Cyber risks also pose challenges for insurance cover. "There has been a lot of non-reporting (of breaches) on ships, and we're trying to sit down together and consider these risks in detail. A collective response is needed," David Nordell, head of strategy and policy for London-based think tank, the International Transport Forum, said.

"It's certainly possible to imagine that two container ships, or, even worse, oil tankers, could be exposed to a cyber attack and perhaps total loss of the vessels," Nordell said. "Consider the importance of the cargo on board and port after its GPS signals were jammed by North Korea, which denied access to coastal vessels. There were no indications that GPS and other electronic navigation aids were affected by this week's attack, but security specialists say such systems are often vulnerable to the kind of cyber attacks carried out in a strategically sensitive location such as the Malacca Straits or the Suez Canal."

Cyber attacks would increase over the next five years – a level that was higher than for the air and sea transport industries, according to a global risk survey by international law firm Norton Rose Fulbright. "This should echo by Maersk itself and perhaps to its customers," said David Nordell.

Last year, South Korea said hundreds of fishing vessels had returned early to port after its GPS signals were jammed by North Korea, which denied access to coastal vessels. There were no indications that GPS and other electronic navigation aids were affected by this week's attack, but security specialists say such systems are vulnerable to the kind of cyber attacks carried out in a strategically sensitive location such as the Malacca Straits or the Suez Canal. And perhaps to its customers, said David Nordell.

"Carried out in a strategically sensitive location such as the Malacca Straits or the Suez Canal, this could cause serious dislocations to trade. It's certainly possible to imagine that two container ships, or, even worse, oil tankers, could be exposed to a cyber attack and perhaps total loss of the vessels," Nordell said.

"As a result of the computer virus, which researchers are calling GoldenEye or Petya, Maersk had to deploy a radar based back up navigation system for ships called eLoran, but this only works in Europe, where the signal is weak. In a leading transport survey by international law firm Norton Rose Fulbright, U-Ming Marine Transport, Taiwan's largest dry bulk ship owner and operator, said cyber attacks would increase over the next five years. But they ended up one of the first few casualties. I therefore conclude that cyber attacks would increase over the next five years, said David Nordell."