



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Charter for change

Murray and Hourcade push for gender balance in the industry

Pages 10-12



IN TRANSITION

Canada focus

The market is shaken up while major carriers shift their focus to cargo

Pages 17-18

FREIGHTERS

Bold fleet expansion sets Amerijet on contract path

Freighter operator Amerijet has revealed ambitious expansion plans as it aims to increase its fleet to 27 aircraft.

As of last summer, the carrier operated nine B767 freighters and this spring it wet-leased two A321 freighters from Titan Airways.

Chief executive Tim Strauss said the carrier hopes to bring in B757Fs, in addition to more B767Fs.

Of these, 19 will be in the Amerijet fleet, with the rest flown on a CMI basis for DHL.

That deal began last November and has since brought five freighters into Amerijet's operations.

The agreement gives the cargo airline the opportunity to use the planes outside operating windows for the integrator, but it has resisted the temptation so far in order to ensure the CMI activity runs smoothly, as Strauss is bent on developing the company's CMI and ACMI business.

The plans come as the carrier faces a surge in demand.

"There are so many opportunities,"



Amerijet aims to operate a fleet of 27 aircraft

said Strauss. "We scramble to take advantage of opportunities and at the same time build our system."

In fact, the airline is turning down lucrative opportunities to operate charters.

"We probably get 20 calls a day, and we say no 20 times a day. We try to build relationships on ACMI and CMI," he said.

The company has essentially been a scheduled operator serving the

Caribbean and parts of Central America. Strauss has no intention of abandoning that business, but he wants to change the mix of work.

He aims for a 75:25 split in favour of contract flying within four years.

Outside its American theatre of operations Amerijet flies one or two times a week across the Atlantic to Brussels. The transatlantic service has proved popular for pharma traffic, Strauss said.

AIR CARGO NEWS

Same news, fresher look

The *Air Cargo News* team is excited to announce that in July we will launch a new monthly email product bringing together the best in interviews, analysis, special reports, news, comment and data.

The Monthly Exclusive email will be sent out to subscribers at the start of each month and link through to curated content on the *Air Cargo News* website, acting as a replacement for the monthly e-zine.

The monthly round-up email has been created to reflect increasing reader demand for online and easy-to-access content that is available across a variety of platforms.

This demand for online content is reflected in a 50% year-on-year increase in traffic on aircargonews.net in 2020 to almost 3.5m pageviews.

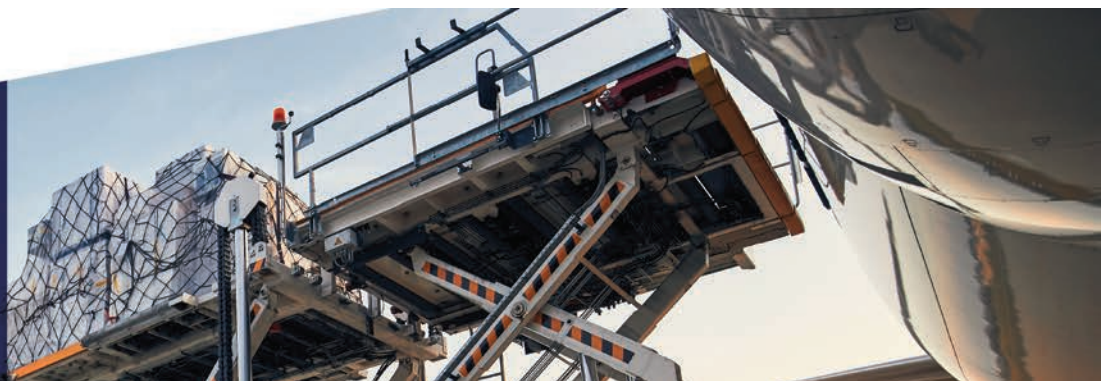
Meanwhile, from October our quarterly print/digital edition will be expanded to include more in-depth content in a refreshed A4 size with a dedicated freighters section.

To avoid missing out, sign up for our quarterly digital edition, the new Monthly Exclusive email and our twice-weekly news alerts at aircargonews.net.



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IN TRANSITION
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has introduced a new
air cargo service for
international mail

FINANCIALS
Bold fleet expansion sets Amerijet on contract path

ANALYSIS
Same news, fresher look

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Annual subscription:
£99 (UK); €150 (Europe and Scandinavia);
US\$200 (Rest of the world)

Material from this publication may not be copied or reproduced in any way without prior written authorisation from the publishers. © 2021 Air Cargo News, ISSN Number 1357-4051, is published monthly by DVV Media International Ltd, 1st Floor, Chancery House, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, SM1 1JB, United Kingdom. • Tel: +44 (0) 20 8722 8370 • Fax: +44 (0) 20 8652 5210. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to Air Cargo News, Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Intermedia Brand Marketing Ltd, Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9PE, United Kingdom. Worldnet is acting as our mailing agent. Website: www.aircargonews.net

