

# Mexico Freight Is More Complex Than Ever. Here's What to Do.

Tariffs in legal limbo, a T-MEC renegotiation coming in July, rising cargo theft, and a 56,000-driver shortage — North American supply chains are under pressure from every angle. This is what C-levels at freight forwarders and shippers need to know right now.

By GLT Logistics · April 16, 2026 · 12 min read

<b>\$175B</b> IEEPA tariffs in legal dispute	<b>56K</b> Driver shortage in Mexico today	<b>82%</b> Cargo theft in Centro Bajío regions	<b>Jul 2026</b> T-MEC/USMCA formal review date	<b>12%</b> Mexico logistics costs as % of GDP
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## WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE

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If you move freight between Mexico, the U.S., and Canada, 2026 is not business as usual. The rules — commercial, legal, and operational — are shifting faster than annual planning cycles can absorb.

This guide cuts through the noise. No generic advice, no recycled buzzwords. Just the six most critical disruptions hitting cross-border supply chains right now, what the data actually says, and concrete steps to keep operations moving.

### ISSUE 01 — TRADE POLICY

## The Tariff Landscape After the SCOTUS Ruling

On February 20, 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down tariffs imposed under IEEPA (International Emergency Economic Powers Act) in a 6-3 ruling. The immediate reaction from the White House was to pivot to Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, imposing a 10% global tariff effective February 24 — later raised to 15%.

**What this means for importers right now:** The Section 232 tariffs on steel, aluminum, heavy trucks, and auto parts are untouched by the ruling and remain in effect. Meanwhile, approximately \$175 billion in IEEPA duties previously collected sit in legal limbo — and CBP's automated CAPE refund system is expected to launch around April 20, 2026.

### The bottom line for cross-border freight

The war on tariffs didn't end — it changed weapons. Section 122 expires on July 24, 2026, which means a new round of trade policy decisions is coming just as the T-MEC review kicks off. The freight market has been operating under what analysts call "sourcing paralysis" for months, with Class 8 truck orders at their lowest since May 2020 and some carriers reporting double-digit profit declines.

For freight forwarders and shippers: the risk is no longer just the tariff rate. It's the volatility of not knowing what rate to plan around 90 days from now.

- Audit which of your entries were IEEPA-based vs. Section 232 — they have very different legal status today.
- Move quickly on IEEPA refund eligibility before CBP's CAPE system launches; those who file early will have priority processing.
- Build tariff pass-through clauses into client contracts now — before July, not after.
- Don't conflate tariff announcements with actual duties owed; Flexport's analysis shows the gap between rhetoric and implementation has been consistently wide.

## GLT PERSPECTIVE

One of the most painful experiences for shippers moving through Mexico is discovering extra charges or tariff-related problems after the freight has already moved. Our team works ahead of the shipment — we explain what classifications apply, flag risks before they become surprises, and keep communication proactive at every stage. No post-delivery discoveries.

### ISSUE 02 — TRADE AGREEMENT

## T-MEC/USMCA Renegotiation: What's Actually at Stake

The 2026 T-MEC review was supposed to be procedural. It is not. The Trump administration has made clear it intends to examine every aspect of the deal, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies has called it "a defining test for North American cohesion and global competitiveness."

Three areas with direct freight implications:

### Rules of origin — could get tighter

The current threshold for North American content in automotive is 75%. A push to raise that bar, or extend similar requirements to electronics, aerospace, and medical devices, would force supply chain redesigns for many manufacturers. Any change to origin rules directly affects what can cross the border duty-free — and how you document it.

### China-sourced intermediate inputs — the biggest wildcard

Approximately 40% of Mexico's intermediate imports come from China. If new rules restrict or penalize those inputs, supply chains would need to be redesigned rapidly. For freight forwarders, this translates into clients scrambling to re-source, re-route, and re-document — all at the same time.

### A potential new supply chain resilience chapter

Both the Baker Institute and Brookings have proposed adding a formal supply chain resilience chapter to T-MEC. If adopted, this would create new reporting, transparency, and compliance requirements for cross-border shipments — more complexity, more documentation, more need for knowledgeable partners.

**Action before July:** Run a rules-of-origin audit on your top commodities now. Know which products clear comfortably at 75% North American content and which ones are marginal. That analysis will be worth its weight when the negotiations actually move.

### ISSUE 03 — MARKET STRUCTURE

## Nearshoring vs. Infrastructure: The Gap Nobody's Talking About

Mexico is now the largest trading partner of the United States, representing 15.5% of U.S. imports. Foreign direct investment hit \$34.3 billion in 2025, a 10.2% year-over-year increase. By any measure, nearshoring is not a trend — it's a structural shift that has already happened.

