

Europe Ports Avoid Rail Strike

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German railroad locomotive engineers called off a strike that threatened to gridlock ocean container traffic in north European ports after a court issued a temporary injunction against the walkout.

A labor court in Nuremberg issued an emergency ruling barring strikes on freight and long-distance passenger trains until Sept. 30.

The GDL engineers' union said it will withdraw plans to disrupt cargo traffic Thursday to press for higher wages while it appeals the court ruling.

Germany's top two container ports, Hamburg and Bremen/Bremerhaven, were bracing for severe disruption as up to a quarter of the boxes they handle are transported inland by train and there is limited trucking and barge capacity to carry rail cargo.

Deutsche Bahn, Europe's biggest rail freight operator running nearly 5,000 cargo trains a day in Germany alone, is seeking an early resumption of negotiations to resolve the dispute.

Union members voted overwhelmingly on Monday to stage the first nationwide rail strike in Germany since 1992 to press for a 31-percent increase in pay. Two other rail unions earlier settled on a 4.5-percent wage increase.

-- *Bruce Barnard in London*

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