NEWS

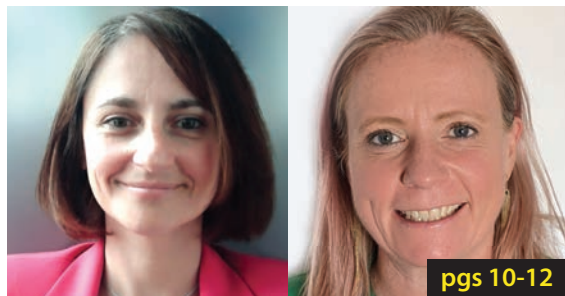


pg 9

- 4 NEWS** Hong Kong Air Cargo targets Europe with new routes
- 4 NEWS** Turkish eyes tech sector with Munich freighter flights
- 4 EDITOR'S COMMENT**
- 6 NEWS** Cathay capacity recovering
- 6 NEWS** K+N completes Apex deal
- 6 PUTZGER PERSPECTIVE**
- 8 NEWS** DHL Express adds Asian capacity for e-commerce boom
- 8 NEWS** Blue Dart trials drone delivery
- 8 SHIPPER SPOTLIGHT**
- 9 NEWS** A record year for Cargolux

INTERVIEW

10-12 Can air cargo do more to attract women into top roles? **CELINE HOURCADE** and **EMMA MURRAY** push for balance



pgs 10-12

FEATURES

- 13-14 PERISHABLES** Air cargo invests in improving quality
- 17-18 CANADA** An airfreight market in transition



pgs 17-18

ANALYSIS

- 15 AIRPORTS** Malpensa looking to reach new heights



pg 15

- 19 FOCUS** Finnair uses reversible cargo cabin solution

DATA HUB

- 20-21 ANALYSIS** Global demand reaches a record high in March

29 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE

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DHL'S AIRLINE SHAKE-UP:

DHL Express plans to launch a cargo airline based in Austria. It will operate using B757Fs transferred over from its DHL Air UK business, which will become an intercontinental airline, adding B777Fs into its fleet.

MORE AIRCRAFT FOR MASAIR:

Aircraft lessor CDB Aviation is leasing two of its Airbus A330-300 passenger-to-freighter conversions to Mexican all-cargo carrier MasAir Cargo – the first time that it has obtained a lease for the aircraft type.

MENZIES' MILESTONE:

Menzies Aviation has surpassed the milestone of 50 stations in its cargo handling network following a series of new wins over the last 12 months. The company now operates 53 stations, up from 36 a year ago.

GEODIS IN PARIS:

Forwarder Geodis has opened a new 6,000 sq m cargo facility, with airside access, at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport, providing CEIV- and TAPA-certified services for its pharma and luxury goods customers.

KWE TAKES BITE OF SEAFOOD:

The Canadian arm of Kintetsu World Express has acquired seafood specialist forwarder Prestige Air Cargo as it looks to grow in the sector. Prestige will continue to be managed by president Nick Signoretta.

AIRLINES

HKAC targets Europe and expands network

Hong Kong Air Cargo (HKAC) has moved a step closer to expanding its scheduled cargo network with flights to Europe, while it also hopes to add a host of new destinations in Asia.

The Hong Kong Airlines subsidiary applied to the Hong Kong Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA) for nine new routes back in December and earlier in May received its licences for the flights.

With the granting of the ATLA licences, the airline will soon commence applying for the other necessary approvals for the new services.

The destinations the airline received licences for are: Chennai, Tokyo, Manila, Jakarta, Delhi, Sydney, Melbourne, Liege and Milan.

At present its scheduled network covers China, Southeast Asia and Turkey.

The airline has previously operated charter flights to most of these cities



HKAC plans more flights from Hong Kong

and said it has therefore “established a solid foundation in preparation for the new services”.

“The newly received ATLA licence approvals will allow Hong Kong Air Cargo to plan, forecast and service customers and the cities with confidence,” the carrier said.

“The new routes will be gradually introduced utilising the existing fleet,

and HKAC will continuously review its resources input if market demand continues to dictate.”

William Chan, the airline's director of government and public affairs, said: “This marks a significant milestone in Hong Kong Air Cargo's journey. Over the years, we have strived to do our best and serve the community of Hong Kong.”

“The pandemic has been a challenging time globally, and the demand for the transportation of cargo has continued to increase. We are grateful for the approval for these new routes and the opportunity to grow with Hong Kong.”

Hong Kong Air Cargo currently operates a fleet of five Airbus A330-200 freighters. In order to be able to operate the new services, the carrier in April embarked on a recruitment drive to increase its cockpit crew head count by 14%.

FREIGHTERS

Turkish Cargo taps into the tech market

Turkish Cargo has added freighter flights to Munich as it looks to capitalise on high-tech and automotive demand from the German city.

The airline said that it will use an Airbus A330F on the weekly flight between Istanbul and Munich.

“Munich is considered as the technological metropolis of Germany, and it hosts the market leaders in automotive, electronics, medical and biotechnological products,” the airline said.

Turkish Cargo chief cargo officer Turhan Ozen added: “We are glad to

add Munich, a substantial business centre, to our flight network, and continue to offer a stable and reliable cooperation to the leading exporters of the market.”

