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The weekly newspaper for air cargo professionals

No. 1,275 | 8 April 2024



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# TOURISM BOOSTS MEDITERRANEAN TRADE

**N**avigating the complexities of increasing passenger traffic and expanding cargo operations as Greece's tourism industry rebounds to pre-pandemic levels, Athens International Airport (ATH) is looking to capitalise on the invigorated economy.

"The number of passengers has returned to normal, especially between the touristic Greece period of April to October. ATH has more passengers and, of course, more airlines and cargo capacity with more flights," Pavlos Poutos, CEO of Marinair Cargo Services, said.

### Regional and international opportunities

ATH looks to transcend national borders, positioning itself as a central hub due to Greece's "perfect geographical location, especially in the Balkan area and Mediterranean region."

This strategic advantage is bolstered by a significant investment master plan, including

a €650 million expansion expected to serve 50 million passengers annually, marking ATH's ambition. This will be paired with the development of Greece's road network and the investments in Piraeus and Thessaloniki seaports, offering intermodal opportunities.

"ATH can be easily connected via sea and create a combined network from/to Central Europe and the Balkans via rail or truck," Poutos explained.

### Developing sector

In response to growing competition in the market, ATH is leveraging Greece's extended touristic period to develop its commercial and logistical sectors further.

In particular, during this time, destination countries like the USA, Asia and the Middle East can be served with better capacity than airports in neighbouring countries at a better cost and with more frequent connections.

"Investments that have been announced over time create the appropriate conditions so Athens

becomes a centre of passenger and freight transit as well for a longer period of the year," the managing director outlined.

"We must accept more investments in these sectors, better knowledge, and more openminded approaches to the potentiality of ATH Airport as a more significant Hub.

### Greece goes digital

Technology is playing a crucial role in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of ATH, with ATH acknowledging that it must embrace more investment in this field.

"It's essential to develop the digitalisation of vital sectors, like Greek customs and cargo ground handler operations," Poutos stated.

"The truth is that the development of an airport depends mostly on the right plan and right investment at all levels and from all parties involved.

"ATH Airport was started a long time ago, but this does not mean that there is no space for improvement of course."

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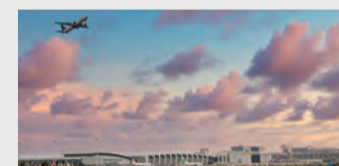
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LOOKING to the West, the challenge in the airfreight industry remains evident, requiring carriers to adapt rapidly to evolving market dynamics.

Volumes have dropped while capacity increased as belly-hold space returned through the revival of the passenger sector. This situation was widely expected as the industry returned to a sense of normalcy after a tricky two-year period that was dominated by the pandemic.

"2023 was definitely a challenging year," Soufyan Mouaniss, Etihad Cargo's Director West Cargo Commercial, said. "The general consensus is that 2024 will be a similar year to 2023, with maybe a slight uptick in the second half of the year."

"The additional capacity and lack of demand is not a good combination. You need to be agile. You need to adapt accordingly and adjust your strategy," he added.

### Strength in diversity

Given the fluctuating nature of demand in the region, Etihad Cargo has placed an emphasis on developing a wide-ranging portfolio to prepare itself for swift changes in customer demands.

Fresh salmon, fruits, vegetables, etc are some of the primary commodities transported through the region by the carrier, as well as high-tech equipment and general cargo.

While primarily a passenger airline utilising its belly-hold space, Etihad Cargo can also tap into its freighter fleet to provide the service level required, depending on the nature of the goods being transported.

"Our approach involves deciding on the most suitable flight for these shipments, aiming for the best connection," Mouaniss explained. "If leveraging our belly capacity allows for a shorter connection time, we can prioritise that option to enhance efficiency."

The carrier's focus extends vertically to pharmaceuticals, with Etihad Cargo being among the first in the Middle East to be certified by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) for both perishables and pharmaceuticals.

"This certification contributes to our expertise in providing streamlined and secure supply chain solutions for the sizeable customer base through our pharma and Fresh Forward initiative," Mouaniss highlighted.

### Post-Covid push

Following the challenges posed by COVID-19, the focus has been on re-establishing operations to pre-pandemic levels. As part of that, carriers have begun to implement plans that were put on hold during the disruption experienced during the global shutdown.

"Among our recent initiatives, we reinstated services to Dusseldorf, a location that was always part of our pre-Covid map," Mouaniss said. "Copenhagen was a new route that was always in the works. Initially introduced as a seasonal route, we have decided to operate it year-round, enabling us to serve the Scandinavian countries and be the airline of choice for the seafood market in Norway."

