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The weekly newspaper for air cargo professionals

2024 MIDDLE EAST SUPPLEMENT INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

No. 1,287 8 July 2024

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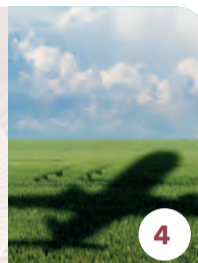
Delicious to taste, but don't try to take any on your flight home! If you have never encountered the Durian fruit, here are a few facts: the smell ...



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Voice Of The Industry

London's Heathrow Airport processes almost three quarters of all UK air cargo, with an annual value of well over £200 billion. Over 80 percent of that cargo ...



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60 Seconds With ...

Cathy O'Brien is Vice President of International Sales at UPS Healthcare, where she is responsible for driving growth across EMEA, APAC and ...



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The rise of temperature-sensitive drugs, like biologics and vaccines, is driving growth in the cold chain segment of airfreight. This trend extends beyond pharmaceuticals. The global growth of the biotechnology sector, including the transportation of biopharmaceuticals and clinical trial materials, also requires specialised temperature-controlled logistics solutions to maintain product integrity.

While this growth presents opportunity and boosts activity in the industry, it also brings with it a need to adapt operations to limit the industry's impact on the environment. Sustainability has become a top priority for many companies in recent years, driven by various factors. These include mounting public pressure, increasingly stringent regulations, and the tangible impacts of climate change such as extreme weather events, droughts, storms, and the rapid melting of glaciers. What many companies have come to realise is that reducing CO2 emissions is not only crucial for mitigating the risks associated with climate change but also for managing financial risks.

In the near future, many regulators are expected to implement "net zero policies," mandating reductions or compensation for Scope 3 emissions. It's worth noting that reducing emissions is often significantly more cost-effective than compensating for them. For instance, a large pharmaceutical company emits approximately 10 million tonnes of CO2 per year. At current compensation rates of around \$100 per tonne, the annual cost of compensation for such a company would amount to US\$1 billion.

"We're witnessing a growing trend wherein advanced big data and AI solutions are being leveraged to simultaneously reduce risks, costs, and CO2 emissions," SkyCell's co-founder and CTO, Nico Ros, said.

"These technologies are proving to be instrumental in helping companies navigate the complexities of sustainability and achieve their environmental and financial goals.

"Our partnership with Ivoclar aims to cut carbon emissions and reduce waste associated with empty return journeys by filling SkyCell containers with Ivoclar pallets. By integrating Ivoclar pallets into our hybrid containers, we can optimise freight efficiency, leading to reduced CO2 emissions. We predict that our partnership will result in approximately 2,500 tonnes of CO2 emissions saved annually.

"Cost reduction is realised through increased trip efficiency and fewer empty returns, which lower transportation costs per unit. Ultimately,



optimised logistics reduce fuel consumption and related expenses. Additionally, the savings from reduced CO2 emissions offer financial benefits, considering potential regulatory pressures and carbon taxes."

Visible and transparent

The advancement of digitisation and enhancing data visibility will be important tools when it comes to reducing the environmental impact of airfreight and cold chain logistics. For example, by leveraging real-time data insights, stakeholders across the supply chain can minimise

energy consumption, reduce CO2 emissions and streamline their operations.

The industry can also expect to see a significant shift in traditional packing and shipping methods. For example, single-use containers rely on excessive cooling which leads to substantial waste and pollution. Innovative solutions that reduce the need for cooling and offer sustainable alternatives for transporting temperature-sensitive goods will be pivotal in minimising the carbon footprint of cold chain operations.

YOUR CARGO SHOULDN'T FEEL OUT OF PLACE

Shipping isn't a one size fits all business. That's why at SkyTeam Cargo, we offer four clearly defined product pillars, ensuring that your cargo is safe and never ends up somewhere it shouldn't be.



CUTTING EMISSIONS WITH CARBON REMOVAL

BY Ajinkya GURAV

DIRECT Air Capture (DAC) involves extracting carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere and storing it deep underground. This not only offers a virtually unlimited feedstock—the atmosphere itself—but also provides a reliable method of carbon sequestration.

DAC's ability to combine captured carbon with green hydrogen to produce power-to-liquid sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) further enhances its future potential. However, DAC remains an expensive option until technological advancements bring down costs.

"Storing the carbon underground is a proven method and offers an unequivocal emissions removal," Anna Stukas, VP Strategic Partnership at 1PointFive, noted. "This process ensures that captured carbon does not re-enter the atmosphere, thereby providing a concrete solution for

long-term carbon reduction."

Measurable offsets and regulatory recognition

DAC's capability to generate measurable offsets is crucial for the aviation sector, particularly under the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).

These measurable offsets are essential for airlines to meet regulatory requirements and demonstrate their commitment to sustainability.

However, DAC offsets are not yet recognised under the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), though efforts to change this are ongoing.

The path to 2050

Industry estimates suggest that around 500 million tonnes of carbon

removal will be necessary by 2050 to meet global climate targets. Airlines are working to lead the charge, investing in advance credit purchases despite the higher costs compared to other carbon offsets. This proactive approach underscores the aviation sector's recognition of the importance of CDR and its willingness to invest in the technology's future.

"The ability to provide measurable and recognised offsets makes DAC a valuable tool for airlines," Lee Beck, Senior Director of Europe and Middle East, Clean Air Task Force, said. "Despite the current high costs, airlines are acting quickly to secure these credits, indicating their commitment to long-term sustainability goals."

Walsh, in his speech to the summit, stated that "the challenge is to make it work."

"We have SAF, a proven clean alternative to jet fuel. The challenge is to ramp up efficiency with diverse feedstock and production methods."

"We have a common commitment with governments to decarbonise by 2050."

"The challenge is for governments to deliver enabling policies. We have many possible pathways to net zero. The challenge is to promote them all and move forward."

Did You Know?



DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS FORBIDDEN FRUIT?

BY Michael SALES

DELICIOUS to taste, BUT DON'T TRY TO TAKE ANY ON YOUR FLIGHT HOME!

If you have never encountered the Durian fruit, here are a few facts: the smell is very strong, a cocktail of sulfur, skunk, caramel, rotten eggs, fruit, honey, rotting onions and sewage, containing 44 active compounds.

Durian is a tropical fruit indigenous to the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, India and Thailand. The fruit is spikey with a hard outer shell and custard-like flesh, with its large seeds, Durian is very high in nutrients, growing up to one foot (30 cm) long and six inches (15 cm) wide and providing about 500 grammes of edible pulp.

Unfortunately, despite its healthy

qualifications, its overpowering smell makes it almost impossible to transport and it is quite difficult to find any retailer in Europe or the USA who offers it.

The transportation of fruits, especially tropical, presents some very special challenges to airfreight operators. According to the UN, a third of perishables is lost or wasted globally – equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes per year.

Humidity, temperature, light, air and insulation are vital considerations, too much humidity encourages bacteria, an excess of light can damage the product, and incorrect handling can lead to the introduction of harmful microorganisms. However, fruit requires respiration from oxygen for carbon dioxide emission and transpiration.

They must also comply with current

regulations regarding transport materials, with most fruits transported at around 3°C to prevent the proliferation of microorganisms.



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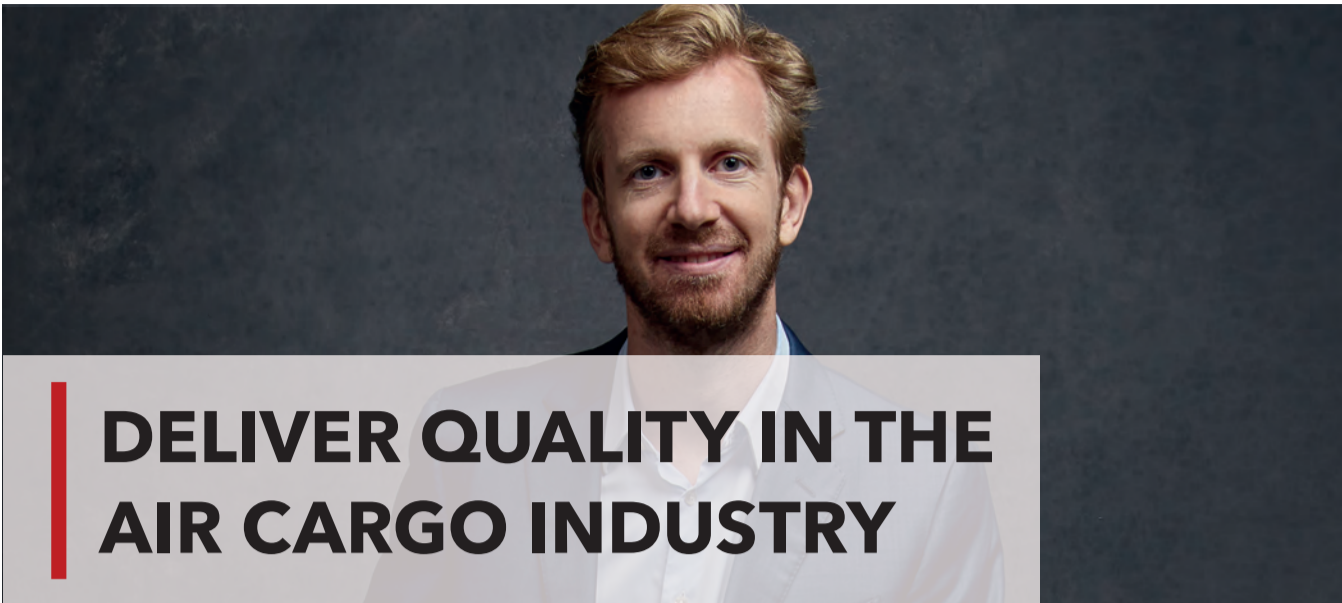
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Annual subscription rates: Print issue: £150 • € 180 • US\$195
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 Digital issue: Free-of-charge

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DELIVER QUALITY IN THE AIR CARGO INDUSTRY

BY Anastasiya SIMSEK

In an era where digitisation and data transparency are key drivers of operational efficiency, CargoAi is focused on pushing innovation in the air cargo industry. With the introduction of their latest feature, CargoQUALITY, CargoAi is looking to provide unprecedented transparency and reliability to the airfreight booking process.

