

Trans-Atlantic ocean trade readies for end to 90-day pause on US tariffs



Spot rates from North Europe to the East Coast of North America have remained at \$1,700 per FEU since May 16, according to Platts. Photo credit: Mariusz Bugno / Shutterstock.com.

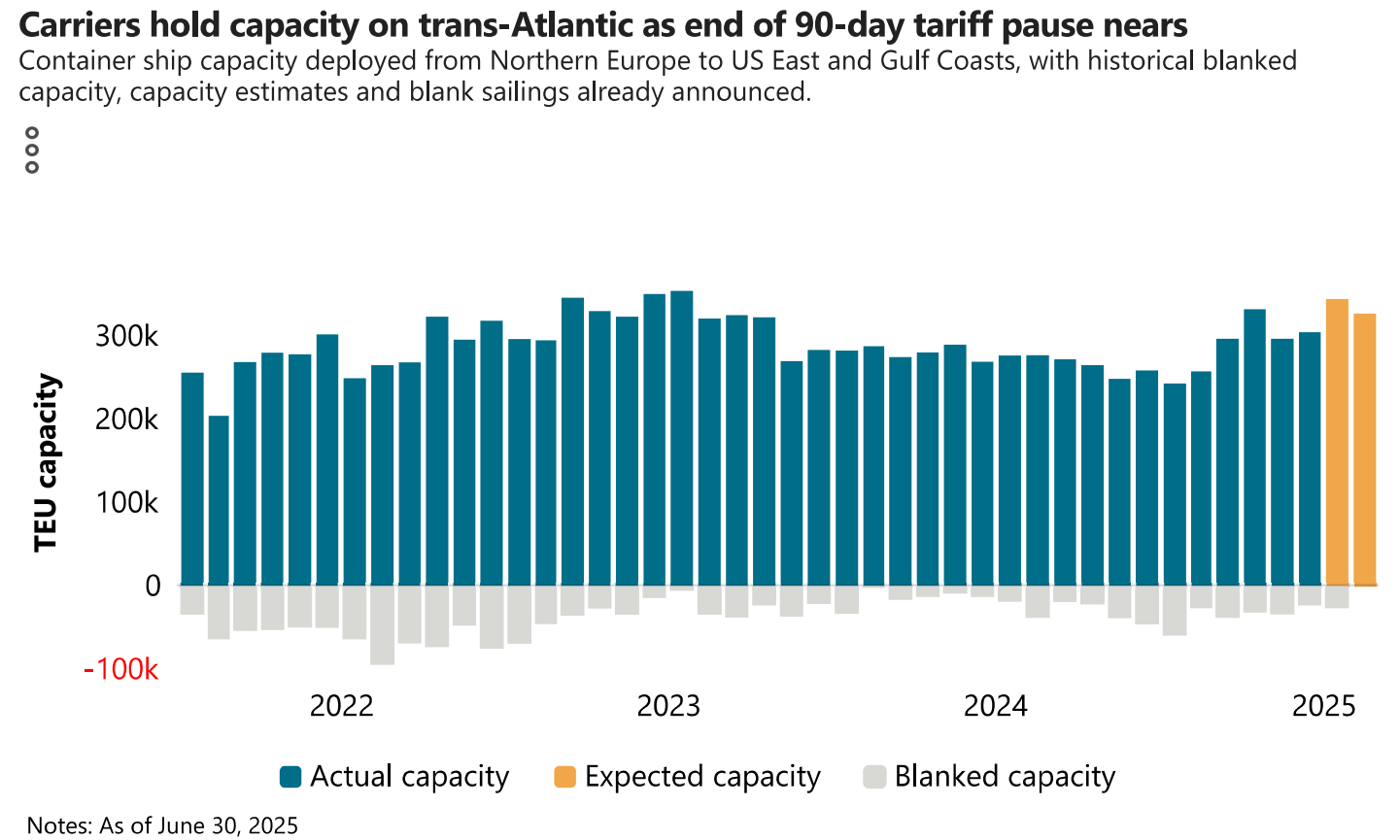
Greg Knowler, Senior Editor Europe | Jul 1, 2025, 11:00 AM EDT

Ocean carriers are keeping trans-Atlantic capacity at high levels ahead of next week's expiration of President Donald Trump's 90-day pause on so-called "reciprocal" tariffs. Easing freight rates and demand, meanwhile, suggest a "wait-and-see" approach by US importers.

The pause ends on July 9 as trade negotiations continue between the US and the European Union. Market expectations are for the 10% across-the-board tariffs on all US trading partners to be applied to the EU and be accompanied by some level of tariffs on automobiles, steel and aluminum. Trump has also suggested he could extend the pause on reciprocal tariffs while talks continue.

With no certainty over the outcome of the trade talks, carriers are keeping capacity available to handle any increase in shipments once there is greater clarity around tariff levels.

Data from ocean visibility provider eeSea shows that carriers will deploy 344,811 TEUs of capacity in July on the westbound trans-Atlantic, the highest in the past 12 months, then easing slightly to 327,226 TEUs in August. Just 24,840 TEUs will be blanked in July, while no blank sailings have yet been announced for August.