Beyond those targeted markets, other connections have been added to the carrier's growing network, bolstering movements to John F. Kennedy Airport in New York and Chicago's O'Hare International.

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# Impact of war looms over Ukraine's cargo companies



WAR is always something that radically changes people's lives. Some lose homes, others tragically lose family and loved ones, while many lose businesses, clients, and profits. War is about loss but also about strength, courage, and struggle.

Kiy Avia Cargo, Ukraine's largest cargo Company, knows this story all too well, having seen the personal and professional struggles caused by the ongoing Russian invasion.

In the first year of the conflict, Ukraine lost 30 to 35 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), leading to the largest recession in the country's history. While it rebounded slightly in 2023, Ukraine's economy only managed growth of 4.8 percent due to improved electricity access, better harvest and increased government spending.

This financial impact pales in comparison to the human cost of conflict. Although estimates vary, it has been reported that over 31,000 Ukrainian military personnel have died in the fighting, while 10,500 civilians have been killed and nearly 20,000 wounded. However, the number may be higher, as reports are still awaiting confirmation, and some areas remain inaccessible due to the Russian occupation.

## Closed gateway

The main office of Kiy Avia Cargo was located at the cargo terminal of Boryspil airport. 90% of all goods flying in and out of Ukraine went through the hub. The remaining 10% were handled by other airports such as Lviv, Odesa and Dnipro.

"Kiy Avia Cargo has been on the market of cargo air transport since 2002. 20 years by the time the war started," Konstantin Hrynko, the director of Kiy Avia Cargo, told Air Cargo Week.

"Boryspil airport is the air gateway to Ukraine through which all the main air cargo flows. We were aware of certain escalations, but we could not have anticipated that military actions would begin from the Russian Federation."

The company's director learned about the full-scale war around 4-5 am on 24th February 2022, literally half an hour after the Battle of Hostomel began. Konstantin initially didn't believe the war had started, but then he saw people running out of their houses with suitcases, getting into cars, and leaving, realising his country was under attack. About 20-30 minutes later, his employee, who lived in the city of Boryspil, called Hrynko to tell him that they were being bombed.

Russian military targeted Boryspil Airport. The strikes were precise, meaning they didn't assault the entire airport but specifically took out aeronavigation elements.

"On that day, 24th February, we couldn't access our offices and warehouse. Our office, located at Boryspil airport's cargo terminal, was inaccessible. The National Guard, military, and security services didn't allow us into the airport area. We couldn't enter the airport until mid-April.

"The airport was closed. Additionally, Russian forces were close enough until mid-April, so the company couldn't start working until then. We barely got permission to check our facilities. When Hrynko did finally arrive at the airport, they found many goods were stolen.

"Unfortunately, some of these cargoes, not only ours but also a large number of import and export cargoes at Boryspil airport, were looted. This was cargo of finished products that had arrived from other countries, intended to be sent abroad, and had been stolen.

"According to the information, these were thieves who, under the guise of territorial defence, guarded the warehouse, but in fact, they were looting it extensively. We had a few cargoes left from, but cargo that was about to be shipped had been stolen.

"This caused significant financial losses and damages. A criminal investigation into this matter is currently underway. I understand that some of the looters have been caught, but unfortunately, both exporters and importers have suffered greatly, with thefts potentially amounting to tens or even hundreds of millions of US dollars worth of goods.

## Changing strategy

With the war having broken out in the country, companies that operate at Boryspil faced a challenge: They do not have an airport and the seaports are no longer accessible.

"There is a real panic both in business and among clients," Hrynko admitted.

There was only one way left for Kiy Avia Cargo: consolidating cargo and moving them individually or in small batches to hubs that were still in operation outside of Ukraine. For airfreight, this would primarily be Warsaw Airport and Budapest Airport, while seafreight moved to Gdynia and Gdansk in Poland or Constanta in Romania.

"The closer this airport is to you, the cheaper it will be. Therefore, we have only one way, we deliver goods to the

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nearest neighbouring countries.

"Chisinau is mostly used by Ukrainian carriers as a hub for transporting animals. A very large stream of animals goes from there on Turkish Airlines, but we have never used it for our company's cargo. After all, the priorities are Warsaw and Budapest."

The challenge would be getting the cargo from Kiy Avia Cargo's facilities to those hubs, given the significant issues faced around securing transport and fuel supplies, with much of it requisitioned for military activities.

"We couldn't drive. Gas stations were empty. There was no fuel. They were issuing only ten litres of gasoline per driver per car," Hrynko revealed.