CargoQUALITY will work to achieve this by providing a standardised, data-driven performance overview based on Notify for Delivery (NFD) metrics during and after the booking process. This approach ensures that airlines' performances are measured on a consistent baseline.

"CargoAi is proud to introduce CargoQUALITY, a game-changing solution for air freight booking," Matt Petot, Founder and CEO of CargoAi, shared.

"CargoQUALITY applies a fair, common standard to all airlines, providing CargoMART users with a clear performance overview as an additional

booking consideration factor."

"This is the first time a quality measure is widely available and can be used to make procurement decisions.

"Traditionally, freight forwarders had to rely on anecdotal evidence or personal experience to gauge an airline's reliability and performance. Performance metrics were out of the question during the booking process."

Calculating quality scores

CargoAi collaborates with around 100 airlines displaying their services on CargoMART and has access to data from millions of air waybills (AWBs) tracked over the last 12 months via CargoAi's solutions. Combining this data with their Track & Trace technology, CargoAi takes the planned NFD for every shipment and adds six hours to it. If the NFD for the shipment arrives within that window, the airline receives a score of 1. Otherwise, it's a 0.

"These scores are then tabulated to form a quality score out of 100 percent. This allows us to calculate a quality score per airline per route, reflecting the percentage of shipments ready for delivery within six hours after flight arrival, according to a baseline roadmap derived from booking information."

Benefits to freight forwarders

CargoQUALITY's offers freight forwarders the ability to click the quality icon next to an airline's name when searching for rates and evaluate airline quality scores before making a booking.

By providing detailed performance data and streamlined booking processes, CargoQUALITY empowers forwarders to compete more effectively and improve their operational efficiency without incurring huge costs. This quality overview adds another dimension alongside price, speed, and CO² emissions, enabling more informed booking decisions.

"The idea of using quality data has been shared with airlines and freight forwarders since the CargoQ board meeting in 2022, and we have been trying to find a way to collaborate since then," Petot recounted.

"We provide detailed data to airlines, and they can use it to analyse their quality performance and make improvements where needed."

Data-driven

CargoQUALITY contains historical reports for each airline, detailing their performance over time and how it compares with other airlines on the same route. This historical data enables forwarders to understand an airline's performance trends and make better estimates regarding the progress or upgrades in the airline's processes.

"The solution also helps airlines improve their market presence and operational efficiency by providing insights into their NFD performance, which can be used to drive internal improvements," Petot explained.

"With a growing number of airlines on our platform, we plan to make CargoQUALITY more comprehensive in coverage and completeness of data.

"As the solution matures, we will also build on more historical data, giving our users as much clarity as possible to help them make informed decisions."

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Voice Of The Industry

EATING WHILE YOU DREAM



BY Matthew WARE CEO at CFL, Chairman of Aviation Services UK

LONDON'S Heathrow Airport processes almost three quarters of all UK air cargo, with an annual value of well over £200 billion.

Over 80 percent of that cargo travels in the holds of passenger aircraft, while the rest goes on cargo-only flights.

So, Heathrow is an enormously important part of the UK's global trading network and a key part of the national infrastructure.

However, the challenge for an airport like Heathrow is that cargo makes up only a fraction of its revenue. This means that developing a long-term strategy for cargo can be difficult when passenger flights can be so much more profitable.

So it is at moments like this where, perhaps, we need to recognise that critical infrastructure cannot be left simply to market forces. For Heathrow and the UK, it is important to consider how a coherent strategy can be developed that meets the needs of the economy as well as delivering for the airport itself.

Some of our European counterparts have, in recent years, taken a more strategic approach and are now reaping the benefits.

What might such a strategy consist of? What are the constraints and limitations imposed by today's systems and infrastructure? And what practical steps could be taken now that could help build towards that longer-term solution to what is a critical national problem?

To start, an airport cargo strategy must involve everyone in the cargo delivery and management ecosystem; without this, inefficiencies will always exist, meaning (ultimately) higher costs somewhere in the system.

Involving everyone means working towards a common goal and, more prosaically, agreeing on a common standard for data-sharing.

That delivery/management ecosystem includes the government, the airport itself, cargo handlers, logistics companies, ground handling agents and the airlines.

With an effective cargo strategy in place at Heathrow, the next logical step would be to coordinate with other airports to optimise cargo movement schedules, giving cargo handlers the ability to plan for the future with confidence.

The lack of this wider UK strategy has created problems at Heathrow; for example, there are very few cargo-only slots, and no ad hoc slots are being provided for cargo operators, which means they're having to

move cargo shipments to other UK airports. These airports have ground handling agents with limited experience in dealing with cargo-only aircraft, which creates challenges.

Heathrow also has an ageing cargo infrastructure and plans for redevelopment have been delayed, which has created significant uncertainty, especially for express operators.

By contrast, in Brussels and Amsterdam, the effects of a long-term strategy have meant that, today, cargo operations are more streamlined and integrated into the overall airport planning process.

Brussels Airport's BRUcloud platform is used by almost all participants in the cargo handling and processing network.

Schiphol Airport has developed a data-sharing platform for all internal cargo stakeholders and external authorities, such as Customs.

In addition, a slot booking system is being developed that will help reduce incidents of truck queues at peak times.

Both airports' cargo communities have adopted the IATA ONE Record standard, which means every piece of cargo has a single record that's used across all parts of the system. Such standardisation is highly effective in reducing paperwork and saving time.

With an integrated strategy in place, traditionally difficult issues – such as the availability of cargo slots – are more easily resolved, though even at Schiphol, where an airport-wide strategy exists, these are still hotly debated.

Mandating a minimum number of cargo slots would be the ideal, but this is likely to be fiercely contested by the passenger carriers as these are generally much more profitable – according to the current model of UK airport economics. In addition, if the airport is not in control of airside cargo property, it will have little incentive to favour cargo flights as it won't have a revenue stream from renting.

Various relevant UK bodies, including AICES (the UK trade body for the express sector) and Aviation Services UK (ASUK, which represents ground handlers), have been agitating for mandated minimum cargo slots, largely because it allows express couriers, in particular, to plan with confidence. The current situation prohibits that.

At Schiphol, the cargo lobby is trying to get 2.5 percent of flights to be cargo-only; this is based on the percentage of flights of this kind today.

04
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- **e-commerce**
- **and live animals.**

Brussels Airport is the **preferred pharma & life sciences hub in Europe** with the **largest surface of temperature-controlled warehouses**, supported by digital solutions and offers efficient connections with other major airports and direct access to a dense road network.

Brussels Airport registered **701,000 tonnes flown**

volumes in 2023, outperforming other European airports. The airport is the second most important economic engine in Belgium and is good for 64,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Preferred pharma & life sciences hub

As the leading pharmaceuticals hub in Europe, Brussels Airport has an excellent track record for specialised solutions for time and temperature sensitive shipments.

- Brussels Airport was the first airport in the world where stakeholders of the cargo community received the **CEIV Pharma certification**.
- The cargo zone has **35,000 m² of temperature-controlled warehouses**.
- Brussels Airport ensures the cool chain from the temperature-controlled warehouse to the aircraft with tailored **Airside Pharma Transporters** developed with the sector to bring the unbroken cool chain to the next level.

Digital solutions at the service of a strong community

Brussels Airport is a front runner in the digitisation of its cargo operations. **BRUcloud**, an open data sharing platform, makes data sharing and more efficient digital operations in a cloud environment possible. BRUcloud currently counts 12 different applications all digitising a specific aspect of the air cargo process to provide efficiency and transparency.

A solution that benefits the strong cargo community, that is represented by **Air Cargo Belgium (ACB)**. ACB supports Brussels Airport and its community in being the most attractive, efficient, innovative and successful logistics platform in Europe.

Top notch logistics real estate

Brussels Airport strives to deliver state of the art logistic facilities for its partners. In the past years, realisations include **Brucargo West**, a facility of 50,000 m² with offices and temperature-controlled warehouses and the **Animal Care and Inspection Centre (ACIC)**. This centre has received the coveted IATA Centre of Excellence for Independent Validators (CEIV) Live Animals Certificate. An important recognition of the investments made to provide this top-notch facility and service.

Currently the redevelopment of **Brucargo Central** is ongoing, an 83,500 m² area located in the heart of the cargo zone. The project will be realised in line with the sustainable development strategy of Brussels Airport aiming for Net Zero Carbon, with a BREEAM-Excellent certification.

A sustainable future for air cargo

Sustainability is a strategic priority for Brussels Airport. With its **European Green Deal project "Stargate"**, the airport works with a consortium of 21 partners on some 30 concrete projects to make aviation and airports greener and more sustainable. This includes the introduction of electric ground handling equipment and the further development of digital solutions to lower waiting times and paper use. Brussels Airport continues to work with its community partners and Air Cargo Belgium on a sustainable future for aviation and air cargo.



THE FUTURE OF NORWEGIAN SEAFOOD AIR LOGISTICS



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REGISTER TO ACCELERATE SAF ADOPTION

BY Ajinkya GURAV

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has announced the creation of the Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Registry, aimed at accelerating the adoption of SAF by providing authoritative accounting and reporting on emissions reductions.

The registry, which is set to launch in the first quarter of 2025, has already garnered support from seventeen airlines, one airline group, six national authorities, three Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), and one fuel producer.

IATA sees this as a significant step towards aviation's ambitious decarbonisation goals through greater visibility of the progress that's made. By 2050, SAF is expected to contribute up to 65 percent of the total carbon mitigation required to reach net-zero emissions in air transportation.