The first flight of the service took place on May 7.

EDITOR'S COMMENT

Damian Brett

Time to cast your vote

Air cargo is often maligned, accused of taking too long to adopt digital technology and of providing the same service — in terms of time taken to get cargo from shed to shed — as it did 20 years ago.

But there are plenty of examples of innovation, with many companies pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

The last 12 months have seen an acceleration of digitalisation as companies have adapted to

home working and increasing demand for the transportation of e-commerce.

Airlines in particular have demonstrated their ability to evolve; stripping out seats to increase cargo capacity, quickly tweaking networks to adjust for the loss of passengers, rolling out charter departments and adding cargo-only passenger flights.

Freighter operators have also been busy, quickly adjusting

their operations to meet rapidly changing demand patterns.

One way to recognise the hard work and innovativeness of airlines during the last 12 months is to vote in this year's Air Cargo News Awards.

The awards give freight forwarders and shippers the chance to recognise the five best cargo airlines in regional categories and the ultimate Cargo Airline of the Year.

Airline customers can choose their preferred carrier in Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, as well

as their overall top carrier, the hotly contested Cargo Airline of the Year. Online voting runs until July 16 at 5pm BST.

Winning a prize at the Air Cargo News Awards, with a proud 37-year history, is the ultimate accolade in the air cargo sector. Winners will be honoured at an exclusive awards ceremony to be held in the UK at the Runnymede on Thames Hotel on September 16, where attendees can network with their peers and colleagues.

To vote and book your seat visit: aircargonewsawards.net

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AIRLINES

Cathay Pacific capacity shows signs of recovery

Cathay Pacific's cargo capacity was only gradually recovering in April after the relaxation of stricter crew quarantine rules for Hong Kong in the middle of the month.

The Hong Kong-based airline in April saw its cargo capacity in cargo tonne km terms drop by 36.6% compared with February levels as a result of stricter quarantine measures introduced in March.

These rules were relaxed in mid-April for vaccinated crew, but capacity only gradually came back online.

Cathay Pacific group chief customer and commercial officer Ronald Lam explained: "While we welcomed the easing of quarantine restrictions for cargo aircrew in Hong Kong in mid-April, the positive impact of the relaxation was not immediately realised due to crew rostering lead time and our overall capacity last month remained significantly affected.

"The number of freighter and cargo-only passenger flights that we operated was lower than at any point since the Covid-19 pandemic began,



Ronald Lam: Freighter and cargo-only passenger flights hit a low in April

limiting our ability to provide more lift to what was a reasonably buoyant cargo market, particularly on long-haul routings. This reduction in capacity together with the firm market led to a high load factor of 83%."

He added: "We expect our May cargo schedule to gradually recover as more of our crew are fully vaccinated."

Lam said that currently 80% of pilots and over 40% of cabin crew in Hong Kong have either booked or received their vaccination.

Cathay Pacific's air cargo volumes for the month were 13.6% down year on year. Over the first four months, tonnages are 26.7% down on a year earlier.

The reduction in Cathay Pacific's cargo capacity — along with surging US consumer demand — has caused a spike in transpacific airfreight rates.

In April, BAI Index figures show that average prices from Hong Kong to North America increased by 54.7% compared with a month earlier.

FORWARDERS

K+N wraps up its Apex acquisition

Kuehne+Nagel (K+N) has completed the majority acquisition of Apex International as it looks to expand in the Asian market.

K+N recently received unconditional regulatory approvals from the competent authorities for the deal.

The purchase price paid at closing amounted to SFr1.1bn and was financed by the group's own funds and around 750,000 new shares issued out of the authorised share capital.

The deal should result in K+N becoming the world's largest airfreight forwarder.

In 2020, Apex generated a turnover of SFr2.2bn, gross profit of SFr296m and earnings before taxes of SFr126m. It is ranked seventh in terms of global airfreight forwarding volume.

A minority participation remains with the Apex management and over the next three years, Kuehne+Nagel will have the opportunity to acquire all other shares in Apex for a performance-based consideration.

The Apex management team will continue to run the company.

PUTZGER PERSPECTIVE

Ian Putzger



Time to invest in addressing sector shortcomings

It is part of the job of an independent observer to shine a light on the shortcomings of the air cargo industry. It's an easy task.

Everybody who deals with it knows that there is no shortage of them.

At the same time it has to be noted that this industry has performed admirably since the global outbreak of Covid-19.

Companies have bent over backwards to find solutions and people have shouldered much extra work to keep things going — from moving PPE and vaccines to feeding the voracious maws of e-commerce and accommodating freight that spilled over from congested ocean transport.

Pretty much everybody has been in hyperdrive mode,

usually seen only in a crisis or during peak season.

However, this has not been a peak that lasts a few weeks. People have been working at the limit for a long time.

Nobody should take this for granted or assume that it can go on indefinitely.

What are companies doing to take care of their employees and ease their burden?

Part of the answer should be the automation of repetitive, time-consuming processes.

This industry is undergoing a profound transformation, and it needs technology to adapt to the changing landscape of commodity mix and customer expectations. There also has to be investment in fundamental infrastructure.