"Refuelling the car to send the freight to Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, or Romania, where the main movement of cargo is happening, was impossible because there was nothing to refuel with".

It was also problematic to find drivers because there was no transport, many drivers had gone to the frontline have been mobilised by the Ukrainian army to defend their country.

The challenges of securing the resources and manpower for moving goods were also compounded by the attempts to remain safe amid constant bombing and regular interruptions to the power supply.

The border blockades by Polish carriers, a predicament that commenced in 2022, has also developed into a significant hurdle.

As recounted by Hrynko, this situation has caused logistical nightmares with extensive queues at the border and a sharp increase in transportation costs, directly impacting the competitiveness of Ukrainian products on the

international stage.

"The problem at the border, where carriers stand for weeks, necessitates a rise in the cost of transportation. Consequently, our products from Ukrainian manufacturers become uncompetitive due to the exorbitantly expensive logistics," Hrynko said.

Competition has also intensified, with express and private carriers utilising minibuses for cargo delivery. This informal sector, thriving on semi-legal cash transactions, offers a more attractive alternative to traditional import.

"Our border no longer resembles a sieve through which imports are probably like water that flows," he laments, highlighting the challenges of operating within the legal framework in a market saturated with informal practices," Hrynko warned.

### Shrinking sector

In the face of escalating challenges at the border and within the logistical landscape of Ukraine, Kiy Avia Cargo has been navigating through tumultuous times.

The evolving economic conditions, exacerbated by the war, blockades, and mobilisation, have forced the company and the wider logistics industry in Ukraine to adapt and innovate to sustain operations.

To keep afloat, the focus has shifted from food, a critical export, to general cargo, including industrial goods.

With the escalated logistics costs rendering Ukrainian goods unaffordable, driving potential customers towards alternatives offered by other countries with more stable logistics and no conflict.

This logistical quagmire not only hampers

Ukraine's ability to export also forces a strategic realignment of its industries. Many enterprises are either shutting down or relocating their production from the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine to countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltic republics.

"This is a big problem because there are a lot of Ukrainian industries. Today, a lot of enterprises are closing, and production is being transferred to areas where there is no war," Hrynko said.

"From those companies that remain on the Ukrainian market today, which were engaged in air transportation, about 25% of them remained from the pre-war level, that is, 75% were closed. They left this market," Hrynko highlighted.

This staggering closure rate underscores the profound impact of the current logistical challenges, not just on the present but the future of Ukraine's cargo and freight sector.

Further exacerbating the issue is the dwindling number of clients relying on these services. "Our customers are only 10-15% from the

pre-war level. Today, most companies are closing or have already closed."

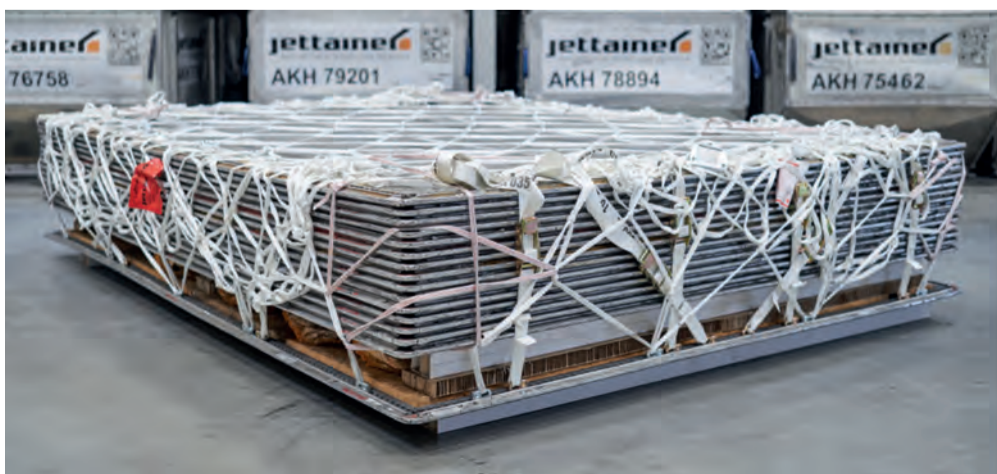
The war and subsequent mobilisation have had a profound impact on logistics, reducing the number of employees available, as many professionals were either mobilised into the armed forces or moved to work from safer locations abroad.

"Mobilisation is a danger for a large number of male staffers who remained in Ukraine," Hrynko revealed, noting the drastic reduction in his staff to just seven workers.