"SAF is key to aviation's decarbonisation. Airlines want more SAF and stand ready to use every drop," Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General, stated.

"The SAF registry will help meet the critical needs of all stakeholders as part of the global effort to ramp-up SAF production.



"Governments need a trusted system to track the quality and quantities of SAF used. SAF producers need to accurately account for what has been delivered and effectively decarbonised.

"Corporate customers must be able to transparently account for their Scope 3 emissions. Airlines must be certain that they can claim the environmental benefits of the SAF they purchased. The Registry will meet all these needs."

Capabilities and benefits

The SAF registry is designed with several key features to meet the diverse needs of its stakeholders:

Wide Geographic Scope: The registry will enable airlines to purchase SAF from any location. Each batch's certified environmental attributes can be tracked and assigned to the purchasing airline, ensuring accurate emissions reduction reporting in line with international standards.

Broad application and neutrality: The registry will operate neutrally concerning regulations and SAF types, making it adaptable to various jurisdictions and frameworks. IATA is collaborating with certification organisations and fuel producers to standardise data.

Regulatory compliance: The registry will assist airlines in meeting regulations such as the Carbon Offsetting Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, ensuring transparency and compliance with emissions reduction mandates.

Governance: Independent governance will ensure the system's impartiality and robustness, safeguarding against double counting and double claiming while maintaining the integrity of all data.

Cost efficiency: Participation in the registry will be on a cost-recovery basis to avoid adding unnecessary financial burdens to the SAF ramp-up.



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At United Cargo, we're not just in the business of moving cargo; we're here to keep the world moving forward. Our comprehensive network and proactive, visionary approach provide a sustainable, dependable way to get our customers' freight from here to there.





INSIGHTS INTO THE CHARTER MARKET



Operators in the charter market are no strangers to uncertainty and turbulent times. As Russi Batliwala, Chairman of Chapman Freeborn, explained: "If we lived in a world of absolute peace—no wars, strikes, pandemics, or any other hurdles—our industry would cease to exist."

With nearly 40 years of experience at the charter broker, the one defining trend that Batliwala has seen through that time is volatility.

"It's not surprising when we see sudden spikes in rates due to events like conflicts in the Red Sea or other military issues. Volatility is simply the nature of our business, and as an industry, we've learned to weather both the highs and the lows.

"The ebb and flow of normal chaos and volatility has always been a constant in my experience, and I haven't seen anything to suggest otherwise."

This reality is why adaptability is crucial in the charter space, with operators ready to pivot and adjust to various situations as they arise, offering the right solutions at the right time.

When faced with humanitarian crises or geopolitical conflicts like the situation in the Red Sea, there are critical needs to address, and it's essential to be adaptable and provide tailored solutions to meet those needs. While the scale may differ, the underlying approach remains consistent.

"The reality is that charter brokers thrive on providing solutions when things don't go as planned. Whether it's handling unique requests like transporting animals or car parts or simply being there to fill the gaps left by scheduled carriers, we excel at thinking outside the box and meeting specialised needs.

"While our services encompass a wide range of unconventional cargo, at its core, it's about innovation and being there for our clients when traditional options fall short."

Capacity and capabilities

The landscape of the cargo charter market is undergoing significant changes, particularly with regard to the availability of certain aircraft types. One notable factor is the decline in the presence of Russian aircraft, largely due to geopolitical tensions involving Ukraine and Russia. Many airlines that once flew Russian-registered aircraft are no longer able to do so, significantly limiting capacity.

The most substantial impact is seen in the dwindling numbers of the Antonov An-12 and the Ilyushin Il-76, which have historically been essential workhorses in the industry. While these aircraft were once ubiquitous, their numbers have sharply declined over the past decade.

Several factors contribute to this decline, including challenges related to maintenance and crew availability. As a result, the pool of operators for these aircraft has significantly diminished.

The absence of viable replacements compounds the issue. Unlike the phased-out Boeing 747s, which still have some presence despite

ageing, there are no comparable commercial alternatives to the Antonov and Ilyushin aircraft. This scarcity is exacerbated by the fact that the remaining aircraft in operation are ageing, presenting additional maintenance challenges and operational risks.

"For us as a charter broker, the reduced availability of these aircraft types has a substantial impact," Batliwala outlined.

"While the gradual reduction in the 747 fleet is noteworthy, it pales in comparison to the immediate challenges posed by the scarcity of Antonov and Ilyushin aircraft.

"These aircraft have been crucial for certain types of cargo operations, and their decline underscores the urgent need for innovative solutions to address capacity constraints in the airfreight industry."

Sustainable situation

Sustainability poses one of the most significant challenges for the aviation industry. It starts with the scrutiny of private jets, where individuals may face criticism due to the large CO2 footprint associated with such flights. Now, the focus has shifted to ageing freighter aircraft traversing the globe, prompting many companies to reassess their environmental impact.

Despite efforts like the introduction of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) on select flights, it remains a small-scale solution compared to the industry's overall emissions. Achieving true sustainability in aviation, especially in airfreight, remains a daunting task that requires substantial time and effort.

"In my lifetime, I doubt I'll witness a significant change. Perhaps it might occur in yours," Batliwala suggested.

"The reality of sustainability is not straightforward: flying, whether for individuals or freight, inherently carries an environmental impact. We can't ignore this fact.

"In terms of governance and economic decision-making, there's a noticeable shift towards prioritising sustainability. Governments are increasingly inclined to award contracts to entities with robust sustainability initiatives and carbon-offsetting strategies.

"This trend is particularly evident in countries like Germany and is likely to spread further. Similarly, in the realm of investments, there's a growing emphasis on funding sustainable businesses with proven track records. Investors are increasingly discerning, favouring companies committed to sustainability over those perceived as environmentally harmful.

"In essence, sustainability is not just an abstract concept but a critical concern that will shape our future. It's a multifaceted issue that intersects with various aspects of our lives, including transportation practices like airfreight. "As we navigate this evolving landscape, it's evident that sustainability will be a defining factor in the logistics decision-making processes across industries and sectors."

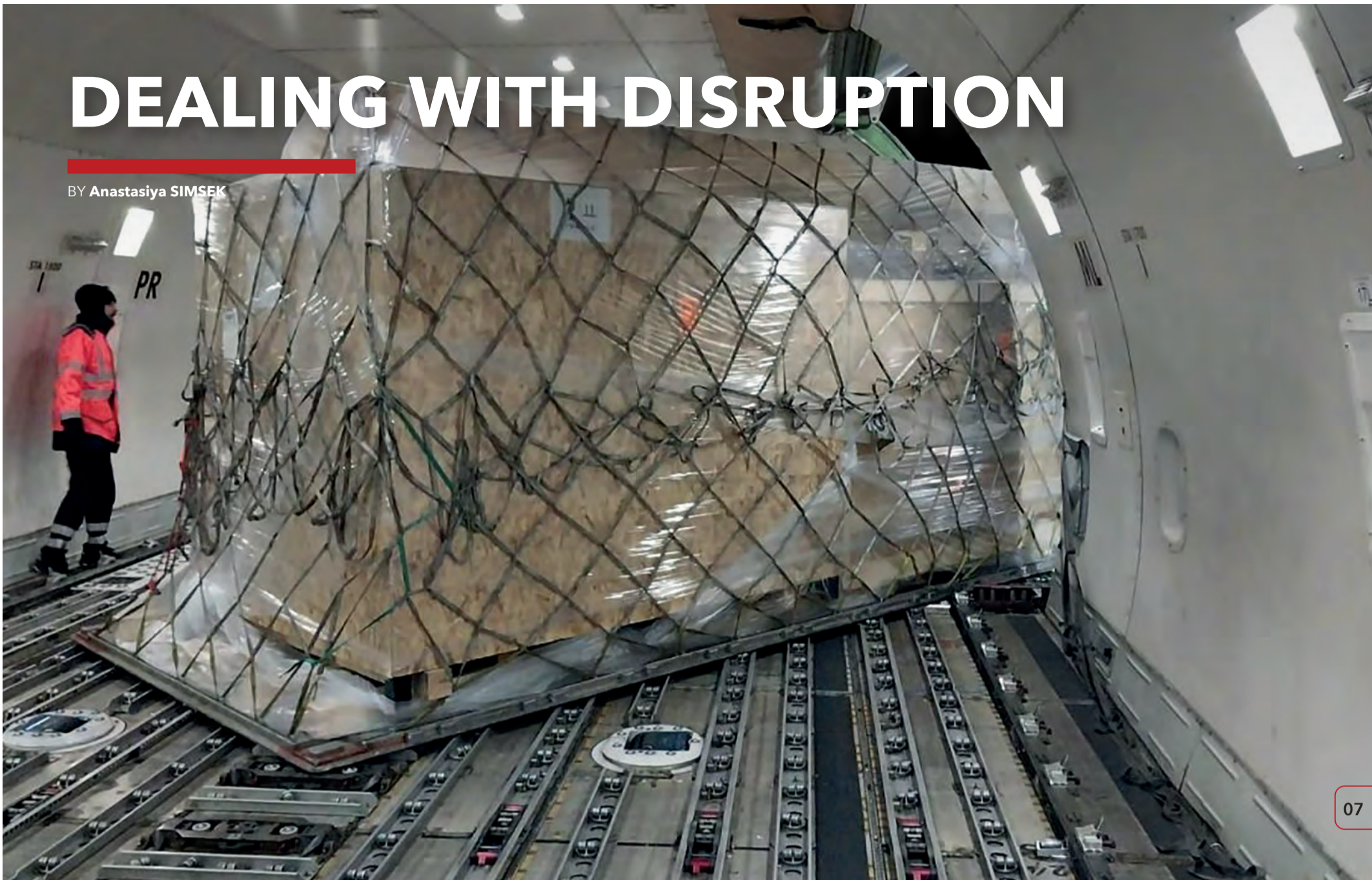
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"This trend is particularly evident in countries like Germany and is likely to spread further."

