there was extensive damage to buildings and vehicles.
- Three people were injured, but fortunately, there were no fatalities.
- Operations were temporarily suspended for assessment but resumed late Monday afternoon.

3. Botswana lifts grain import ban:

- The ban on grain imports was lifted after it was confirmed that GOSS'S Wilt of Maize is spread by maize, not grain.
- Import permits issued before 16 January remain cancelled.
- Future maize seed imports will be subject to revised conditions.
- Results of the BUD ROT investigation are still pending.

4. Efficiency Improvements at Nacala Port:

- New dual-directional drive-through portal scanners installed.
- Scanning time reduced to eight seconds per truck.
- Maximum permitted speed through scanners: 15 km/h.
- Expected to enhance efficiency and reduce delays.

5. Deteriorating road conditions (Zimbabwe):

- Ngundu-Masvingo road condition worsening despite Road User Charge.
- Many drivers divert to an alternative route, adding 97 km to their trips.

6. Lithium export tax hike (Zimbabwe):

- Export tax increased from 1% to 2% as of 1 January 2025.
- No official statutory instrument has yet been issued to formalise the change.
- ZIMRA officers enforcing the tax and withholding trucks until payment is made.
- Situation under ongoing monitoring.

- In summary, cross-border queue time averaged **~6,2 hours** (up by **~0,7 hours** from the previous week's **~5,5 hours**), indirectly costing the transport industry an estimated **\$5,7 million (R103 million)**. Furthermore, the week's average cross-border transit times hovered around **~6,3 hours** (up by **~0,9 hours** from the **~5,4 hours** recorded in the previous report), at an indirect cost to the transport industry of **\$3,9 million (R71 million)**. As a result, the total indirect cost for the week amounts to an estimated **~\$9,5 million (R174 million)**, up by **~R29 million** or **↑20%** from **~R145 million** in the previous report.

**vi. Global shipping industry**

- The United States is set to implement **25% tariffs** on imports from Canada and Mexico and an additional **10%** on imports from China, effective February 4, 2025.²
 - These measures are anticipated to exacerbate the existing container trade imbalance, as US imports have consistently outpaced exports, with a **2,4:1 ratio** in 2024 compared to a **1,8:1 ratio** in 2017.
 - China remains the predominant source of US imports, accounting for **41%** of total containerised imports in 2024, despite the imposition of previous tariffs.
 - In light of the proposed US tariffs, shippers are advised to adopt a strategic and flexible approach to navigate volatility, considering options such as product adjustments, supply chain rebalancing, and exploring untapped markets.
- According to *Sea-Intelligence's* Global Liner Performance (GLP) report, global schedule reliability remained relatively stable throughout 2024, fluctuating within the **50%-55% range**.³
 - In December 2024, reliability decreased by **↓0,9%** (m/m) to **53,8%**, marking a **↓3,0%** decline compared to December 2023.
- The average delay for late vessel arrivals improved, decreasing by **0,23 days** to **5,28 days**—the lowest since July 2024.
- Among the top 13 carriers, Maersk achieved the highest schedule reliability at **60,4%**, while Wan Hai recorded the lowest at **47,9%**.
- Port congestion slightly eased this week, as some **2,83 million TEU** (around **9% of the global fleet**) is stuck in the system – down from **3,3 million** last week.
 - The Lunar New Year holidays (notwithstanding the tariff threats) have had their effect. Congestion was concentrated in China, with some severe weather on the US Atlantic coast and the English Channel, further impacting the flow.⁴
 - However, the excess container capacity is likely to curtail any further worsening.
- Global container spot rates have decreased again this week, as rates dropped by **↓2,4%** this week to **\$3 364 per 40-ft container**⁵, according to Drewry's "*World Container Index*".
 - Spot rates are **↓12%** less than this time last year (but still **↑137%** above the average pre-pandemic level of **\$1 420** in 2019).
- Despite the global decline in container spot rates, rates on the Shanghai-Durban route remain elevated at **\$6 810/40-ft** according to the SCFI due to limited capacity from blank sailings and carriers prioritising European destinations, keeping Asian export rates at a premium.
- Meanwhile, charter rates have remained stable (but still elevated), as the *Harper Petersen Index* (Harpex) traded around **2 057 points** (**↑94%**, y/y) on Friday.