The shrinking team mirrors the broader trend of shrinking workforces in the sector, further straining the operational capabilities of logistics firms.

"The situation in the economy is very difficult," Hrynko stated, reflecting on the company's journey through these trying times.

"2022 was better, ultimately, because we adapted to new types of transportation...So 2022 was better than 2023. And 2023 was better than 2024, but challenges have persisted this year."



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# Changing traditions with technology



TRADITIONAL cargo processes have imposed unnecessary costs and complexity due to manual paperwork, reliance on physical documentation, and fragmented communication channels.

Paper-based and fragmented communication processes lead to inefficiencies, errors, and delays in handling, tracking, and processing cargo cover. Moreover, manual data entry, which is still in use across the industry, increases the risk of inaccuracies and miscommunication among stakeholders.

Legacy systems lack real-time visibility and integration capabilities, hindering effective coordination and decision-making.

Embracing digital solutions can streamline operations, enhance transparency, and optimise resource utilisation in the cargo industry.

"Our digital solutions optimise resource utilisation, minimise costs, and enhance agility in adapting to dynamic market demands," Eyal Goldberg, CEO of Breeze, explained.

"We developed our platform in a very flexible and modular way that allows us to quickly adjust it based on the type of company we work with

"For customers who are still in the process of modernising their systems, we have developed a platform that allows them to integrate it with their existing workflow.

"We do see a rapid transition to technology across the board, and several of our customers started in a more analogue way and evolved into using our application programming interface (API) solutions as time went by."

## Multimodal measures

One key strength of Breeze's approach is its flexibility in integration, which caters to companies at various stages of technological adoption and throughout the entire supply chain.

The main pain points in the approach taken by customers is inefficient tools and technology that limit their ability to seamlessly offer cargo cover for every shipment, in addition to a lack of understanding of the insurance process.

"They come to Breeze as we are solving both of these pain points. Our state-of-the-art embedded platform allows them to add a cargo quote for every shipment in a way that doesn't require them to change any of their existing process, and our team helps them and their customers to better understand the insurance process," Goldberg outlined.

"We cover all modes of transportation. Our platform allows customers to insure their cargo in any combination of mode of

transportation, whether it's only port to port, door to door, one mode of transport or more.

"We have mechanisms to ensure such data is properly captured and reported, and in some cases, we also track the shipments along the way for better risk management.

## Navigating geopolitical risks

In today's volatile business landscape, with supply chain challenges and global disruptions rampant, embracing embedded cargo insurance solutions is critical for logistical companies.

Such solutions allow these companies to offer protection against unforeseen events, mitigating financial risks associated with damaged or lost goods during transit.

By integrating cargo insurance seamlessly into logistics processes, companies can bolster resilience, reduce operational costs, enhance customer satisfaction, maintain competitiveness and generate additional revenue streams.

In essence, embedded cargo insurance solutions have become indispensable shields, fortifying businesses against the uncertainties of the modern world while also contributing to the bottom line.

"Rising geopolitical tensions globally have sparked an increased

demand for cargo insurance, emphasising the necessity of secure shipment systems," Goldberg revealed.

"Uncertainties like trade conflicts and political instability elevate the risks of goods in transit. Companies now prioritise insurance to mitigate potential losses due to geopolitical disruptions, ensuring financial protection.

"Such tensions underscore the significance of a robust insurance system, safeguarding shipments from unforeseen events. By integrating comprehensive coverage into their logistics strategies, businesses mitigate risks and maintain operational continuity amidst geopolitical uncertainties."

## AI-powered protection

Artificial intelligence (AI) plays a pivotal role in enhancing Breeze's offerings, boosting both product efficiency and the security of shipments.

"Through AI-driven risk assessment algorithms, Breeze can more accurately evaluate shipment vulnerabilities and ideally tailor risk-based insurance premiums to better manage specific risks," Goldberg stated.

"Predictive analytics anticipate potential threats, enabling proactive measures to safeguard cargo.

Breeze's AI-powered claims model has the potential to expedite settlements and minimise downtime and financial losses for clients.

Moreover, machine learning algorithms continuously refine our risk models, ensuring adaptability to evolving threats.

Lastly, real-time monitoring and data analysis optimise risk management strategies, bolstering the security of shipments. AI empowers Breeze's cargo insurance platform, elevating efficiency, accuracy, and resilience in protecting cargo across the supply chain.

"We are measured by how efficient our claims process is. At Breeze, our claims submission process is fully digital, and as a result, it saves a lot of time and effort for customers compared to manual processes," he explained.