The delays that are frustrating everybody these days are the result of an unexpectedly huge tidal wave of traffic overwhelming severely limited capacity, but they are also a scathing illustration of the neglect and lack of investment that have plagued the air cargo sector in many locations.

The blistering growth of cargo airports over the past year would have shown a much flatter trajectory if operators at some large hubs didn't have to struggle with insufficient, inadequate and outdated facilities. And people's workload would be less severe if the infrastructure were adequate and efficient.

There is hope that airports and airlines have adjusted their

view of cargo and are willing to invest in it, but this cannot be taken for granted.

Even if they are, their financial predicament does not leave them with much room to spend.

The financial sector is looking

'People have been working at the limit for a long time. Nobody should take this for granted or assume that it can go on indefinitely'

Ian Putzger

for opportunities, and supply chains have risen on its radar over the past year. More effort is required to tap into this.

At the same time companies have to invest in technology and take better care of their people.



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E-COMMERCE

DHL Express increases capacity on Asian routes

DHL Express will offer dedicated freighter flights to Ho Chi Minh and Penang from its Hong Kong hub, as it looks to meet growing e-commerce demand.

The express firm said that it would serve Penang five times per week from its central Asia Hong Kong hub, while the new flight to Ho Chi Minh will fly six times per week.

Previously, the two destinations were served as part of a single loop. DHL said separating them out would add cargo capacity and shorten transit times to the two cities.

In addition, DHL Express will upgrade the aircraft shuttling between Hanoi and Hong Kong from a Boeing 737-400 to Boeing 737-800, which will offer greater capacity.

DHL Express Asia Pacific chief executive Ken Lee said the company was experiencing a surge in B2C and B2B e-commerce shipments as “tech-savvy digital natives begin to make up the bulk of merchants and consumers across the world, and also in Asia.

“This has driven a shift in expecta-



Dedicated freighter flights will serve Penang and Ho Chi Minh from Hong Kong

tions about e-commerce — customers want top quality service, speed, reliability, convenience and flexibility,” said Lee.

“By dedicating flights to Ho Chi Minh City and Penang, and upgrading our aircraft for Hanoi, our customers in these markets will continue to enjoy the quality service that they have come to expect from us as we seek to deliver their shipments within a day.”

The Ho Chi Minh service will utilise an A300F with a capacity of 62 tonnes. It is expected to carry ship-

ments such as fashion apparel, garments accessories and materials, and electronics.

On the Penang route, a 50-tonne capacity A300F will operate with electronic components and parts making up the bulk of goods flown.

DHL Express currently has 23 dedicated aircraft in its Asia Pacific fleet, and four regional hubs in Asia Pacific that help local and regional customers, e-commerce merchants and other businesses to tap into intra-Asia trade growth.

TECHNOLOGY

Blue Dart to trial the use of drones in India

India-based express delivery firm Blue Dart is to trial deliveries of pharma and medical shipments to remote locations in the country using drones.

The company has established Blue Dart Med-Express Consortium to join the Medicine from the Sky project in collaboration with the Government of Telangana, World Economic Forum, government agency Niti Aayog and Healthnet Global.

The Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has granted the project the necessary rights and exemptions to fly drones on an experimental basis in Telangana.

Blue Dart said the move would allow it to assess drones’ potential for pickup and delivery of items like medicines, Covid-19 vaccines, units of blood, diagnostic specimens and lifesaving equipment.

Ketan Kulkarni, head of business development at Blue Dart, said: “With efficient systems in place, it can help reduce the current logistics cost, making healthcare logistics faster and efficient.”

SHIPPER SPOTLIGHT

Zoe McLernon

Air cargo recovery depends on passenger travel

The UK government allowed international travel to resume on May 17, putting 12 countries and territories on its ‘green list’ including Australia, Portugal and Singapore.

While this is encouraging news for the air transport industry, a number of key destinations which are vital to the UK’s supply chain — such as Spain, France, Italy and the US — have not been included on the list and are among those listed in the amber category, requiring anyone that goes to these countries to self-isolate on their return to the UK.

These restrictions will slow down the recovery of the air cargo sector as freight is often transported in the bellyhold of passenger aircraft; these rules

will limit the demand for passenger travel and in turn, the availability of bellyhold space for freight.

Bellyhold cargo at Heathrow accounted for more than 60% of total UK airfreight volume in 2017, with forwarders and suppliers utilising the airport’s extensive intercontinental passenger network.

Long-haul routes proved critical to this, with more than 30% of total airfreight shipped on US routes.

As a result, UK and US airlines have signed a joint letter to their respective governments calling for a travel corridor to be created, stating that air travel is a critical enabler of trade between the two countries — worth \$273bn

(£196bn) in 2019.

Utilising bellyhold capacity on long-haul routes can also boost exports from regional airports in the UK and as more intercontinental routes return to normal service and new destinations are added by airlines, export values across the UK could increase.

Following the launch of a new direct passenger connection between Manchester Airport and Muscat, Oman in 2017, the value of exports flown from Manchester to Oman increased fivefold — to reach more than £40m annually — with export values of flown products from the north west of the UK also increasing significantly.

