

## **Journal of Commerce**

### **Baltimore's container volume dips after record March**

JOC Staff | May 27, 2015 9:37AM EDT

Container traffic through the Port of Baltimore in April fell 8.8 percent year-over-year after a record March, Maryland Port Administration statistics show.

The port's public terminals handled 58,864 20-foot-equivalent units, compared with 64,527 TEUs in April 2014. Loaded containers declined to 46,084 TEUs from 52,900 a year earlier.

Baltimore's April totals contrasted with total TEU volume increases of 25.8 percent at Savannah, 11.3 percent at Charleston, and 46 percent at Houston. Those ports rely more heavily on imports of retailers who sought alternatives to West Coast port congestion.

The April results at Baltimore followed a record month for the port in March. Baltimore terminals handled 77,792 TEUs in March, including 57,097 full containers and 20,695 empties.

General cargo volume, which includes containerized goods, autos, forest products and roll-on, roll-off farm and construction equipment, was 900,947 tons in March, topping the port's previous record in April 2014. Baltimore's general cargo volume totaled 806,718 tons last month.

### **Port of Baltimore not a front in heroin fight**

May 27, 2015, 7:23am EDT Rick Seltzer

The commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection doesn't see the Port of Baltimore as a major source of heroin.

Less than 1,000 grams of heroin were recorded at the Port of Baltimore last year, said R. Gil Kerlikowske, Customs and Border Protection commissioner, during a trip to the Baltimore port Tuesday. Most heroin entering the United States comes from Mexico, and most of Kerlikowske's agency's seizures are on the Southwest border, he said.

State and city leaders have been looking for ways to fight the growth of heroin abuse in Maryland. Heroin tends to move over land to cities like Baltimore, Kerlikowske said. Other drugs are more of a problem at East Coast ports, he said.

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"Synthetic drugs are much more of an East Coast port issue," he said. "And that's always something to be aware of."

Customs and Border Protection plays a part in fighting the drug trade, with its officers in different locations seizing more than 10,000 pounds of drugs during a typical day. The agency

has a huge role in the economy, too, processing more than 70,000 truck, rail and sea containers on an average day. Port of Baltimore officials will tell you the agency's workers have to scan and clear cargo efficiently if it is to move freight into and out of the country quickly.

Kerlikowske toured the Port of Baltimore as part of an effort to promote his agency's role in local economies. He met with port officials as well as representatives from local companies with a stake in the port, including McCormick & Co. Inc. and Under Armour Inc.

They talked about more than the drug trade. Here's a rundown of port-related news coming out Tuesday:

- **Ag matters.** Customs and Border Patrol is using Baltimore to promote the importance of its agriculture specialists — the people who catch pests and invasive species that could decimate crops or otherwise hurt the food industry. Baltimore is a top port when it comes to catching pests, Kerlikowske said. The agency passed out new cards detailing agricultural threats like onionweed and swine vesicular disease.
- **Truck worries.** The Port of Baltimore isn't as worried about possibly missing out on growth in container cargo as it is about losing out on truckers. The average age of owner-operators with their own trucks is rising, and the industry seems to be having trouble attracting younger drivers, officials said. The port's director of operations, Dave Thomas, called the trucker shortage a concern and a challenge, as 95 percent of cargo leaves the port by truck.
- **New records.** In a separate move Tuesday, the Port of Baltimore released new statistics showing record shipments in March and April. Public marine terminals handled 913,139 tons of general cargo and 49,971 containers in March. The previous general cargo record was 900,947 tons in April 2014, and the former container record was 46,927 from October 2014. The news follows new annual records announced earlier this year for 2014.