² Linerlytica. 03/02/2025. [Market Pulse 2025 Week 05](#).

³ Murphy, A. 28/01/2025. [2024 schedule reliability largely within 50%-55%](#).

⁴ Koo, A. 28/01/2025. [Chinese New Year rush and threat of tariffs leaves box ports congested](#).

⁵ Drewry. 30/01/2025. [World Container Index](#).



vii. South African air industry

- The daily average of air cargo handled at ORTIA in the previous week amounted to **532 309 kg** inbound (**↑14%**, w/w) and **363 612 kg** outbound (**↑14%**), another significant increase on this year's initial slow start.
- Consequently, the levels have surpassed last year's January volumes (**↑33%**, y/y) and below pre-pandemic January 2020 (**↑40%**).

Per airport, consolidated figures for December show the following movements:

- Johannesburg cargo decreased monthly by **↓13%** (m/m) and annually by **↓5%** (y/y).
- Cape Town cargo decreased monthly by **↓20%** (m/m) and annually by **↓2%** (y/y).
- Durban cargo increased monthly by **↑10%** (m/m) and increased annually by **↑76%** (y/y).
- Total international cargo decreased monthly by **↓15%** (m/m) and annually by **↓3%** (y/y).
- Lastly, year-to-date cargo shows that the industry increased by **↑11%** in 2024.

Consolidated domestic air freight volumes for our three primary airports are collectively up versus last month (**↑11%**, m/m) and similarly up versus the previous year (**↑8%**, y/y). Per airport, the following movements have been observed for December:

- Johannesburg cargo increased by **↑11%** (m/m) and increased annually by **↑16%** (y/y).
- Cape Town cargo increased monthly by **↑9%** (m/m) but decreased annually by **↓3%** (y/y).
- Durban cargo increased monthly by **↑14%** (m/m) and annually by **↑10%** (y/y).
- Lastly, year-to-date cargo shows that the industry decreased by **↓15%** in 2024.

viii. International air industry

- IATA released their latest "*Air Cargo Market Analysis*" for December, indicating that global cargo tonne-kilometres (CTK) grew by **↑6,1%** (y/y), marking the 17th consecutive month of growth.
- The full year saw CTks surpass 2023 levels by **↑11,3%** (y/y), setting a new record by exceeding 2021's volumes.
 - Moreover, the growth was consistent across the world, as all regions and trade lanes saw growth averaging over **↑5%** for the full 2024.
 - Despite the significant yearly increases, December volume was only up by **↑0,9%** (m/m).
- Capacity increased by **↑3,7%** (y/y) globally, as YTD increased by **↑7,4%**. The average cargo load factor (CLF) for the year ended **45,9%**.
- Concerning cargo carrier type, the full-year 2024 breakdown shows passenger belly capacity at **54,8%**, with freighters at **45,2%**, compared to **52,5%** and **47,5%**, respectively, in 2023, noting the growth of the passenger market.
- Jet fuel – the largest aviation cost component – dropped in annual terms for the sixth consecutive month and is down by **↓14,9%** (y/y).
- In the high-frequency metrics, World ACD reports that global air cargo rates rose by **↑4%** in the final week before the Lunar New Year to **\$2,52 per kilogram**, marking an **↑11%** year-on-year increase.
- Elsewhere, the UK government has officially backed the long-debated plans for a third runway at Heathrow Airport and the Lower Thames Crossing, with supply chain leaders expressing strong support for these infrastructure projects.⁶

⁶ Whiteman, A. 29/01/2025. [Logistics cheers as third runway for Heathrow gets green light at last.](#)