The problem? Infrastructure didn't get the memo.

- Border crossings at Laredo, El Paso, and Nogales are running at or beyond capacity.
- Mexico's logistics costs represent 12% of GDP — versus a 9% global average. That gap is real money.
- Multimodal connectivity between industrial corridors and border crossings remains fragmented.
- Digital adoption across logistics processes is still slow among mid-size carriers.

The good news: infrastructure projects are finally moving. The new Otay Mesa East port of entry (San Diego/Tijuana corridor) is opening in 2026. The Corredor Interoceánico del Istmo de Tehuantepec opens Atlantic-Pacific routing options. And the Green Corridors initiative (Monterrey-Saltillito-San Luis Potosí) is developing electrified trucking infrastructure for ESG-sensitive shippers.

**For freight forwarders:** The nearshoring wave is generating more freight demand than the current network can handle cleanly. Companies with ground-level relationships, multiple border crossing options, and deep knowledge of Mexico's industrial corridors will capture the business. Those without will hand it over.

## HOW GLT APPROACHES THIS

With 23+ years operating in Mexico, we don't just know the routes — we know how they behave under pressure. We recommend border crossings based on your specific commodity, equipment needs, security profile, and timeline — not just what's geographically closest. And when a crossing gets congested, we have alternatives already in play.

- **LTL** — 98% national coverage in Mexico
- **FTL** — Full real-time visibility, CTPAT-certified carriers
- **Drayage** — Direct container delivery to Mexico + cross-border to the U.S.

### ISSUE 04 — SECURITY

## Cargo Theft in Mexico: New Tactics, New Hotspots

Mexico sees a cargo theft roughly every 38 minutes. In 2025, 82% of incidents were concentrated in two regions: Centro (51%) and Bajío (31%). The Bajío number grew by 7 percentage points year-over-year — making it the most-watched escalation in the country.

The four states accounting for 94% of Bajío incidents: **Guanajuato (36%), Jalisco (22%), Michoacán (19%), and Querétaro (16%).**

### How organized crime is adapting

Criminal groups are no longer operating randomly. They've shifted to weekday operations (83% of incidents Monday–Friday), concentrated in the 18:00–24:00 window. The most targeted cargo: food and beverages (34%), industrial inputs (10%), auto parts (9%). The tactic of choice in the Bajío: intercepting trucks in transit — meaning thieves have operational intelligence about route and schedule.

**The cyber angle:** Ransomware attacks on logistics operations grew 15% in early 2026. Criminal networks are exploiting GPS tracking systems to identify high-value loads before executing physical theft. "Silent logistics" — restricting real-time public broadcast of vehicle location — is becoming standard practice for carriers moving sensitive cargo.

- Avoid nighttime departures on the Bajío corridor (especially Highway 45D); schedule trips to arrive at secure facilities before 18:00.
- Require carriers to operate with ISO/IEC 27001-aligned tracking protocols — location data should be encrypted and access-restricted.
- Verify your Carta Porte documentation is flawless before every move — under 2026 customs reforms, a theft claim with irregular documentation can result in SAT fines in addition to the cargo loss.
- Diversify rest stops; preset checkpoints are increasingly targeted.

## GLT'S SECURITY APPROACH

We don't work with any carrier we haven't personally vetted. Our validation protocol includes ownership verification (we only work with carriers who own their trucks — no broker chains), CTPAT certification review, and direct personal relationship with operators. We also only recommend routes and schedules that reflect current security conditions on the ground, not last quarter's.

### ISSUE 05 — REGULATORY

## Carta Porte 3.0 and the Compliance Trap

If you're moving freight inside Mexico — or crossing the border with a domestic segment — Carta Porte 3.0 is not optional. The SAT (Mexico's tax authority) now requires a digital CFDI manifest for every shipment, including vehicle, driver, route, and cargo details.

The trap: under Mexico's 2026 customs reform, if your cargo is stolen but the Carta Porte had any irregularities, you may not only lose the insurance claim — you may face SAT fines for failing to prove legal ownership of the goods in transit.

**Smaller carriers are most at risk.** Complemento Carta Porte 3.0 mandates software investment and staff training. Many mid-size and small fleet operators are not fully compliant yet, creating a risk for any shipper whose freight moves on those trucks.

### Cross-border complexity compounds this

For cross-border shipments, the Carta Porte process is more complex than intra-Mexico moves because customs brokers need to pull data from the carrier's filing to complete clearance. This requires a chain data exchange chain between the shipper, the carrier, and the broker — and any gap in that chain creates delays or exposure.

