

Suez Canal blockage likely to have knock-on effects in North Europe until June

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The knock-on effects of the blockage of the Suez Canal by ULCV Ever Given between March 23rd and March 29th was likely to affect supply chains in Northern Europe until June, reports logistics publication *The Loadstar*.

Container hub ports, which were already experiencing a back-up of waiting vessels because of the dislocation caused by Covid-19, used a week-long pause in ship arrivals to prepare their shoreside facilities for the anticipated rapid increase in the number of container arrivals. The ports are now full.

Rather than hang around, the container lines have been discharging Asian imports wherever they can, in order to get the vessels back to Asia as quickly as possible, as the mega ports there are also full, this time with containers waiting to be exported.

Worse for Northern European exporters, the container ship visits have prioritized the back-loading of as many empty containers as possible in order to restock carrier depots in China, which are bereft of containers into which to load their own exports. That has meant that exports from Northern Europe, to wherever, have been left on the quayside.

Importers were reported as being told that their cargo had indeed been discharged, but not at the port they wanted and expected. Worse, a shortage of feeder boxship has meant that in many cases there is no schedule for when the containers will find their way to the right destination. This is therefore causing a trickle-down effect in the delays.

Congestion at the hubs of Rotterdam and Antwerp is now delaying hinterland barge operations. Operator Contargo said that the average waiting time for the handling of its barges had risen to 34 hours at Rotterdam and 41 hours at Antwerp.

SeaIntelligence said that the negative effect on capacity for the Asia-North Europe trade from the Suez Canal stoppage will be over by week 22, after nine weeks of

disruption, a better result than if the larger container ships had waited outside their initial; Northern European destination, rather than unloading stock wherever they could.