"Secondly, the customer has real-time visibility about the current status of the claim and where it stands. Efficient and real-time communication to customers about their claim is the most important thing during the process - better communication brings about higher customer satisfaction.

"Using our data, we gradually automate the claims settlement process, and as a result claims can be resolved much faster, resulting in faster payment and recovery for customers."







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# WELCOME TO THE LONE STAR STATE



**“Dallas is a transportation hub. It’s a nexus for railroad, truck and air travel”**

**D**allas, one of the most centrally located cities and a top business centre in the United States, is home to the 2024 CNS Partnership Conference, bringing together the leaders and decision-makers of the industry to explore and influence the future development of airfreight.

Attendees will have the chance to create connections with potential partners and prospective new businesses; learn about the latest trends and developments affecting the air cargo supply chain; and stay up-to-date with the latest government regulations and their impact on the industry.

“The CNS Partnership Conference has a dual role. As the name already says, as a partnership conference, the agenda allows plenty of time for the participants from across the value chain to network, while the various key-note speeches and workshops

provide the latest update on industry trends, technology and innovation,” Alicia Lines, CNS President and Head of Cargo for IATA in the Americas, said.

“Dallas is a transportation hub. It’s a nexus for railroad, truck, and air travel, with Dallas Fort Worth International Airport providing nonstop access to more than 166 US destinations and 53 international cities, making the city an ideal location for our annual conference.”

#### Industry outlook

Sustainability will be high on the agenda, as air cargo is critical to achieving the net zero carbon emission goal the aviation industry has committed to hitting by 2050. Not only do stakeholders need to work on decarbonising the value chain, they need to consider that the type of cargo flown by air – such as perishables or high-value electronics – is also in the spotlight for their commodity carbon footprint.

Digitalisation will also be a key topic. As the industry pushes for further digitalisation to become more efficient and agile, with too many paper-based processes still in air cargo, such as customs documentation. On the economic side, air cargo’s role in providing alternative transport options to sea shipping lanes that have been impacted by security threats or other reasons will no doubt be discussed. While these are a good revenue source, making capacities available will be a challenge. “From the feedback we have gathered over the past years, the participants value the fact that we have a wide-ranging attendance from across the value chain, enabling dialogue between various parties,” Lines highlighted.

“The mix of these opportunities makes the CNS Partnership Conference unique in the Americas.

“Our programme once again will offer a wide selection of workshops. The topic of safe transportation remains high on the industry agenda, along with technology and data, as well as diversity and attracting and training new talent to the air cargo sector.”



# COVERING THE INDUSTRY



**T**he CNS Partnership Conference will begin with the CNS Partnership Golf Classic on Sunday, followed by an evening cocktail reception, giving guests the chance to build lasting relationships, strategic partnerships and friendships.

The formal programme will start on Monday morning at the Gaylor Resort and Convention Centre with a welcome address from Brandon Fried, the Executive Director of the Airforwarders Association (AFA), and a keynote speech from Lufthansa Cargo's Stephanie Abeler and LATAM Cargo's Andrés Bianchi.

Diving into the topics at the centre of the conference, attendees will have a chance to hear from key industry figures on the state of the industry, sustainability and digitalisation on the first day. Guests will then be able to attend the Innovation Stage or head to the Certificates Panel Discussion, Dangerous Goods Display or Women in AirCargo talk.

Launching into the second full day of events, panels will cover Cargo Around the World, the Future of Air Cargo and a number



of talks and presentations from Dallas Fort Worth on a range of topics, from changes in the workforce to the state of the region.

The conference will be capped off with a cocktail reception and networking dinner, allowing attendees to reflect on the event and relax after a busy couple of days debating ideas, discussing the issues shaping the industry and networking with colleagues old and new.

