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TRADE JUMPS 19% IN MAY TO HIGHEST LEVEL EVER

Propelled by a surge in imports, total cargo container volume at the Port of Long Beach rose 19 percent in May compared to May 1998. The equivalent of 394,467 containers was shipped through Long Beach – the nation's busiest container port. The May total is the highest monthly total in port history, surpassing the previous record of 378,714 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in July 1998.

(TEUs are the standard measure for the commonly used, steel cargo containers, which initially were 20 feet long but are now mostly 40 feet long.)

The gains in May stem from unexpectedly strong consumer spending in the United States.

"Merchants started ordering again in May after a cutting back orders in March and April," said Hal Hilliard, the port's marketing manager. "They found themselves short on inventory, and now they're replenishing their supplies. A great many are also beginning to order for the upcoming Christmas holiday season."

Imports at the port increased 25.7 percent in May to a record 205,640 TEUs. Long Beach is the leading port of entry for Asian-made products such as clothing, toys, shoes, furnishings and electronics goods.

Exports improved after tumbling in April, rising 3.8 percent in May to 87,553 TEUs. Except for a disappointing April, exports have improved slightly in recent months, halting last year's slide and signaling a possible rebound in Asian. Thus far, however, the gains in exports have come largely in shipments of U.S. raw materials.

The number of empty containers shipped through Long Beach, virtually all headed to Asia, was also a record, climbing 21.1 percent to 101,274 TEUs. Several chartered vessels came in May to take entire shiploads of empty containers back to Asia.

Port of Long Beach Container Traffic (TEUs*)

	LOADED				TOTAL CONTAINERS
	Inbound	Outbound	TOTAL LOADED	EMPTIES	
May-99	205,640	87,553	293,193	101,274	394,467
May-98	163,640	84,381	248,021	83,598	331,619
% change	25.7%	3.8%	18.2%	21.1%	19.0%
Jan-99	169,397	77,676	247,073	72,239	319,312
Feb-99	172,482	80,000	252,482	71,647	324,129
Mar-99	171,913	88,699	260,612	87,362	347,974
Apr-99	181,575	77,040	258,615	81,071	339,686
May-99	205,640	87,553	293,193	101,274	394,467
Year-to-date	901,007	410,968	1,311,975	413,593	1,725,568
% change	15.5%	0.3%	10.2%	10.0%	10.2%

***TEUs: 20-foot equivalent units or 20-foot-long cargo container**