Logistics UK is calling for the UK’s government to reopen

international passenger routes as soon as it is safe to do so, with successful vaccination programmes set to play a crucial role in this.

Integrators, who use their own freighter aircraft for cargo-only movements, have played an exceptional role over the course of the pandemic in keeping goods moving in and out of the country, and will continue to do so.

However, it is important that the forwarder model recovers, and that passenger numbers return to pre-pandemic levels, in order to support vital trade links across the globe.

Zoe McLernon, multimodal policy manager, Logistics UK

AIRLINES

Capacity crunch boosts Cargolux

Cargolux achieved record profits in 2021 as the loss of bellyhold operations boosted demand for all-cargo aircraft.

The freighter operator, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, achieved a 3745% year-on-year increase in net profits to \$768.7m. Its previous record was \$211.2m in 2018.

Cargolux also recorded revenues of \$3.8bn — up 40% on 2019, while earnings before tax and interest increased 769% to \$991m.

Demand also increased for the airline as volumes in terms of tonnes sold increased 9.7% year on year in 2020 to 1.1m tonnes.

As a result of the increased demand and the fact that passenger airlines have seen their cargo networks slashed due to lost bellyhold capacity, Cargolux is currently [in 2021] placed fourth in IATA's ranking of the world's top 25 international scheduled cargo carriers.

Its load factor last year was up by three percentage points on a year earlier at 68.7%.

The company said air cargo's role throughout the coronavirus pandemic positively impacted its results.

"The outlook for the year was originally quite bleak with production halted in China, due to the outbreak of what ultimately resulted in the Covid-19 pandemic," said the carrier.

"The situation resulted in a significant shortfall in available airfreight capacity due to the grounding of most, if not all, long-haul passenger operations. We experienced unprecedented demand for the transport of personal protective equipment supplies as well as for other products which came to rely on air transport to keep logistics lines intact.

"The company adapted its network to optimise its services and operate according to global market needs. Demand for charter services also remained strong throughout the year."

It added: "Cargolux is proud of the fact that the airline honoured all block space agreements with our customers that were concluded in 2019 when market conditions were significantly less favourable."

At the end of December 2020, Cargolux's fleet of 30 aircraft was comprised of 16 Boeing 747-400 freighters (10 B747-400Fs and six B747-400ERFs) and 14 Boeing 747-8 freighters.

Looking forward, the freighter operator predicted a continued reliance on freighter capacity as passenger services continue to be affected by the pandemic.

"Over a year after the initial outbreak, the Covid-19 pandemic is

still not behind us and much uncertainty remains as to the evolution of the virus and the pace and effectiveness of vaccination programmes," the company said.

"This development would indicate that the supply chain will continue to need to rely on freighter aircraft to keep logistics chains running as the bulk of long-haul passenger aircraft remain grounded."



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Gaining balance in air cargo

Most companies now have policies in place to develop a better gender balance among their staff, especially in senior roles, but could more be done across industry to give women increased prominence? **Damian Brett** talks to two aviation professionals who have come up with a scheme to help give female colleagues a much bigger public profile

FACT FILE

◆ Celine Hourcade founded logistics consultancy Change Horizon in 2019. Before then, she worked at IATA for 13 years and played a key role in several cargo transformation initiatives, including the Future Air Cargo Executives (FACE) programme.

◆ Emma Murray founded Meantime Communications in 2009 after spending several years working in logistics publishing. She has also worked as an archaeologist and an English teacher.

◆ The Women in Aviation and Logistics Pledge hopes to facilitate change in the industry, define concrete targets and an action plan to achieve gender equality in the sector.

◆ As part of the drive, Change Horizon is developing a free and searchable database of women speakers in the aviation and logistics sectors.

Anyone who has attended an air cargo event will be able to attest to the fact that it is a predominantly male industry.

In fact, according to a Novosensus survey in 2020, only 13% of senior leaders in the logistics industry are women.

And research from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills shows that less than a quarter of employees in the country's transport and logistics sector are female.

But times are changing; the industry is now being driven by technological innovation and the world's biggest brands have increasingly leveraged their supply chains as a competitive advantage, opening up a broader range of roles within the industry.

While the number of women work-

ing in the sector does appear to be increasing, at least anecdotally, the move to a more gender-balanced industry is not happening fast enough.

New ideas

Hoping to speed things along, Celine Hourcade, founder and managing director of consultancy Change Horizon, and Emma Murray, founder and chief executive of logistics PR firm Meantime Communications, have come up with an idea they hope will encourage more women to join the industry.

On International Women's Day the pair launched the Women in Aviation and Logistics Pledge that they hope will act as a catalyst for change.

Companies or individuals can sign up to work together to define targets and an action plan to achieve gender equality in the industry; act as an

advocate for change and promote gender equality and broader diversity.

The initiative also centres around a database of women in the industry that are willing to speak at events, join boards and take part in forums.

This will help event organisers to invite more women subject-matter experts to speak at their events, and encourage more female delegates to attend, starting this year and setting annual targets for improvement.