### Dallas calling

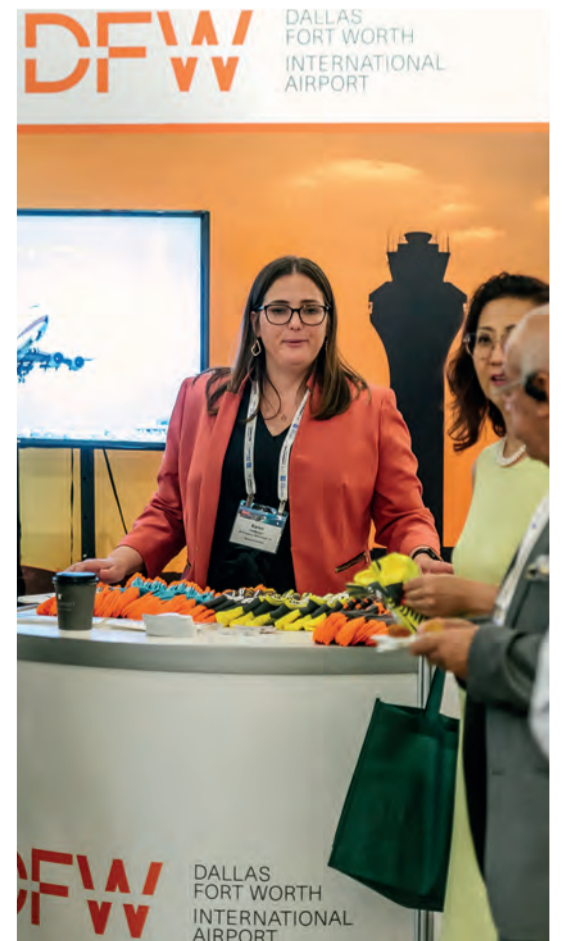
With Dallas Fort Worth hosting the event, attendees will be welcomed into a city filled with culture and historical significance, as well as a thriving cargo community.

Focused on airfreight, Dallas Fort Worth Airport delivers more than US\$20 billion to the regional economy every year, serving as a connection between the United States, Latin America and Asia.

Dallas Fort Worth covers more than 26.9 square miles, has seven runways, no slot constraints, no curfews and 15 cargo aircraft parking positions, allowing it to serve key markets around the globe.

With more than 150 freight forwarders operating within the Dallas Fort Worth Area, over 15 cargo carriers serving it and three integrators moving goods through the hub, the airport handles over 60 percent of all airfreight in the state of Texas.

In the financial year 2023, Dallas Fort Worth handled 791,192 tonnes, connecting 36 major hubs and experienced a 205 percent year-on-year growth in e-commerce, with over 20 million international e-commerce shipments.





# CONNECTING EUROPE TO THE WORLD

**“Brussels Airport serves as an integral component of an innovative and sustainable multimodal logistics solution.”**

Positioned as a central hub for both cargo and passenger operations, Brussels Airport plays a crucial role in bolstering trade. As a cargo hub, the airport efficiently facilitates the movement of goods, functioning as a gateway to Europe and various global destinations, connecting businesses to markets worldwide.

Brussels Airport serves as an integral component of an innovative and sustainable multimodal logistics solution. This integrated system involves the transport of high-value and time-sensitive cargo via air, complemented by the arrival of large volumes of bulk and containerised products via vessels at the nearby Port of Antwerp-Bruges.

Positioned between these two influential hubs is the inland waterway node of Willebroek. Cargo trains play a pivotal role, linking Flanders and Belgium to Germany and Poland, and extending further into China's belt & road network.

“Brussels functions as a central hub for both cargo and passenger operations, serving a vital role in enhancing regional connectivity and international trade,” Dimitri Bettoni, Brussels Airport's Head of Cargo - Product and Network Development, stated.

“The robust passenger network not only serves as a primary entry point for travellers to Belgium and the broader European region but also contributes significant belly capacity, providing greater flexibility for forwarders and agents.”

#### Growth approach

Geopolitical developments have significantly affected the airfreight industry. Despite these challenges, maintaining their focus on their core strategy has allowed Brussels Airport's cargo volumes to remain comparable to those of their peer airports.

While not anticipating substantial improvements or major changes in the geopolitical situation for the remainder of 2024 and, therefore cargo volumes, Brussels Airport does expect to see a transition from China to Europe to Southeast Asia to Europe, and a shift from Latin America to Europe, with Africa to Europe emerging subsequently

“Concentration and commitment to four primary commodity groups, coupled with an customer-centric approach, have been the driving forces behind the growth and success of Brussels Airport Cargo and its community,” Bettoni said.

“Our customers are not just clients but long-term partners, with whom we foster shared interests and actively pursue market differentiation.”

#### Keeping competitive

In the domains of Pharmaceuticals, Perishables, Live Animals, and e-commerce, the aim is to achieve optimal process flows and transparency through the implementation of digital solutions, leveraging their extensive network to optimise the end-to-end logistics for each group.

“Thriving in the increasingly competitive market is no simple task, given the external challenges, including the renewal of our license, environmental considerations, and competition from neighbouring airports,” Bettoni explained.

“However, these challenges compel us to intensify our focus on our inherent strengths as a diversified airport, distinguished by a unique location and unwavering commitment to quality and innovation.

“Our commitment remains steadfast to our strategy, based on our focus segments, in the upcoming years.

