

Trump: Port Traffic Slowdown "A Good Thing"



Boxships alongside at Port of Long Beach, April 2025 (Corine Solberg / Sipa via AP Images)

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This week, after major container ports on the West Coast reported less ship traffic due to falling imports, U.S. President Donald Trump told reporters that a drop in boxship volume is a win for the American economy.

"That means we lose less money . . . when you say it slowed down, that's a good thing, not a bad thing," Trump said in response to a reporter's questions at a press conference Thursday.

After the imposition of 145 percent tariffs on Chinese goods last month, buying activity for goods for export from China to the U.S. plummeted, followed by a sharp drop in container bookings. "Carriers reacted to the drop in exports out of China in the immediate aftermath of reciprocal tariff announcements by the US Government at the start of April by increasing blanked sailings," explained Xeneta's Peter Sand in a recent customer note.

The number of ships departing China for the U.S. West Coast has dropped sharply: the Port of Long Beach reports 30 blanked sailings in May and June, and the Port of Long Beach reports another 30. Port of Long Beach CEO Mario Cordero confirmed to local NBC LA that volume is already down, and said that traffic hasn't been this slow since the pandemic.

The number of vessels isn't the full picture. Based on AIS, the boxships that are under way from China to the U.S. this week are riding an average of about two feet higher in the water than normal, says Flexport CEO Ryan Peterson - indicating that they are carrying less cargo.

The slowdown may not last long. The U.S. and China have begun much-anticipated negotiations on a new trade agreement, and this will eventually result in lower tariffs on Chinese goods, Trump confirmed Thursday. "Right now you can't get any higher. It's at 145 percent so we know it's coming down," Trump told Bloomberg TV.