Organisers answering the call will be asked to make a commitment to have more women on panels and report back on numbers of both female speakers and delegates in order to gather data for targets and to measure development.

Murray and Hourcade say it was at the 2014 TIACA Air Cargo Forum in Seoul that they really began to take

'This industry is full of brilliant people. We should celebrate that and if we have these amazing voices that aren't being heard, let's help get them out there'

Emma Murray,
Meantime Communications



'This it is not about pointing fingers at people. It is saying we can do something about it, let's come up with a solution. Maybe we can help the event organisers'

Celine Hourcade, Change Horizon



would be to have more women on the other panels discussing the industry in general, rather than just talking about their experience of being a woman in air cargo.

Overall, Murray says, there is no avoiding the fact that there aren't enough women in air cargo.

"Are there enough women in leadership positions? There just aren't, that's a fact," she says.

"Why is that happening? Again, I think it is a contradiction — by not having women on stage or in leadership positions, we aren't attracting women to join the industry. I think that is something that we should collectively share as an industry."

The two decided to launch the initiative when the spate of webinars launched this year and last year — in response to the inability to travel — were dominated by male panellists.

Future imperfect

They found it particularly concerning that even webinars on the future of the industry, which featured air cargo's next generation, would consist mostly of men.

However, the two wanted to offer a practical solution. They recognised that creating conferences can be difficult and organisers find it hard to find different speakers, so they came up with the idea of a database.

"This it is not about pointing fingers

note of the lack of women in the industry, although they had always spoken of the issue.

"Frankly, there were not a lot of women at that event," says Hourcade. "Since then we have met at various events and each time it was the same; we have exchanged views on women-specific panels, where women are invited to talk about the fact they are

women and not invited to contribute their expertise on a topic that will interest the audience.

"It has been a recurrent theme of discussion between the two of us."

Murray says that her experience of the industry is contradictory. She says that, while it is male dominated, people were willing to go out of their way to help her when she first joined.

This is also reflected in the all-women panels, mentioned by Hourcade, that event organisers sometimes introduce.

General discussion

While it is good that the organisers recognise that there is an issue and are trying to do something about it, the more appropriate course of action



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at people,” says Hourcade. “It is saying we can do something about it, let’s come up with a solution.”

“Maybe we can help those event organisers by providing a database of experts. I phoned Emma and she was on board instantly, it was a natural fit.”

Murray adds: “I have done a lot of event organising, so I know it can be difficult to source people, to get people to give up their time and sometimes it is just easier to go to the same people because you know they will turn up and they will do a good speech.”

“What resonated with me was that the matchmaking aspect is very practical and very real.”

She adds: “We are both practical people who can put things in place; we know lots of people so we can use that and our motivation is to achieve something for the industry as a whole and not just talk about it.”

The two say that having more diverse speaker line-ups and industry forums will help bring different perspectives to the industry, which will in turn improve events and industry groups.

They are also calling on women to step up and play a part in instigating change by having a more visible presence in the industry.

To kick off the initiative, a webinar was held with more than 70 attendees. Hourcade says that following the meeting one of the attendees was in

touch with another idea to help women in the industry.

She says that they hope that over time the initiative will help spark others to also launch projects that aim to create a more diverse industry.

Hourcade says: “This isn’t a Meantime Communication or Change Horizon initiative. We are pushing it and we are driving it, but we are ultimately calling for anyone to join the movement and to contribute.”

“That is what success looks like; at the end of the year we have this database, we have contributed to improve the gender balance at the next events and we have inspired people to add to the movement with other initiatives.”

Murray and Hourcade hope that having more women on panels could create a snowball effect.

Work is still ongoing on the database but it is hoped that it will be launched “very soon”.

“I really feel the pressure to have it up and running,” says Hourcade. “We are, for the moment, collecting profiles from experts.”

“Already 30 women have submitted their profiles and around 90% of them have also indicated that they are open to board positions, which is another

aspect of a lack of gender balance — in the board rooms.

“So that is one of the things we are asking through the submission form: are you open to speaking opportunities, to board positions, to contribute to working groups?”

The initiative also aims to try to get a grasp on how big the issue is — is it just an imbalance in terms of numbers or are women being held back from progressing to management roles within the industry?

“Without facts, we cannot really address the issues,” says Hourcade. “But the starting point on our side was not a perception; at industry conferences and at webinars what we can see is that there are very few women either attending the events or speaking.”

“This is a visible fact — but what we don’t know is whether it represents inequality in the workplace, if there is more to that than just the lack of visible women.”

“Are there any strong issues that companies need to address to make sure there is no gender pay gap, there is no glass ceiling for women, that there is equal access to promotion and training.”

“This we don’t know, because we don’t have the facts, but the starting

point is what we know, what we can see, the visible parts at the industry events and webinars.”

Time to reset


Murray adds that now could be the right time to launch the initiative.

She explains that the past year has given the industry a chance to reset, as the pandemic has led people to review how they work.

This is particularly true of events which have ground to a halt over the past 18 months because of lockdowns and travel restrictions.