DEALING WITH DISRUPTION

BY Anastasiya SIMSEK



07

The surge in online shopping has reshaped consumer habits across the APAC region, fuelling a staggering increase in airfreight demand. With the rapid expansion of the e-commerce sector driving demand for swift and reliable transportation solutions, charter operations have emerged as a vital cog in the logistics machinery across the Asia Pacific region.

With a reputation as the world's manufacturing hub that remains unparalleled, Asia, and in particular China, has continued to show economic strength and airfreight dominance despite a shaky period during the pandemic. Even in the face of calls for diversification, its manufacturing prowess continues to attract businesses seeking efficiency and scale, ensuring sustained demand for airfreight services.

"The market in the Asia Pacific region is dominated by e-commerce right now, and that growth will no doubt continue," Dan Morgan-Evans, Global Director Cargo at Air Charter Service, asserted.

Recognising the unique dynamics of the Chinese market, ACS undertook a strategic realignment of its operations across the APAC region.

"The China region needed its own focus. By separating our regions, we can work more specifically in each region. Joseph Tam, our director of cargo for China, is hugely experienced, and we knew that by leaning on his knowledge and talent, he would help accelerate our growth throughout our Chinese offices," Morgan-Evans stated.

This personal, dedicated focus also aids in navigating the diverse economic, cultural, and political landscape of the APAC region demands robust connectivity and cultural fluency. ACS underscores the importance of language proficiency in fostering strong client relationships.

"Languages are a key part of this region and help us penetrate the different markets," he added.

Rate resilience

Despite the challenges that Asia has gone through in recent years, charter rates have generally remained high as demand is high.

"We are in the charter business. Disruption has always been part of our world," Morgan-Evans outlined.

With capacity in the charter market quite tight right now and showing no signs of letting up, the opportunity for those operating in this space remains high.

"I don't see this letting up," he explained, adding that "it's a bit of a different story for general commercial rates, which makes it a very strange market."

Innovative operations

As Asia embraces technological opportunities, ACS has acknowledged the transformative potential of artificial intelligence and automation in streamlining operations.

"We are always looking to utilise technology as a tool in our business but only if it benefits the client," Morgan-Evans added.

"Too often, technology in our world is smoke and mirrors. We tend to concentrate on efficiency to reduce costs and time to our clients and not fancy headlines."



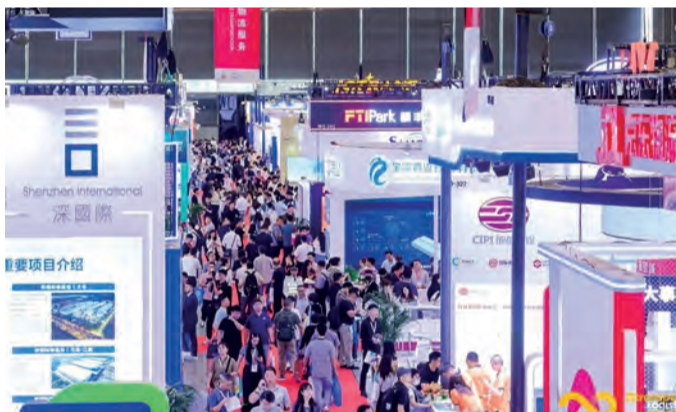
"We are always looking to utilise technology as a tool in our business but only if it benefits the client."



BY Edward HARDY

air cargo China, part of transport logistic China, returned for the first time since 2018, as thousands flooded into the Shanghai New International Expo Centre. Recognised as the leading trade fair for logistics, mobility, IT and supply chain management in the Asia-Pacific region, the event showcased every element of the industry across 10,000 square metres of exhibition space.

"transport logistic and air cargo China once again underlined the validity of Messe München's concept of combining all modes of transport



at one trade fair and thus offering one-stop shopping for shippers and cargo owners," Xu Jia, Chief Executive Officer—Greater China of Messe Muenchen Shanghai, said.

With 36,000+ visitors from 92 countries and regions from countries, the event brought together industry leaders to discuss the topics at the centre of the logistics industry, including the e-commerce revolution, aviation trends, the future of airfreight and trans-pacific trade.

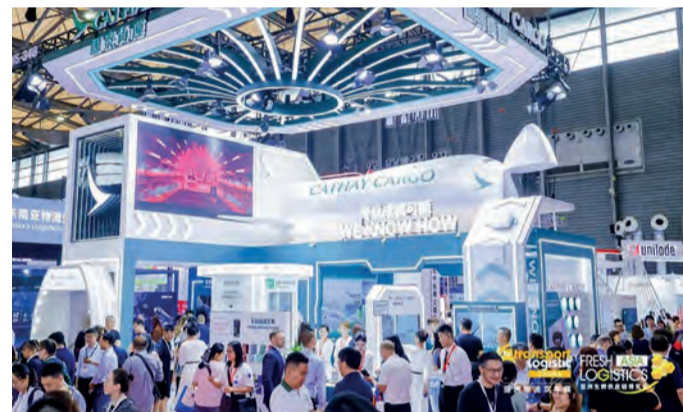
"This strong international participation reflects the enormous economic importance of China and Asia for global logistics," Dr Volker



Wissing, the German Federal Minister for Digital and Transport, stated.

"The topic of artificial intelligence, regarded as a game changer, will be particularly presented here and show its enormous problem-solving potential," he added.

Adjacent to air cargo China, transport logistic China also offered visitors the chance to meet with hundreds of exhibitors covering the



entire spectrum of logistics products, technologies and services, learning about tailored solutions, high-end equipment and exploring the Asian market.

From a deep dive into vehicle logistics, rethinking Chinese-Eurasian rail freight, the maritime-continental Silk Road Summit and more, the transport logistic side of the conference gave a wide range of insights into the Chinese sector and beyond.

Throughout both sides of the event, technology and sustainability were key focuses as attendees explored the 2024 Asia Logistics Technology Forum and looked at how to build an international low-carbon logistics corridor.

"Exhibitors and visitors used the three days intensively to cultivate contacts and initiate business. Concrete contracts were also signed. The trade fair has set a milestone as an indispensable business platform for the logistics industry," Dr. Robert Schönberger, Global Industry Lead transport logistic & air cargo exhibitions of Messe München, added.



08 "This strong international participation reflects the enormous economic importance of China and Asia for global logistics."

AIR CARGO WEEK WORLD AIR CARGO AWARDS CELEBRATES A YEAR OF SUCCESS

BY Anastasiya SIMSEK

Making a spectacular comeback to the region after a six-year break, the Air Cargo Week World Air Cargo Awards (WACA) took centre stage at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre. The prestigious event, integral to air cargo China and transport logistic China, was a celebration of the air cargo industry's outstanding accomplishments.



On the second day of air cargo China, the main stage buzzed with excitement as hundreds of industry professionals gathered to acknowledge the past year's triumphs.

The event was once again hosted by our resident presenter, Steven Weathers, an American who has lived in China for over 18 years. His extensive knowledge of Chinese culture and business practices, as well as his ability to speak fluent Mandarin, makes him the perfect presenter for our Awards.

"This is always a highlight for me, meeting with airports, cargo companies, and logistics firms. The achievements of all nominees are truly impressive," Weathers said.

Commenting on the event's success, Steven Polmans, Managing Director of Air Cargo Week, stated: "Organising our awards during air cargo China (part of transport logistic China) allows us to give our winners the recognition they deserve in the world's largest air cargo market."

The night saw a flurry of accolades, voted on by the industry, honouring

companies for their exceptional contributions across various categories.

AIR CARGO WEEK WORLD AIR CARGO AWARDS 2024: WINNERS

- Airfreight Forwarder of the Year: DHL Global Forwarding
- Air Cargo Handling Agent of the Year: Swissport
- Air Cargo Charter Broker of the Year: Air Charter Service
- Airport of the Year: Viracopos International Airport
- Air Cargo General Sales Agent of the Year: ECS Group
- Air Cargo Industry Customer Care Award: Qatar Airways Cargo
- Air Cargo Industry Achievement Award: Qatar Airways Cargo
- Information Technology for the Air Cargo Industry Award: Webcargo
- Air Cargo Industry Marketing & Promotional Campaign Award: Qatar Airways Cargo
- Cargo Airline of the Year: Qatar Airways Cargo

"We are super happy; we thank you all the customers, all the votes and thanks for everything," mentioned Adrien Thominet, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of ECS Group.

The memorable evening was made possible by the generous support of our sponsors: Air France KLM Martinair Cargo, Awery Aviation Software, Brussels Airport, Cologne Bonn Airport, Euro Cargo Aviation, HACTL, Hong



Kong International Airport, NAV Aero, United Cargo, WebCargo and WorldACD.

"I am so proud of this team. This is a team that delivered throughout the year, has always delivered and will continue to deliver and this belongs to everybody at Qatar Airways Cargo. Thank you all very much," said Mark Drusch, Chief Cargo Officer at Qatar Airways.

Air Cargo Week would also like to extend our appreciation to the dedicated staff and the team at Messe München (MM), as well as the team at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre, for their tireless support. Their behind-the-scenes efforts were crucial to the event's smooth execution.

"We are very excited to receive this award; thank you for the community, thank you all for your partnership, and we hope for everybody's success for years to come," said Joyce Tai, Executive Vice President Worldwide Partnership and Managing Director Asia, Freightos.

See you next year in Munich!



"Organising our awards during air cargo China (part of transport logistic China) allows us to give our winners the recognition they deserve in the world's largest air cargo market"

09

SKYTEAM CARGO INTRODUCES NEW REUSABLE CARTON PALLET

SkyTeam Cargo has introduced the latest developed paper-based carton pallet as a replacement for wood and plastic, Euro and Block pallets at air cargo China.

Weighing between 10 - 15kg less than wooden and plastic pallets, depending on size, SkyTeam Cargo's carton pallets are made from 94 percent recycled fibres, are humidity resistant and comply with ISPM 15 standards. The new carton pallets can be used multiple times, depending on handling and usage, reducing wood consumption, waste and emissions.