“While addressing occasional challenges that may arise, the Brussels Airport Cargo team will persist in strengthening its capabilities, solidifying its position as a leader in innovative end-to-end logistics solutions.”

#### Digital driver

The BRUcloud, introduced by Nallian and Brussels Airport in 2014 was pioneered as the first community digital platform of its kind. Over time, it has evolved into a benchmark for digitisation and collaborative efforts within the community.

The advanced functionalities of BRUcloud will additionally contribute to enhancing transparency in these processes, facilitating seamless integration into third-party solutions. This integrated approach positions the airport to provide a global network of connectivity, encompassing both full freighter and belly freight capacity.

“We are pleased to witness other airports and community platforms undertaking similar initiatives, elevating our industry's standards of professionalism and transparency, and fostering collaborative endeavours that propel us toward a network of cloud cooperations,” Bettoni highlighted.

“A good example of one of our digital solutions is the Digital Green Lane. In summary, the Digital Green Lane enhanced visibility, collaboration, and efficiency in cargo operations. By embracing technology and automation, the platform contributes to a more agile and customer-centric approach to cargo handling at Brussels Airport.”



# DUAL OPERATIONS

**A**s passenger travel returns to normality, Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport (GSP) has positioned itself to prepare for the dual opportunity presented by people and airfreight in the post-pandemic era.

Since 2019, GSP has constructed a 160,000-square-foot cargo facility and over 30 acres of parking ramp to support cargo operations handled by the airport's commercial aviation division.

Simultaneously, GSP has invested millions into terminal roadway and vehicle parking improvements to serve an anticipated record number of passengers in 2024.

"GSP has been intentional with its capital improvement plans, which allows the facility to have ample capacity to handle rising passenger and cargo operations simultaneously," Peter Gross, GSP's Cargo Development Manager, said. "Advance planning has been key to achieving that balance.

"Forward-thinking and innovative service providers like us must plan ahead to ensure what we offer is relevant and competitive. GSP has dedicated staff to continuous business development for our operations.

"This includes identifying opportunities best suited by our partners, assessing new infrastructure needs, and engaging with customers to understand their needs. After all, we believe the best competitive advantage lies in our exceptional service, convenience and efficiency."

## Twin-purpose

GSP offers approximately 100 daily passenger flights to 25 destinations on eight scheduled airlines. This level of service has allowed the airport to be an attractive asset to economic development agencies and site selectors considering investing in the region. Beyond passenger service, the hub's cargo operations are a major driver of economic development in the region.

Centrally located between Atlanta and Charlotte on the busy I-85 corridor, GSP does not suffer from congestion in the air or on the ground. With many large manufacturers in the region that rely on the hub's air cargo options, we offer convenient access to rail and deep water port access nearby, allowing GSP and the Upstate South Carolina region to be a significant logistics player in the US.

"With an 11,001-foot runway, favourable year-round weather and a convenient location in the southeast of America, GSP offers ample capacity to handle cargo development for many years to come, opening the doors for the region to compete for business that other communities in our region are not in the position to compete for," Gross said.

"In 2023, GSP was responsible for \$5.9 billion in international trade, and we continue to offer the only scheduled international cargo flights in the Carolinas."

## Intermodal connectivity

GSP presents itself as a convenient alternative to larger, busier cargo gateways, where an airline or freight forwarder's shipment is one of many moving through.

"At GSP, every shipment gets our full attention," Gross stated proudly. "We work directly with shippers and airlines and propose ways to reduce costs or expedite processing. GSP has earned a reputation as a flexible partner, willing to handle

unique shipments and custom orders.

"From luxury sports cars, horses, cows, helicopters, turbines and aircraft parts, we have shipped them all. This flexibility and attention to service has allowed us to win service and maintain customers over time."

Located just minutes away from the South Carolina Inland Port, which provides a direct rail link between the Upstate South Carolina region and the deep water port at Charleston, and with convenient access to Interstates 85 and 26, GSP allows manufacturers and shippers to have multiple options for moving product in and out of the region.

This multimodal network also creates a backstop for companies facing production issues or supply chains, ensuring the region's role as a productive engine for logistics and advanced manufacturing and companies with the best set up to ensure continuity with shipments and deliveries.

"This combination has proven to be highly beneficial; this seamless connectivity even attracts international shipments destined to customers outside of South Carolina, who leverage GSP's speed and efficiency," Gross emphasised.

## Barriers and booming segments

Economic factors pose the biggest threat to operations at GSP, as with many airports. When shipping rates for road or ocean decrease, air freight becomes a less competitive option unless a company is under a deadline or has a unique need. While there is no comparison to the convenience and efficiency of air, ocean, rail, and road may become more viable options for non-time-sensitive shipments.