Source: eeSea

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Meanwhile, Peter Sand, chief analyst at rate benchmarking platform Xeneta, said the decline in short-term rates slowed in May and June after they fell 21.6% in the first quarter. The North Europe-North America rate is now down 37% compared with the beginning of the year, at \$1,206 per FEU, according to Xeneta.

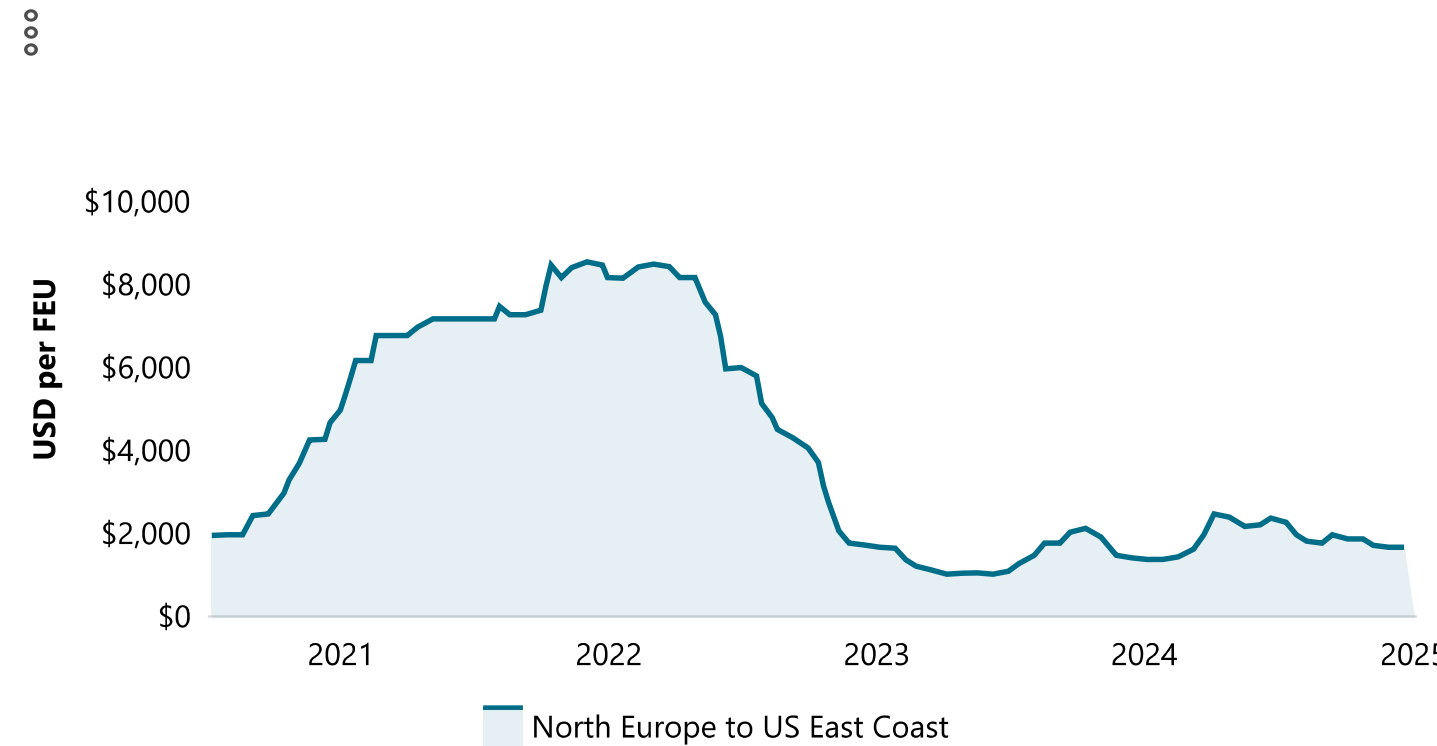
“It comes on the back of falling demand in January to April, down from last year by 0.5%, with deployed capacity on this trade growing from 75,000 TEUs per week in mid-February to 89,000 TEUs per week now,” Sand told the *Journal of Commerce*.

“Looking into the early days of July, we anticipate a slide in rates to the extent of \$40 to \$50 per FEU,” he added. “At the same time, carriers have announced that capacity could increase to as much as 95,000 to 97,000 TEUs/week in July and August.”

The spot market assessed by Platts, a sister company of the *Journal of Commerce* within S&P Global, show that rates from North Europe to the East Coast of North America have remained at \$1,700 per FEU since May 16.

Trans-Atlantic spot rates flatten out through June

Platts container rate North Europe to US East Coast USD per FEU



Source: Platts, S&P Global

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Casper Ellerbaek, global head of ocean freight at DHL Global Forwarding, said “some degree” of frontloading could be seen on westbound trans-Atlantic routes in some

sectors, but noted that with the uncertainty surrounding the trade lane, it was hardly conclusive.

“This does not warrant drawing any conclusions or making assessments about the general development of demand,” Ellerbaek told the *Journal of Commerce*.

Imports from North Europe to the US came in at 196,580 TEUs in May, down from the peak so far this year of 212,730 TEUs in March, according to PIERS, also part of S&P Global.

US imports from the Mediterranean hit a 2025 high in April of 170,360 TEUs, but PIERS data for May shows a 19% drop in volume to 137,710 TEUs.

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