"SkyTeam Cargo has been delighted to meet with industry partners during air cargo China to demonstrate how this revolutionary pallet could make a positive impact on their business," John Engelaan, Vice President of SkyTeam Cargo, said.

"The latest version of our carton pallet that not only cuts costs but also has the potential to significantly cut emissions – something the air cargo industry is striving towards.

"Substituting one-way Euro pallets for SkyTeam's multiple-use carton pallets could reduce the industry's wood consumption, weight and emissions."

DR JAN-WILHELM BREITHAUPT SUCCEEDS THOMAS SONNTAG AT JETTAINER

Dr Jan-Wilhelm Breithaupt has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of Jettainer, with the transition marked at a ceremony during air cargo China.

Together with his predecessor, Thomas Sonntag, he informed at air cargo China about past and future developments of the company, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

Breithaupt, an experienced air cargo executive, was previously responsible for global fulfilment management at Lufthansa Cargo and is, therefore, well-acquainted with Jettainer's professional

ULD management services from the customer side.

He has a proven track record on leading digitalisation initiatives within the Lufthansa Group. such as Mobile Boarding Pass, 100 percent electronic Airway Bill and ONE Record.

He thanked Sonntag for his achievements as CEO over the past five years and announced: "With a great team and a worldwide network, Jettainer is very well positioned in the global market. We will now continue to drive forward digital transformation and further improve the efficiency of our services for our global customers."



CHALLENGE GROUP SIGNS MOU WITH CHINA HENAN AVIATION CO. LTD



Challenge Group has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with China Henan Aviation Co., Ltd., the holding company of CGO Airport, during a signing ceremony held at air cargo China.

The MOU was signed on 25th June by Yossi Shoukroun, CEO of Challenge Group, and Liu Jianming, Vice President of China Henan Aviation Co. Ltd. The event was also attended by Sun Shougang, Executive Vice Governor of Henan Province and Offer Gilboa, Founder of the Challenge Group.

This collaboration comes just two months after the merger of CGO Airport and Henan Civil Aviation Development and Investment Co., Ltd. (HNCA) into a new group, enhancing the strategic significance of this MOU.

"We are very pleased with this agreement, which aligns with Challenge Group's expansion plan and corporate values," said Yossi Shoukroun, CEO of Challenge Group.

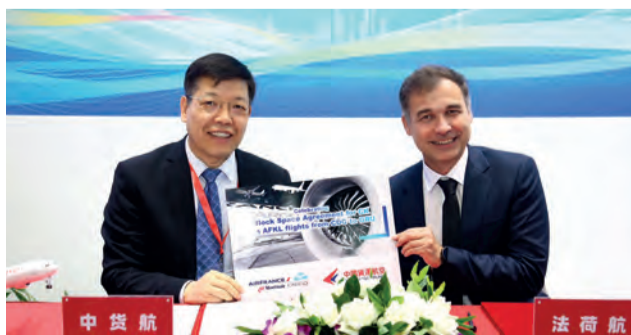
"This partnership supports our business model based on strategic collaborations and strengthens our position in the global logistics industry."

AIR FRANCE KLM MARTINAIR CARGO AND CHINA CARGO AIRLINES STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP

Air France KLM Martinair Cargo and China Cargo Airlines have signed a new hard block space agreement, marking a significant step forward in their partnership. This agreement, which took effect on 1st July, will allow China Cargo Airlines to utilise Air France's belly capacity for shipments from Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) to São Paulo Guarulhos Airport (GRU).

"This new step signifies a deeper partnership and highlights our shared commitment to enhancing our range of services," said Adriaan de Heijer, Executive Vice President of Air France KLM Cargo.

"By capitalising on our extensive networks, we can provide even



greater benefits to our customers. I look forward to the synergies we can generate together."

Wang Jianmin, President of China Cargo Airlines, echoed these sentiments, stating: "In the face of increasing challenges in the air cargo market, we are committed to building stronger and deeper partnerships.

"This step with Air France KLM Martinair Cargo is a significant move towards expanding our aviation network and enhancing our air logistics market. Together, we will provide safe and efficient services to global customers."

60 Seconds With ...



CATHY O'BRIEN

Vice President of International Sales at UPS Healthcare

BY Anastasiya SIMSEK

Cathy O'Brien is Vice President of International Sales at UPS Healthcare, where she is responsible for driving growth across EMEA, APAC and LATAM. O'Brien joined UPS in July 2016 as a Managing Director for UPS Healthcare's European business. Previously, she held several commercial management roles, including driving global strategies in cold chain and specialty pharma logistics.

How did you get into airfreight/logistics?

It was not an intentional move for me, having spent most of my career in the technology space in various sales and marketing roles. I had the opportunity to relocate to Australia, and after spending over a year working there and across APAC, I returned home to Ireland after meeting my now husband.

It was then I decided to change direction, and while I was figuring out my next steps I took a 'temporary' move to manage a technology company for a global transport business. 20 years later, I am still in the industry!

Logistics is a fast-moving industry, and no day is ever the same. The opportunity to work on new projects and with new technologies, all in great team environments, was too attractive to me to leave. I was fortunate to discover a passion for Healthcare supply chain development during this time, and that is where I have spent most of my logistics career to date.

What quote has most resonated with you?

Well done is better than well said – Benjamin Franklin. A lot of people talk the talk, but progress comes from action!

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Never sacrifice who you are for anyone or anything. Always be your authentic self.

If you could have dinner with any three people, living or dead, who would it be and why?

My Grandmother - She died aged almost 103, having lived a long life through World Wars, much change in Ireland and in a time where women were second class citizens in this country. Herself and my grandfather worked extremely hard. She always had a lot of stories to share, and I would love more time with her to get more of her insights!

Steve Jobs – Apple revolutionised our world with the launch of the iPhone. I would love to listen to the story of the journey of that technology, how and when he decided that this was what the company should bet on for their exponential growth journey Taking that risk to cannibalise the iPod was a big decision!

Shirley Chisholm – I just watched a movie "Shirley" about her struggle to be taken seriously in her bid for Congress and her bid for Presidential Election in 1972! I love her self-belief, her grit, determination and can-do attitude. She achieved great success after becoming the first black woman elected to US Congress.

What's something we wouldn't know about you from your CV?

I come from a farm on the west coast of Ireland and have been known to drive a tractor and do some farming with my father at weekends!

What hobby have you always wanted to try but never got around to?

Painting. I like to draw (I do it badly) and always thought I could grow into it as a hobby over the years to challenge myself to become better and better at..... now that my children are older it is something I am

going to sign up to.

If you have not pursued a career in airfreight, what other field would you have liked to go into?

Funnily, one of the areas I originally looked at was Biotechnology. Now, I work with some of the biggest Pharma and Biotech companies in the world, including being involved heavily in the supply chain development for the rollout of the Covid-19 Vaccines.

If you could have any superpower, what would it be?

Super Speed – There is so much to do, and time seems to be going faster as I get older!

What's your proudest moment and your biggest regret?

My proudest moment so far, apart from when my children were born, has been working on the Covid-19 Vaccine Supply Chain. The Pandemic was one of those events that are life-changing in so many ways and it was a time in history when the world united and when everyone needed real collaboration from everyone to fight the same enemy.

To be able to use my experience and skills as part of a team to support the delivery of over one billion vaccines throughout the world is something I will treasure forever and I thank UPS for that opportunity to be part of something so important and special.

My biggest regret is that I didn't see my grandmother before she passed away.

If there was a movie made about your life, who would you like to see play the lead role?

Cate Blanchett.

Looking back over your career, what would your message be to someone considering a career in logistics?

Find a company that can offer you varied roles and opportunities within the area of logistics. It is such a broad career, ranging from commercial roles to operations to quality and everything in between.

At UPS, people are supported in developing so many skills across the business, and that creates great diversity of thought and experience, as well as creating a career development path for talents in so many functional areas. I would recommend working for a company with that broad career progression, being curious to try new roles and learning as much as possible across the business.

Logistics is on a new journey of growth and innovation as supply chain becomes a topic for every business, the opportunities are vast for young people in this industry!

How do you motivate your team?

Recognition is important even for the small achievements.

In healthcare logistics, a lot of work goes into building the right quality solutions and services for the needs of our customers and their patients. My team is passionate about what they do and so embracing that and recognising that they put their heart and soul into delivering for customers' needs to be celebrated often.

As a leader of a team, I make time to roll up my sleeves and get stuck in with the team to get things done. It's critical they know that we are all working together and that they can rely on me to solve problems and fix issues. For me, authenticity is key, so by remaining my authentic self I hope to create a culture of sharing, transparency and confidence.

What is the one item you can't travel without?

Airpods – I travel a lot, I have a lot of conference calls on the go and I like to walk a lot. These are my constant travel companions.

Who is your role model?

My 16-year-old daughter. I admire her independence, her joy and sense of humour, her positive attitude and how much dignity and self-worth she has developed at such a young age. I look at her and want to focus on embracing all the positive things in life. She makes me a better person and her tenacity surprises me constantly.



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AIR CARGO WEEK

SUPPLEMENT

MIDDLE EAST

YOUR GUIDE TO THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL AIRFREIGHT INDUSTRY

BRUN: MIDDLE EASTERN AIR CARGO MARKET IS EVOLVING SIGNIFICANTLY

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION



Q & A WITH ANDY WATSON, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, UAE, KENYA & EGYPT, HAE



We love your cargo

<https://www.brusselsairport.be/en/cargo>



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION



It only takes a glance at the world map to notice how important the Middle East's geographical position is to the global airfreight supply chain. Its importance springs from several key factors.

For instance, it is strategically positioned at the crossroads of major global trade routes connecting Asia, Europe and Africa. This central location enables efficient and cost-effective transportation of goods between these continents. For instance, Dubai, one of the region's primary air cargo hubs, is within an 8-hour flight to two-thirds of the world's population.

