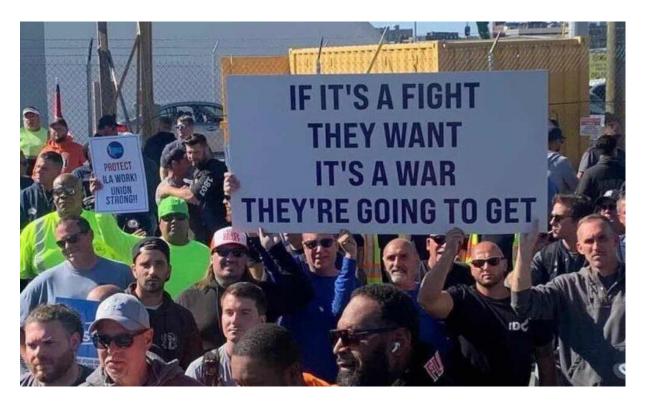


Strike threat escalates across US east coast ports

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The prospect of a strike this autumn by dockworkers along the US east and Gulf coasts has leapt with news that the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) has halted negotiations with employers, citing concerns over APM Terminals using automated gates.

The ILA is the largest dockworker union in the US. It was meant to be sitting down for talks today with the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX), who represent port operators, to discuss a master contract that is due to expire at the end of September.

The ILA said yesterday it canceled the talks with USMX after discovering that APM Terminals and Maersk have been utilising an auto gate system, which autonomously processes trucks without ILA labour. This system, initially identified at the Port of Mobile, Alabama, is reportedly being used in other ports as well.

A spokesperson for the ILA stated, "Here we go again. This is another example of USMX members unilaterally circumventing our coast-wide master contract. This is a clear violation of our agreement with USMX, and we will not tolerate it any longer."

"There's no point trying to negotiate a new agreement with USMX when one of its major companies continues to violate our current agreement with the sole aim of eliminating ILA jobs through automation," said international president Harold Daggett, who serves as chief negotiator for the union.

The ILA said it will not meet with USMX until the auto gate issue is resolved.

The port standoff on the east coast mirrors what took place on the west coast for much of 2022 and 2023. Last June, a deal was finally struck for a six-year labour contract at 29 west coast ports, bringing to a close a fraught 13 months of stalled negotiations, walk-outs and cargoes emigrating to alternate locations.

Port strikes are making headlines around the world with walk-outs across major ports in France and Germany this month.