Transpacific blank sailings rise rapidly

The impact of the US tariff war continues to have a direct impact on container shipping operations, as the number of cancelled sailings on the Transpacific trade increased drastically yet again this past week.

When we look at the data, it is quite evident that the impact of the trade war has caused many shippers to pause, or outright cancel, shipments. This in turn reduces demand for capacity on container vessels, to which carriers respond by cancelling sailings.

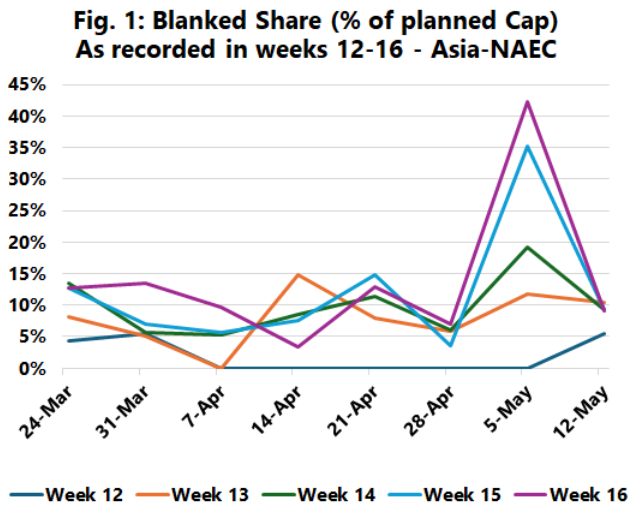

Figure 1 shows scheduled blanked capacity as a percentage of planned capacity on Asia-North America East Coast, for the weeks in the period from March 24 to May 12, as it was scheduled at different points in time, during weeks 12-16. The purple line shows the scheduled blanked share as recorded in the past week (week 16).

In week 12 (dark blue line), the scheduled blanked share was 0% in most weeks from April 7th to May 12th. There is a now major spike in blank sailings for the week starting on May 5, which is quite extreme. By week 15, carriers had scheduled blanked capacity equalling 35% of the planned capacity for that week starting May 5. At week 16 however, this increased to 42% of the total offered capacity, which is a 7 percentage point increase week/week. On Asia-North America West Coast, we see this escalation a week earlier. For the week starting April 28, 13% of the offered capacity was scheduled to be blanked as of week 15, which more than doubled to 28% as of week 16.

This level of escalation in blanked capacity illustrates a dramatic change in the market. Partly from the perspective of the magnitude of the blank sailings, which are more akin to what we tend to see seasonally following Chinese New Year in January/February and Chinese Golden Week in October. And partly from the perspective that many of these blank sailings have been announced with very limited advance warning to the shippers.

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Sea-Intelligence is a leading provider of Research & Analysis, Data Services, and Advisory Services within the global supply chain industry, with a strong focus on container shipping. Combining strong quantitative analytical skills with a deep understanding of the supply chain industry, based on many decades of experience at all central parts of the Ocean supply chain, Sea-Intelligence supports customers across all stakeholder groups.