The region is home to some of the world's largest and most advanced air cargo hubs, such as Dubai International Airport (DXB) and Hamad International Airport (DOH) in Doha. These hubs serve as critical transshipment points for global air cargo, offering extensive connectivity and state-of-the-art facilities that handle significant cargo volumes efficiently.

The Middle East's role in global trade extends beyond air cargo. The region's economic activities, such as energy exports and increasing diversification into non-oil sectors, generate substantial cargo volumes that necessitate efficient logistics solutions. This economic dynamism further enhances the region's importance as a hub for global air cargo.

The region often serves as a reliable alternative when other global logistics routes face disruptions. For example, during disruptions in container shipping in the Red Sea, Middle Eastern hubs like Dubai saw significant increases in air cargo traffic as businesses sought reliable alternatives to sea freight.

These are some of the reasons that the region's air cargo market has been experiencing robust growth while playing a crucial role in global logistics due to its strategic location and significant investments in infrastructure. As well as millions of dollars in investments in the regional airfreight sector in the Middle East has seen substantial growth in demand. For instance, air cargo demand in January 2024 rose by 18.4% year-on-year, driven by the booming e-commerce sector and increasing international trade. This trend continued into February with an 11.9% increase in demand compared to the same period the previous year.

Dubai, of course, remains a pivotal hub for airfreight, particularly due to its strategic position connecting Asia, Europe and Africa. Recent data showed a significant increase in Dubai-Europe air cargo traffic, with a 146% rise in tonnage in February 2024 compared to the previous year. The growth in demand has been supported by an increase in available cargo capacity. In January 2024, the capacity measured in available cargo tonne-kilometres (ACTKs) increased by 14.6%, largely due to the rise in belly capacity from passenger aircraft returning to service.

While the sector is performing well, challenges such as economic uncertainties, particularly regarding China's economic slowdown, and political instability in certain regions remain concerns. However, the ongoing digitalisation, efforts to enhance efficiency, and sustainability initiatives are expected to support continued growth and resilience in the market.

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Erratum

In the last supplement, on pharmaceuticals, there was an inadvertent mention that referenced a co-operation agreement between CMA CGM Air Cargo and AFKLM Cargo in 2023. AFKLM Cargo has asked us to point out that this agreement is now concluded.

We are happy to acknowledge this error on our part and apologise to AFKLM Cargo for this confusion by erroneously entering this in the article.

BRUN: MIDDLE EASTERN AIRCRAFT CARGO IS EVOLVING SIGNIFICANTLY

“New players are emerging, contributing to the region’s rapid development and transformation.”

In February 2024, Etihad Airways appointed Stanislas Brun as its new Vice President of Cargo, based at the carrier’s Abu Dhabi headquarters. Brun is responsible for overseeing commercial operations, including scheduled and charter flights, revenue management, and network planning. He reports directly to Etihad Airways’ chief operating officer, Mohammad Al Bulooki;

Before joining Etihad Cargo, he served as senior vice president of global airfreight at Geodis. Expressing his enthusiasm for his new role, Brun stated on his appointment that it was a privilege to take on the new challenge at Etihad Cargo.

Here in a major media interview, Brun talks airfreight matters with the ACW Middle East supplement.

The Middle Eastern airfreight sector is currently navigating several significant challenges despite an overall positive growth outlook. Do you agree with this opinion?

I agree with the opinion that the Middle Eastern airfreight sector is currently navigating several significant challenges despite an overall positive growth outlook. Over the last five years, the Middle East has experienced a lot of developments, with some companies showing strong growth while others face considerable headwinds. This period has also seen significant changes in management across major airlines in the region, marking a notable shift and a changing of the guard. Such extensive changes within a short timeframe in a region are quite unusual compared to the relative stability seen in other regions.

New players are emerging, contributing to the region’s rapid development and transformation. Government investments in these countries have further bolstered economic growth and development, leading to the establishment of new airlines and expansion of others with ambitious plans each year. These developments are not confined to the Middle East alone; we also observe airlines in India placing orders for new aircraft and targeting expansion, reflecting a broader trend. The Indian and Middle Eastern air cargo markets are evolving significantly to keep pace with their economic advancements, illustrating both the opportunities and challenges facing the sector.

It is reported by IATA that infrastructure at some airports in the region is struggling to keep pace with the growth in cargo volumes. This can lead to bottlenecks and delays. Do you agree with this observation?

Some airports in the Middle East are struggling to keep pace with the growth in cargo volumes, which can lead to bottlenecks and delays. However, there are notable exceptions, such as Abu Dhabi,

where significant efforts are being made to develop and enhance infrastructure. Abu Dhabi has demonstrated its capacity to manage challenging situations effectively. For example, during recent adverse weather events and heavy air traffic, Abu Dhabi Airport showcased its ability to handle such conditions efficiently. Despite these challenges, the airport maintained its operations efficiently, with the passenger terminal remaining open and flights from other airlines diverted to Zayed International Airport.

Etihad Cargo is collaborating closely with Abu Dhabi Airports on a master plan for a new cargo terminal, which is slated to open within the next two years. This initiative aims to create a state-of-the-art cargo terminal capable of meeting future demands. Current capabilities already allow e-commerce cargo arriving at Zayed International Airport to be cleared within 12 hours, and ongoing investments are set to support increasing air traffic. Abu Dhabi’s proactive approach, with a robust growth plan and space for expansion, ensures that it is well-prepared to handle increased cargo volumes without facing significant hurdles in the foreseeable future. This contrasts with other airports in the region that may not be as advanced in their infrastructure development, highlighting the varied capacity and preparedness across different Middle Eastern airports.

Etihad Airways management said that the airline has embarked on an exciting period of significant growth in its cargo operations in the UAE. Can you outline what sort of growth you are aiming for?

Etihad Cargo is embarking on a significant growth phase for its operations, driven by substantial investments and strategic initiatives. A key growth area is the pharmaceutical market where Etihad Cargo





AN AIR CARGO MARKET ANTLY

is developing pharma corridors with the support of Abu Dhabi's Department of Health, aligning with the vision of making Abu Dhabi a global healthcare hub. Following the successful launch of SecureTech, we are also developing our products further to ensure we are well-placed to meet our customers' requirements in the future.

Strategic partnerships, such as our collaboration with SF Airlines, have expanded Etihad Cargo's reach, increasing freighter services to the Chinese market. Etihad Cargo is also focused on enhancing value propositions through improved palletisation, advanced track and trace systems, and temperature-controlled solutions. Additionally, digital integration with customers' systems is being enhanced for seamless access to Etihad Cargo's capabilities. These initiatives collectively aim to strengthen Etihad Cargo's operational footprint, improve service quality, and position Abu Dhabi as a leading global logistics hub. Furthermore, Abu Dhabi is enhancing its infrastructure, including the recent launch of a new passenger terminal and an upcoming dedicated cargo terminal at Zayed International Airport.

How important was it for Etihad Cargo to sponsor MiPharma Global Conference this month? Are you proud to have had such a role?

Sponsoring the MiPharma Global Conference was another way for Etihad Cargo to demonstrate the importance of the industry to the region. Our PharmaLife product is a key focus area for us, emphasising our commitment to the pharmaceutical sector and aligning with Abu Dhabi's vision of becoming a global hub for healthcare and life sciences.

Hosting such an international event, sponsored by the Department of Culture & Tourism, in Abu Dhabi underscores the emirate's growing prominence on the global stage. We are proud to have played a significant role in this conference, showcasing our dedication to supporting and advancing the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry.

Do you utilise Road Feeder Services in the region?

Yes, we definitely utilise Road Feeder Services in the region. Etihad Cargo's network includes daily truck operations within the UAE, providing a 24/7 land bridge between Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah, connecting various airports, and feeding cargo to and from our hub in Abu Dhabi. In partnership with Noatum Logistics, we operate 26 trucks daily, ensuring efficient cargo movement between airports. Additionally, we extend these services to other countries in the GCC, further enhancing our logistics capabilities and connectivity throughout the region.

How successful have the new temperature-controlled cool dollies added to EASC's Abu Dhabi fleet been?

The addition of new temperature-controlled cool dollies to Etihad

Cargo's Abu Dhabi fleet is extremely important for Etihad Cargo, providing extra measures to maintain product integrity especially in the summer months. Manufactured in partnership with Bombelli in Italy, these cool dollies have significantly enhanced our ability to maintain the temperature of sensitive cargo during transit, which is crucial for pharmaceutical manufacturers and other commodities like flowers and perishables. This innovation ensures temperature control on the apron, which is essential for handling such sensitive items. Following the implementation of these cool dollies, several pharmaceutical companies have expressed their commitment to further development with us.

Moreover, the inauguration of our state-of-the-art, CEIV Pharma-certified pharma hub in Abu Dhabi has reinforced our customers' confidence in our capabilities. These advancements highlight Etihad Cargo's dedication to supporting Abu Dhabi's vision of becoming a global hub for healthcare, pharmaceuticals, and life sciences.

To meet the increased demand for charter services due to a surge in e-commerce in the UAE, which has seen Etihad Cargo receive 35% more charter requests and operate 23% more charters in 2023 compared to the previous year, you have partnered with Awery. Is this e-commerce coming into the UAE or leaving the UAE?

We are seeing both — part of this cargo is in transit via the UAE, and the rest is destined for locations across the GCC. While there is notable growth in e-commerce directed towards destinations within the GCC due to the region's developing economies, the vast majority of this e-commerce cargo is in transit to other destinations in our global network. This highlights the UAE's strategic role as a key logistics hub in the region.

How significant is e-commerce traffic compared with 'traditional' cargo traffic?