“I think there has been an intake of breath and just a looking around to see what we can do differently,” says Murray.

She adds: “We have an opportunity because we have broken the cycle of air cargo going to events and asking the same people. What we need to do is put it together again in a different way, and we have an opportunity now.”

Murray concludes: “We have to get the next generation of fantastic people attracted to this industry. We are full of brilliant people, we should celebrate that and if we have these amazing voices that aren’t being heard, let’s help get them out there.” 

NEXT AIR CARGO NEWS INTERVIEW **DOROTHEA VON BOXBERG, LUFTHANSA CARGO**



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INTERVIEW PAGES 4-5

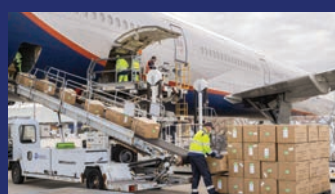
B767 HEAVEN

A new era for Raya Airways

**PAGE 2
NEWS:**
ST Engineering's
cargo leasing JV

**PAGE 3
NEWS:**
CMA CGM expands
freighter network

**PAGES 6-7
SPECIAL REPORT:**
Freighter hubs
pivot for Covid



**PAGE 8
CONVERSIONS:**
High demand
for B777 P2Fs?

Magma brings fleet to five with B747 freighter

Magma Aviation is adding an extra Boeing B747 freighter aircraft to its fleet in response to growing demand.

The UK-based freighter manager has partnered with Plus Logistics Solutions on the B747-400F, which increases its fleet to five all-cargo aircraft.

It is the second freighter that Magma has added to its fleet in the past 12 months — in August last year sister company AviaAM Leasing purchased a B747-400F for the airline to use.

Magma said that the increase in fleet comes in response to the “significant lack of capacity” caused by the pandemic. “Magma Aviation’s reaction to the surge in demand for freighter aircraft maintains the continued support and commitment to their clients, providing regular flying capacity to freight forwarders, logistics providers, and charter brokers,” the company said.

Magma now offers services between Asia and Europe, Europe to North America, Europe to Africa and Africa to Europe. Its fleet consists entirely of B747 aircraft.

ST Engineering and Temasek launch freighter leasing firm

MRO provider ST Engineering and Singapore state-owned investment firm Temasek are teaming up to establish a joint-venture freighter leasing company in response to rising demand for all-cargo aircraft.

The new company will aim to build a portfolio of aircraft with a value of around \$600m within five years, investing in passenger aircraft to be converted into freighters.

ST Engineering’s asset-management arm will equally own the venture with Temasek. ST Engineering will provide MRO services and will be the asset and lease manager.

The portfolio of aircraft will primarily comprise converted narrowbody types. The company expects to be able to purchase the feedstock at lower prices, as passenger aircraft value has been affected by travel restrictions arising

from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The aircraft acquisitions will be financed through a mix of equity and debt.

“This joint venture represents a significant step by ST Engineering in growing our aviation leasing business as we expand beyond passenger aircraft and engines to include freighter aircraft assets as part of our portfolio,” said Jeffrey Lam, president and head of commercial aerospace, ST Engineering.

The company added that demand for freighters is on the rise as e-commerce and air cargo volumes expand across the globe.

According to its website, ST Engineering does already offer freighter leasing through its Aviation Asset Management business.

ST Engineering is already a partner with Airbus in Germany-based EFW, which carries out such conversion work and is extending its modification capabilities globally to sites in Asia and North America.



New horizons? The joint-venture leasing firm plans to invest \$600m in aircraft over five years

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CMA CGM Air Cargo expands its network

Recently launched CMA CGM Air Cargo has continued to expand its freighter network, with the addition of three new destinations.

The airline, which is owned by Marseille-based shipping group CMA CGM, has added Dubai, Beirut and Istanbul to its existing flights covering Liege, Chicago, New York and Atlanta.

The service between Liege and Dubai began on May 19. On the service, the A330F capacity provider hopes to carry cargo originating in Africa and Asia to Europe.

“With its services to Dubai, the CMA CGM group can also provide its customers with a combined sea-air offer comprising shipping, logistics and airfreight,” it said.

“That will give them the benefit of an end-to-end, agile full-service offering.”

The flights between Liege and Istanbul and Beirut were set to begin as *Freighters World* went to press.

“From its Liege base, CMA CGM



CMA CGM Air Cargo launched new routes last month

Air Cargo will offer rapid connection times between these new destinations and the US,” the company added.

Xavier Eiglier, executive vice president of CMA CGM Air Cargo, said: “Strategically located at the crossroads between several continents, these new destinations will help speed up CMA CGM Air Cargo’s development.”

The carrier launched services in

mid-March when it began offering flights to Chicago O’Hare.

Later that month it introduced the second of the four A330Fs that it plans to utilise on its flights.

The aircraft, which were previously flown by Qatar Cargo, are being operated by Air Belgium, while ECS is selling capacity in its role as general sales agent.

SmartLynx adds cargo capacity with five A330s

SmartLynx Airlines Malta is expanding its fleet with the addition of five Airbus A330 aircraft with seats removed, as it looks to capitalise on high air cargo demand.

