

MARKET OVERVIEW

Iran Conflict Reshapes NZ Freight — Costs Rising, Timelines Blowing Out

The US-Israel strikes on Iran in late February 2026 continue to drive the biggest freight disruption New Zealand importers have faced since COVID. The Hormuz Strait — through which roughly one-fifth of global oil and a large share of LNG normally flows — is near-paralysed. Fewer than two tankers cross daily versus the usual 80. Vessels are rerouting around southern Africa, adding 30 to 40 days to transit times and sharply increasing fuel and operating costs on every affected lane.

New Zealand importers are directly exposed. At least one NZ logistics operator reports approximately 4,000 containers in transit, all affected. Marine insurers have applied war risk surcharges of up to 50% on transit policies. Exporters to Gulf Co-operation Council markets — worth NZD 298 million annually — face the sharpest risk, with chilled and refrigerated exports most vulnerable if Hormuz remains restricted.

Two additional chokepoints land in July. The Panama Canal cuts maximum allowable draft to 49.5 feet from July 1, forcing lighter loads or rerouting for some vessels. The Suez Canal Authority raises temporary surcharges from July 15 — dry bulk levies jump from 10% to 22%. The Shanghai Containerised Freight Index has surged 34.55% month-on-month. This is not a market to be passive in.

OCEAN FREIGHT | FCL & LCL

China–NZ Rates Up 15–30% Since March; Space Tightening Ahead of July GRIs

Ocean freight from China to New Zealand has firmed sharply through May and June. Carrier blank sailings and equipment controls are squeezing available space. 20GP boxes are up 30% since March; 40GP and 40HQ units are up 15%. Market averages for 40HQ containers sit at USD 2,950 to USD 3,450 (Seabridge Global Logistics, June 2026). LCL is more stable at around USD 5 per CBM, making consolidation a cost-effective option for smaller shipments this quarter.

Major carriers have filed July 1 GRIs on Transpacific lanes. Quote validity windows are short — confirm pricing at time of booking. Review your total landed cost, not just the freight line: warehousing, labour, and equipment costs remain elevated across New Zealand.

Route	Equipment	Rate (USD)	Movement
China to Auckland (FCL)	20GP	\$1,170 – \$1,430	↑ +30% vs Mar
China to Auckland (FCL)	40GP / 40HQ	\$2,025 – \$2,475	↑ +15% vs Mar
China to NZ (mkt avg)	40HQ	\$2,950 – \$3,450	↑ Firm
China to NZ (LCL)	Per CBM	~\$5 / cbm	→ Stable
NZ exports (all FCL)	All sizes	On application	War risk +50%

Sources: Seabridge Global Logistics Market Update Jun 2026; sino-shipping.com Apr 2026; Freightos Jun 2026. Rates indicative only — confirm at time of booking.

AIR FREIGHT

Middle East Conflict Disrupts Air Routing; Book 2–3 Weeks Ahead

Air freight into and out of New Zealand faces elevated pressure from the Iran conflict. Overflight permissions on several Asia–Europe–NZ corridors are restricted or suspended, forcing airlines to reroute via longer paths. This increases block hours, fuel burn, and crew costs — all flowing into rate pressure on time-sensitive lanes, particularly Europe, Middle East, and South Asia origins into Auckland and Christchurch.

Air New Zealand Cargo has held its terminal fee structure steady following the October 2025 schedule revision, with no CPI-based increase applied January 2026. That discipline may not hold through Q3 if fuel costs continue rising. Businesses with time-critical imports should book two to three weeks ahead and confirm capacity with their forwarder. No new published NZ air freight rate card this week — contact your carrier directly for current spot rates.

BOOKING ADVISORY

Six Actions for NZ Importers This Week

Iran conflict rerouting, July canal surcharges, and carrier capacity discipline make the next four weeks a critical window. Act on bookings and insurance now rather than waiting for July rate confirmations.

Priority	Action required
HIGH	Lock in China-NZ FCL bookings now. July GRIs are filed and rates are moving up.
HIGH	Review Hormuz-exposed lanes. Add 30-40 days transit buffer for Middle East routes.
HIGH	Confirm war risk surcharge is covered in all current marine insurance policies.
MED	Panama Canal draft cut (July 1) affects transshipment via US East Coast. Check routing.
MED	Suez Canal surcharges increase July 15. Review existing carrier contracts now.
LOW	Monitor Australia fuel excise changes from July 1 - may flow into NZ domestic delivery costs.

DISCLAIMER: This briefing is compiled from publicly available, verified sources. All rates are indicative only. TradeFlow Advisory is independent — no freight to sell, no carrier affiliations.

VERIFIED SOURCES

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