E-commerce traffic is increasingly significant compared to traditional cargo traffic. It is a major driver of global cargo growth, gradually replacing some traditional retail channels. This shift is evident as general cargo volumes decrease globally while e-commerce continues to expand. However, e-commerce generates unbalanced flows, particularly outside of China and Hong Kong, leading to high outbound volumes with relatively low return loads. This dynamic highlights the growing importance of e-commerce in the cargo industry, although it also presents challenges in managing uneven traffic patterns.

What is the average age of cargo staff in the UAE? Do you have any significant number of female

“E-commerce traffic is increasingly significant compared to traditional cargo traffic”



employees? How easy is it to get trained personnel at the moment?

The average age of cargo staff in the UAE is 41. Etihad Cargo has a robust recruitment and development programme designed to attract young, tech-savvy talent to continue driving innovation and leveraging technology. Additionally, 30% of Etihad Cargo's operations and commercial teams are female, and 22% of the senior leadership team are women. The executive leadership team at Etihad Airways is committed to building a diverse, inclusive and equal organisation, as demonstrated by various support programmes. I firmly believe that gender balance in cargo is crucial, and despite traditional perceptions of the industry, we are seeing an increasing number of women in managerial roles across sectors such as revenue management, sales, customer service, and operations.

Securing trained personnel is currently not a challenge for Etihad Cargo, thanks to our strong focus on training and our reputation as an employer of choice. We attract some of the industry's top talent across a diverse range of specialities, bringing international experience from various parts of the globe. The collective experience and competencies of these professionals enable Etihad Cargo to maintain its status as one of the best organisations to work for.

Do you employ many foreign nationals in the cargo operation?

Naturally, as Etihad Cargo is based in the UAE, we are a diverse organisation and employ different nationalities from around the world. We currently employ 40 nationalities, drawing from their rich international experience. This diversity enriches our operations and contributes to our global perspective and capabilities.

What role do you think AI will have in the airline's cargo operations and planning in the coming years?

AI is already playing a significant role in Etihad Cargo's operations and planning, and its importance will continue to grow in the coming years. Digitalisation is a key priority for me personally, and AI is integral to this transformation. For instance, we utilise AI-powered tools to optimise cargo capacity and streamline handling processes. Furthermore, we recently released Sales Cockpit in partnership with Rotare; this tool enhances our sales organisation's ability to communicate more effectively and deeply with our customers about actual flows and opportunities. As we continue to innovate, AI will be crucial in optimising operations, improving customer interactions, and driving efficiency across our cargo operations.

Rising operational costs, driven by increased fuel prices and higher insurance premiums, are pressuring profit margins. You must balance these costs while trying to maintain competitive pricing and service levels. Easy or difficult?

Balancing rising operational costs while maintaining competitive pricing and service levels is undoubtedly challenging. However, the industry has recognised this necessity, especially in the wake of COVID-19. There is now a significant focus on optimising cost structures across organisations and improving pricing, booking, and communication channels. Digitalisation is a must for freight forwarders and airlines alike to enhance efficiency and reduce costs while ensuring seamless communication of essential information to shippers and authorities. Additionally, the type of aircraft in our fleet plays a vital role in managing fuel consumption and costs. For example, Etihad Cargo's fleet has an average age of 7.5 years, and we operate the most recent, fuel-efficient aircraft available. This approach helps us control costs while maintaining our commitment to high service levels and competitive pricing.

What utilisation are you getting from your freighters? Any plans to increase the fleet?

Today, we operate five freighters in Etihad Cargo's fleet, optimising their utilisation to achieve more than 15 flying hours per day. We are committed to maximising efficiency and meeting growing demand. Looking ahead, we have plans to expand our fleet and will continue to explore opportunities to increase our capacity, ensuring we can support our customers' needs effectively.

Have you any other thought/observation on the Middle East for my report?

The Middle East is undergoing rapid development and strengthening economically, with the UAE at the forefront. The UAE, in particular, offers incredible stability and has a strong vision for future development, making it an attractive hub for various industries. This dynamic environment presents numerous opportunities for growth and innovation, reinforcing the region's strategic importance on the global stage.

Whatever you see in the world is

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More than 2 million tons of cargo is transported to the world from SMARTIST annually with Turkish Cargo, the air cargo brand that flies to the most destinations in the world.



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Q & A WITH ANDY WATSON, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, UAE, KENYA & EGYPT, HAE

“We have had a very strong start to the year here in the UAE and are seeing the actual tonnage backing up the projections”

The UK-based aviation services company has much business activity in the Middle East which gives it a good perspective on business prospects in the region.

The Middle Eastern airfreight sector is currently navigating several significant challenges despite an overall positive growth outlook. How are you keeping afloat?

Whilst we acknowledge the market is very competitive and a lot of capacity has come back into the market, we are lucky to represent one of the largest freighter fleets in the region in terms of DHL Aviation and airlines with expanding capacity in terms of Air Astana, Air Canada and Etihad as a GSA in the region.

Can there be any more significant location for you in the region than Dubai? Have you any plans to expand office locations in the region?

The UAE is a key home market for us, which also allows us to offer cross trade, interline and export and import services. We also have representation via agents in other GCC countries and have our own operations in Egypt. We are always keen to grow.

The Middle Eastern airfreight market is expected to grow significantly, with IATA projecting a 12.3% increase in cargo demand for 2024. Are you seeing this in your turnover/activity?

We have had a very strong start to the year here in the UAE and are seeing the actual tonnage backing up the projections. The Middle East will always be very competitive due to its position as an ideal hub to feed into Africa, the GCC and most destinations globally direct. The current market reflects this with a lot of the world's largest carriers based in the region and others offering significant capacity to multiple destinations, with multiple rotations. This makes maximising revenue and capacity extremely challenging on a week-to-week basis. We have also seen an increase in our interline activity, another key strand to how we can support our carrier partners.

Concerns over China's economic performance and inflationary pressures in the US contribute to fluctuations in demand for air cargo for carriers operating in the Middle East. Is that your experience?

Not really at this stage but things are so fluid globally we need to

remain proactive and agile to changes in demand and always have our solutions in place. For example the recent upswing in sea/air brings opportunity for companies such as ours.

What sort of tonnages are your airline clients sending out of Dubai? Where are the major traffic flows going out of the UAE?

We have seen a major increase in tonnages month-on-month across all our airlines we represent. Sea/air business remains the primary service and we are seeing large volume spikes increasing ex ISC and Asia via the ME region. However we are also seeing further developments with the traditional transit through the region moving towards uplift direct from origin to destinations.

How long have you been established in Dubai? What staff levels have you got?

We have been established in Dubai since 2006. We have eight staff covering commercial and operation requirements supported by our team of six ops and C/S staff in NBO who provide a variety of functions for us.

Do you circulate staff from EMA to DUB for operational reasons?

No. However we trade and utilise expertise and knowledge from across the group through our own HAE online platform. We are unique in the fact that we have our own self developed Quote Management System – QMS. QMS allows us to share functions many companies do in country offshore for example, we do our sales and local customer service in country, we do our ops and data capture offshore and we do our solutions work in a variety of countries.

What is your general opinion of the region as a source of business for HAE Group?

The region continues to be a key strategic office and HUB for HAE. We have a very strategic, important footprint that we have invested in for many years. We have one of the largest presences for a global GSA company in the Middle East region and have built it over the past 15 years or so. It allows us to service, and assist where required, both ME based carriers but also our interline airline partners wishing to establish services in the ME region. Our local knowledge both operationally and commercially is of significant value within the group and its offices globally.

GCC REMAINS A PIVOTAL GATEWAY

Albion Aviation Group has partnered with a leading Logistics Service Provider (LSP) in the United Arab Emirates to offer third-party Business-to-Consumer (B2C) customs clearance and final mile delivery solutions for e-commerce shipments. This collaboration leverages a dedicated 2,500 sq m customs-bonded warehouse at Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH), allowing for immediate arrival and clearance of shipments before final mile delivery to any location within the UAE.

The facility features direct airside access, in-house screening capabilities and on-site customs officers, ensuring some of the fastest processing times among LSPs in the region. Operating 24/7, 365 days a year, the LSP provides fully integrated IT systems for real-time parcel tracking and adheres to local customs regulations.

Albion Aviation prefers not to disclose the identity of the LSP, to avoid Albion being sidestepped in the market. However, it is a major listed company specialising in e-commerce and 3PL.

Lewis King, Albion director, comments: "This is a value-added service for our existing clients, including freight forwarders, logistics providers, and global e-commerce shippers. We are thrilled about our new LSP partnership in the UAE and expanding our range of services."

Regarding the Middle Eastern airfreight sector, Lewis observes that it is currently navigating several significant challenges despite an overall positive growth outlook.

He says: "We actually have a very positive outlook and particularly for the e-commerce sector, where there is growing demand and user adoption year on year in the GCC market. A market where there is plenty of disposal income and purchasing power parity within certain demographics. Furthermore transport hubs like the UAE have been pivotal in servicing the ongoing sea-air demand due to the security concerns of routing cargo via the Red Sea to Europe."

"We are focusing on the UK e-commerce market via our Albion UK office and of course countries such as China, including Hong Kong and Taiwan where most of the e-commerce goods originate from for the GCC region."

"The GCC region will remain a pivotal gateway to other continents such as Africa, Europe and further afield to North America, which is credit to the transport infrastructure that countries like the UAE have built and invested in over the past few decades. The UAE continues to lead the way in establishing itself as one of the most important transport corridors here in the region."

He notes the key advantages of the e-commerce LSP setup at Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH) include: warehouse access to the flight line for expedited shipment processing times, in-house X-Ray screening machine, a temperature-controlled warehouse, on-site customs office operating 24/7 for immediate clearances and in-house build and break capabilities for lower deck and main deck ULDs.



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MIDDLE EAST FACT FILE

Where

The following countries are commonly considered part of the Middle East:

1. Bahrain
2. Egypt
3. Iran
4. Iraq
5. Israel
6. Jordan
7. Kuwait
8. Lebanon
9. Oman
10. Palestine
11. Qatar
12. Saudi Arabia
13. Syria

14. Turkey
15. United Arab Emirates (UAE)
16. Yemen

Egypt, while primarily in North Africa, is also included due to its strong cultural and historical connections to the Middle East.