"Our location, infrastructure, personnel and expertise provide far more opportunities than threats for GSP. We do not see a significant threat to our operation due to lack of capacity or the ability to expand to meet demand," Gross posed.

"We see opportunities in cool chain, pharma, clothing, aerospace, live animals and unique international or oversized shipments. We have the facilities and the expertise to handle these products, and we are open to discussions with business partners about collaborations that will allow us to grow these operations in the Southeast US region from GSP."

## GSP growth

There has always been a strong demand to and from Europe, particularly Germany, and GSP is looking at opportunities to expand its European reach with multiple airports, customers and commodities. Asia is also emerging as a growth sector, with recently added scheduled service to Korea and China, and additional potential in Mexico.

"GSP remains focused on providing our customers with the best overall experience we can with every shipment, knowing that in air cargo, your reputation rests on your last one," Gross outlined.

"That's why we are continuously striving for improvement. We see great potential to expand into domestic cargo operations in addition to international cargo. We can see a future where GSP will be a regional leader in cool chain logistics.

"We actively evaluate technology and innovation to determine if they can enhance the customer experience with our operations. We think we are really just at the beginning of harnessing all that digitalisation and technology can provide us and our customers."

**"GSP remains focused on providing our customers with the best overall experience we can with every shipment"**

# VIEW FROM THE MAINDECK

## IS AIR CARGO ON THE PATH TO A GREENER FUTURE?



### Is SAF the answer?

Much of the industry's road map's success relies upon the widespread usage of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). As it stands, this is the most viable alternative to traditional fossil fuels, but it is not without its own challenges, including the albeit reduced carbon impact it has and its limited supply.

"SAF is the biggest solution today. It is the most likely alternative energy source to help us move away from fossil fuels at the present moment," Hughes asserted.

"It's a blend; you can blend sustainable fuel with the current kerosene. So it's straightforward.

"It's a much more environmentally friendly fuel base because it's not a fossil fuel; it's a carbon cycle type of fuel, so it extracts the carbon or the materials that have already absorbed the carbon and then releases it."

However, Hughes conceded that the most intriguing avenues lie ahead, with options such as hydrogen having the ability to eliminate carbon emissions.

Airbus is currently anticipating that, by the year 2035, they will have developed a research aircraft that will be running and operating on hydrogen fuel systems, creating a model for the industry.

"Hydrogen power would require changes to how internal combustion engines operate, changes to ground-based infrastructure, and also need changes to the aircraft.

"You would need to have a tank of highly compressed, very cold hydrogen... it needs to be kept close to -270°C," underlining the

volatile nature of hydrogen as a fuel source.

"Right now, we feel that hydrogen is an excellent energy source for ground-based vehicles where the infrastructure is easier to implement, but not yet for mass utilisation in air.

### Putting a spotlight on positive strides

While developments have been made in the sector, Hughes was clear that, to avoid accusations of greenwashing, the industry needs to improve its communication around sustainability.

"We just don't do enough about shouting," Hughes declared.

"Airlines are modernising their fleet. They're investing in a lot of ground support equipment. Ground handlers are investing a lot in perhaps electrified vehicles, so they're running on green energy.

"Some are looking at hydrogen-based vehicles moving away from diesel-based vehicles.

"Many cargo facilities around the world and many airports have solar panels on the roof, and they managed not only to generate enough renewable energy to run their facility but also to be a net contributor back into the overall grid system.

"Technology companies are using renewable energy sources to power the ever-increasing power and processing demands.

"This industry transports about US\$9 trillion worth of goods every year, contributing about 30 to 35 percent of international trade.

"We just need to do a much better job of articulating how efficient and effective we are in moving that cargo through global networks," Hughes urged.

THE quest for sustainability within the air cargo sector is both a formidable challenge and an imperative mission as the industry works to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. But how much progress has been made by the multifaceted strategies and innovations designed to push the industry towards a greener future?

"One thing we must recognise in the air cargo industry is that we're part of the global economy," Glyn Hughes, the Director General of The International Air Cargo Association, shared, shining a light on the industry's progress.

"The global economy connects manufacturers, producers, and growers globally with consumers from across the world.

"So, because we're moving things great distances, this industry does have an environmental impact. So, there are two ways in which the industry is reacting to this.

"We're having an impact, and as an industry, we have collectively made commitments, whether in general, the airport community, or individual companies, to be net-zero from an aviation perspective and an airport perspective."



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