- Verify that every carrier in your network is running Carta Porte 3.0-compliant software — not a previous version.
- Understand the distinction between what a customs broker handles (aduana processes) and what your freight partner handles (transport and documentation). Confusing these roles causes delays and missed information.
- Review your cargo insurance clauses in light of 2026 customs reform — your policy coverage may be narrower than you think under CIF terms.
- Build Carta Porte data requirements into your shipper onboarding checklist — the sooner the right info is captured, the fewer the downstream problems.

## GLT'S COMPLIANCE ROLE — CLEARLY DEFINED

We are a 3PL focused on transportation, not a customs broker. But we don't leave you alone with the regulatory complexity. We walk you through every stakeholder — what the carrier needs, what the customs broker needs, what documents need to flow in which sequence, and what happens if something is missing. We've helped clients avoid fines and delays not by acting as their customs agent, but by making sure they arrive at their customs agent with everything in order.

### ISSUE 06 — CAPACITY

## The Driver Shortage That's Quietly Tightening Capacity

Mexico is currently short 56,000 truck drivers. That gap is projected to reach 106,000 by 2028. This is not a future risk — it's already affecting coverage, rates, and reliability today.

Drivers are leaving the profession primarily for two reasons: safety concerns and low wages. With cargo theft risk concentrated in specific corridors and schedules, many operators are either avoiding those routes entirely or demanding significant risk premiums to take them.

The U.S. side has its own pressure. The FMCSA has tightened English proficiency requirements and is scrutinizing foreign CDL validity, effectively reducing the pool of drivers who can legally operate cross-border. Canada is simultaneously cracking down on the "Driver Inc." misclassification scheme, which could temporarily reduce carrier capacity as businesses restructure compliance.

**For shippers:** Cross-border lanes that used to have plenty of carrier options are tightening. Rate negotiation leverage is shifting back toward carriers in high-demand corridors. Lock in relationships now — not after a capacity crunch hits.

- Ask your logistics partners directly: what is your carrier network's driver retention rate? High turnover is an operational risk for your freight.
- Plan for longer lead times on booking, especially in the Bajío and northern border corridors.
- Build 2026 freight contracts to reflect realistic dwell times, detention costs, and capacity constraints — not best-case assumptions.

## WHY IT MATTERS WHO YOU WORK WITH

## What GLT Logistics Does Differently in This Environment

Everything in this guide points to the same underlying challenge: Mexico freight is complex — not just logistically, but culturally, regulatorily, and commercially. The partners who add real value in 2026 are those who reduce that complexity, not those who just quote the lowest rate.

GLT Logistics has been operating in Mexico for over 23 years. We are bilingual, we understand the culture, and we have ground-level relationships with carriers, routes, and border crossings that take years to build. Here's how that translates into real value right now:

### On the documentation maze

Mexico requires significantly more documentation than U.S. or Canadian domestic freight. Most cross-border issues — delays, fines, cargo holds — trace back to documentation gaps. We guide clients through what the shipper needs to provide, what the customs broker needs, how those pieces connect, and what the timeline looks like. We put structure on what often feels like a disorganized process — because it's not disorganized, it's just unfamiliar.

### On carrier quality

We personally know the carriers we work with. We only work with companies that own their own trucks — no multi-layer brokering. Every carrier we use holds CTPAT certification, which is the gold standard for U.S.–Mexico cross-border security compliance. This isn't a checkbox — it's a filtering mechanism that directly reduces theft and damage risk.

### On visibility and communication

One of the most common pain points we hear from shippers new to Mexico freight: finding out about problems after delivery. We operate on a proactive model. FTL moves have full real-time visibility. Issues are communicated as they happen, not after. We own the problem when it's our scope — and we're clear about what's outside our scope too.

### On flexibility for any freight strategy

We're built to handle the full range of cross-border scenarios — direct container delivery into Mexico, transloading and northbound movement to the U.S., door-to-door across all three countries, temperature-controlled, heavy haul, open deck. If your strategy changes because tariff conditions change, we adjust with you. We don't lock you into a single routing model.

## WHAT CUSTOMERS SAY ABOUT WORKING WITH GLT

Three words come up consistently in client feedback: **accountability, closeness, and transparency.** Clients know that when we say something is handled, it's handled — and when there's a problem, they hear about it from us, not from their customer.

**The bottom line:** In an environment where rules change faster than planning cycles, the most valuable thing a logistics partner can offer is clarity and trust. That's what 23 years in Mexico freight looks like.

## Ready to Simplify Your Mexico Freight?

Talk directly with a logistics expert who knows Mexico from the ground up — not a chatbot, not a junior rep.

- 23+ years in Mexico
- CTPAT-certified carriers
- Fully bilingual team
- 24/7 visibility
- 98% LTL national coverage
- Fair rates, no surprises

Talk to a GLT Expert →

No commitment. Just a real conversation about your freight.