Top Players

Top 10 air cargo airlines in the region:

1. Emirates SkyCargo
 - Hub: Dubai International Airport (DXB)
 - Base Country: United Arab Emirates
 - Specialty: Wide network, diverse cargo including perishables, pharmaceuticals and high-value goods.
2. Qatar Airways Cargo
 - Hub: Hamad International Airport (DOH)
 - Base Country: Qatar
 - Fleet Size: 28 dedicated freighters
 - Specialty: Strong network in Europe, Asia and Americas specialised solutions for pharmaceuticals and perishables.
3. Etihad Cargo
 - Hub: Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH)
 - Base Country: United Arab Emirates
 - Fleet Size: Five freighters, along with belly-hold capacity in passenger aircraft
 - Specialty: Focus on pharmaceuticals, electronics and fashion.
4. Saudia Cargo
 - Hub: King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED)
 - Base Country: Saudi Arabia
 - Fleet Size: Around seven freighters, significant belly-hold capacity
 - Specialty: Strong presence in Europe, Africa, and Asia, diverse cargo services.
5. Turkish Cargo
 - Hub: Istanbul Airport (IST)
 - Base Country: Turkey
 - Fleet Size: Over 20 freighters, extensive belly-hold capacity
 - Specialty: Extensive global network, special cargo handling, including livestock and pharmaceuticals.
6. El Al Cargo
 - Hub: Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV)
 - Base Country: Israel
 - Fleet Size: Primarily belly-hold in passenger aircraft
 - Specialty: Security-sensitive cargo, strong connections to Europe and North America.
7. EgyptAir Cargo
 - Hub: Cairo International Airport (CAI)
 - Base Country: Egypt
 - Fleet Size: Several dedicated freighters
 - Specialty: Strong connections within Africa, Europe and the Middle East; diverse cargo types.
8. Iran Air Cargo
 - Hub: Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKA)
 - Base Country: Iran
 - Fleet Size: Limited number of freighters, significant belly-hold capacity
 - Specialty: Regional cargo, diverse commodities.
9. Kuwait Airways Cargo
 - Hub: Kuwait International Airport (KWI)
 - Base Country: Kuwait
 - Fleet Size: Primarily belly-hold in passenger aircraft
 - Specialty: Regional cargo services, growing network.
10. Oman Air Cargo
 - Hub: Muscat International Airport (MCT)
 - Base Country: Oman



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- Fleet Size: Limited number of dedicated freighters, significant belly-hold capacity
- Specialty: Regional and international cargo, specialised handling services.

Population numbers

The estimated populations for Middle Eastern countries as of 2023:

1. Bahrain: 1,783,000
 2. Egypt: 109,300,000
 3. Iran: 87,420,000
 4. Iraq: 43,270,000
 5. Israel: 9,700,000
 6. Jordan: 11,200,000
 7. Kuwait: 4,391,000
 8. Lebanon: 5,482,000
 9. Oman: 4,603,000
 10. Palestine: 5,270,000
 11. Qatar: 2,938,000
 12. Saudi Arabia: 35,870,000
 13. Syria: 21,920,000
 14. Turkey: 85,710,000
 15. United Arab Emirates (UAE): 9,972,000
 16. Yemen: 33,970,000
- Estimated regional population in 2023: 472,799,000

Regional history

The dawn of aviation in the Middle East began in 1909, six years after the Wright brothers' famous flight on the coast of North Carolina. In a cold and blustery December of that year, Belgian Baron Pierre de Caters and the world-renowned Frenchman Louis Blériot piloted the first heavier-than-air flying machines over Istanbul — then commonly known in Europe as Constantinople — the capital of the Ottoman Empire, which encompassed much of the Middle East at the time.

Early developments

- 1932: EgyptAir is founded, one of the oldest airlines in the Middle East, and begins operations with cargo services as part of its offerings.

Post-World War II expansion

- 1945: Middle East Airlines (MEA) is established in Lebanon, contributing to regional airfreight services.

- 1947: The founding of Gulf Air, originally a private company owned by a Bahraini entrepreneur, significantly impacts air transport in the Gulf region.

Modernisation and growth

- 1985: The establishment of Emirates in Dubai, which rapidly grows to become one of the world's leading air cargo carriers.
- 1993: Qatar Airways is founded, with Qatar Airways Cargo becoming a major player in global airfreight.

Technological advancements and network expansion

- 2003: The introduction of the Airbus A380 and Boeing 777 by Emirates SkyCargo enhances capacity and efficiency for airfreight services.

- 2004: Etihad Airways is founded, with Etihad Cargo quickly developing into a significant airfreight carrier in the region.

21st Century developments

- 2010: Qatar Airways Cargo introduces its first dedicated freighter aircraft, enhancing its cargo capabilities.

- 2014: Saudia Cargo expands its fleet with the addition of Boeing 747-8F and Boeing 777F freighters, boosting its cargo capacity.

Recent innovations and challenges

- 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic prompts Middle Eastern carriers to adapt by increasing cargo operations due to the drop in passenger flights. Emirates SkyCargo, Qatar Airways Cargo and Etihad Cargo play crucial roles in transporting medical supplies and vaccines globally.

- 2021: The Abraham Accords open up new opportunities for airfreight between Israel and several Arab countries, including the UAE and Bahrain, fostering greater regional trade connectivity.

These dates reflect key milestones that have helped shape the airfreight industry in the Middle East, highlighting the region's strategic importance in global logistics and trade.

Top cargo airports

Some of the top cargo airports in the Middle East along with their approximate annual cargo tonnages:

1. Dubai International Airport (DXB), UAE
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Approximately 2.5 million tonnes
 - Key Features: Major hub for Emirates SkyCargo, extensive global network.
2. Doha Hamad International Airport (DOH), Qatar
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Around 2.1 million tonnes
 - Key Features: Hub for Qatar Airways Cargo, state-of-the-art facilities.
3. Bahrain Airport
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Approximately 350,000 tonnes
 - Key Features: Express Cargo Village.
4. King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED), Saudi Arabia
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Around 600,000 tonnes
 - Key Features: Major cargo gateway for Saudia Cargo, strategic location.
5. King Khalid International Airport (RUH), Saudi Arabia

- Annual Cargo Tonnage: Approximately 450,000 tonnes
 - Key Features: Key cargo hub in the Saudi capital, supports domestic and international freight.
6. Sharjah International Airport (SHJ), UAE
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Around 400,000 tonnes
 - Key Features: Significant cargo operations, strategic location for regional freight.
 7. Istanbul Airport (IST), Turkey
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Approximately 1.4 million tonnes
 - Key Features: Major hub for Turkish Cargo, extensive global reach.
 8. Kuwait International Airport (KWI), Kuwait
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Around 250,000 tonnes
 - Key Features: Growing cargo operations, strategic position in the Gulf region.
 9. Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY), Lebanon
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Approximately 150,000 tonnes
 - Key Features: Key cargo gateway for Lebanon, supports regional trade.
 10. Muscat International Airport (MCT), Oman
 - Annual Cargo Tonnage: Around 200,000 tonnes
 - Key Features: Hub for Oman Air Cargo, modern cargo facilities.

These tonnages are estimates based on the latest available data and may vary slightly year to year.

Future proof

Several planned and upcoming airports in the Middle East aim to bolster the region's position as a global aviation hub. Here are some notable projects:

Saudi Arabia

1. King Salman International Airport (Riyadh)
 - Key Features: Planned to be one of the world's largest airports, serving as a new hub for Riyadh.
 - Capacity: Expected to handle up to 185 million passengers annually by 2050.
 - Completion: Initial phases by 2030.

Neom Bay Airport

- Location: Neom
- Key Features: Part of the Neom mega-city project, focusing on futuristic technologies and sustainability.

- Capacity: Designed to handle significant cargo volumes.

- Completion: First phase operational, full completion expected in the 2030s.

Red Sea International Airport

- Location: Red Sea Project
- Key Features: Serves the luxury tourism project along the Red Sea coast.
- Completion: Expected to be fully operational by 2030.

United Arab Emirates

4. Al Maktoum International Airport (Dubai World Central - DWC)
 - Location: Dubai
 - Key Features: Planned to be the largest airport in the world when fully completed.
 - Capacity: Ultimately handling over 12 million tonnes of cargo annually.
 - Completion: Ongoing phased expansion, with major milestones expected around 2030.

Qatar

5. Hamad International Airport Expansion
 - Location: Doha
 - Key Features: Major expansion to increase capacity and enhance facilities.
 - Completion: Expected by 2025.

Oman

6. Muscat International Airport Expansion
 - Location: Muscat
 - Key Features: Continued expansion to increase capacity and modernise facilities.
 - Completion: Various phases, with significant improvements by 2030.

Kuwait

7. Kuwait International Airport (New Terminal 2)
 - Location: Kuwait City
 - Key Features: New terminal to enhance capacity.
 - Completion: Expected by 2025.

Bahrain

8. Bahrain International Airport Expansion
 - Location: Manama
 - Key Features: Expanding and enhancing cargo facilities.
 - Completion: Ongoing, with major projects expected by 2025.

Iraq

9. Baghdad International Airport Expansion
 - Location: Baghdad
 - Key Features: Modernisation and expansion to improve infrastructure.
 - Capacity: Increasing cargo capacity significantly.
 - Completion: Various phases, with key improvements by 2030.

Turkey

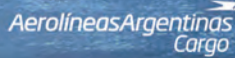
10. Istanbul New Airport (Expansion Phases)
 - Location: Istanbul
 - Key Features: Continued expansion to become one of the largest airports globally.
 - Completion: Phased development, with major milestones by 2030.

These projects reflect the Middle East's strategic efforts to enhance its aviation infrastructure, supporting cargo traffic and reinforcing its status as a global aviation hub.



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