The ACMI and charter firm said that the aircraft will be added in May and June and will expand its fleet types beyond its existing A320 and A321 aircraft.

The updated A330 aircraft will carry cargo to and from Asia, the US and Europe. They have a volume capacity of 260 cu m and a maximum cargo weight of 50,000 kg.

The aircraft will be leased to sister company SmartLynx Airlines as it looks to expand in the cargo market — it will be one of the first airlines to operate converted A321 aircraft.

In April, air cargo demand reached an all-time high, and was 9% above pre-Covid levels from February 2019.

This prompted SmartLynx to introduce the modified aircraft, to transport shipments such as vaccines and medical supplies on long-haul flights.

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April saw Malaysian cargo carrier Raya Airways take delivery of a third B767-200 converted freighter, on lease from Cargo Aircraft Management (CAM).

Freighters World spoke to Raya managing director Mohamad Najib Bin Ishak about the carrier's development since 2013, when he participated in the acquisition of its forerunner, Transmile Air, which operated three B727Fs, one B757-200F and one B767-200F.

Raya now has three B767Fs and one B737-400F as part of a gradual fleet transition.

Says Najib: "As part of the restructuring plan for Raya Airways, a thorough fleet-renewal exercise was undertaken to streamline the company's fleet size.

"At the time of the restructuring, a smaller fleet suited our new business model and presented more benefits, including less monitoring of assets and lower overhead cost.

"In 2014, we replaced three ageing Boeing 727-200F freighters which were no longer economically feasible.

"We are currently undergoing a re-fleeting exercise to a single B767-200F aircraft type. This is part of our long-term plan to serve a wider network within ASEAN and Asia Pacific."

He says Raya Airways is expanding its footprint in domestic routes within Malaysia, and strengthening its position within international markets as a key enabler in the supply chain.

"We currently operate scheduled freighter

Mohamad Najib Bin Ishak: "We are committed to serve as one of the key enablers in the supply chain ecosystem"



LINKING THE CHAIN

As business begins to recover from the coronavirus pandemic, Malaysian carrier Raya Airways is looking to simplify its fleet. Roger Hailey reports

services to seven destinations in five countries. We operate into major regional hubs such as Jakarta, Singapore, Hanoi and Hong Kong as well as many prime commercial centres in east Malaysia, namely Kota Kinabalu, Kuching and Labuan.

"The accelerated growth of e-commerce has reshaped our commitment to anticipate and respond to the needs of our customers and to enable connectivity across our vehicle assets.

"With the added capacity, we plan to continually extend our time-definite services to more destinations within ASEAN and Asia Pacific.

"Our regional network currently consists of over 300 flights per month — both scheduled and charter flights — connecting capital cities and other major business centres."

PRESTIGE CUSTOMERS

Raya Airways is an approved ground service provider for its own operations and for third-party customer airlines at four airports within Malaysia.

"We can handle both narrowbody and widebody aircraft and have secured multiple contracts with other prestige customer airlines, such as AirAsia and World Cargo Airlines."

He adds: "There is definitely potential within this space and it is already looking positive, as we are inching closer to establishing new partnerships.

"This plays a big role in the supply chain ecosystem, which allows Raya Airways and our customer airlines to operate into these destinations."

Another potential area for growth is trucking solutions, enabling the carrier to reach customers in a larger landscape, instead of merely point-to-point.

Raya Airways is an approved truck flight operations provider for routes within Malaysia.

"These services allow us to connect from online airports to or from offline airports. We are exploring potential routes within Peninsular and east Malaysia (ie, intercity connectivity between Sabah and Sarawak) where there is potential growth, given domestic demand."

Raya has also focused on the charter business. A movement control order in Malaysia from March 2020 saw charter demand for east

Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Jakarta and Ho Chi Minh experience average growth of 53% year on year between March and September.

"This growth in demand is due to a combination of increased e-commerce transactions, shipment of goods and supplies for medical purposes and reduction of belly cargo supply from the fall in passenger services on these routes."

In November 2020, Raya Airways collaborated with MediCOM, a manufacturer and distributor of PPE and infection control solutions, in delivering PPE and dry food supplies to the frontliners in Sabah, Malaysia.

Najib comments: "Raya Airways is happy to provide its continuous support to aid the nation in recovering from the significant impact of the pandemic."

To meet future demand for e-commerce, Raya Airways aims to continue the re-fleeting exercise for network expansion opportunities.

It will provide capacity to increase flight frequency and improve connectivity within Malaysia, ASEAN and across Asia Pacific.

"In addition, we are also looking into offering earlier flight times, and on expanding our trucking service from major to small cities within Malaysia. We are committed to serving as one of the key enablers in the supply chain ecosystem, which reflects our unique position in transporting goods requiring a high level of speed, reliability, and security for our customers."

Raya Airways has collaborated with DHL for more than 15 years and now operates DHL two-way routes from Subang to Hong Kong, Jakarta and Singapore.

"Our operations connect to DHL's global network across all continents. The DHL-Raya Airways collaboration functions as one entity, with high dependency on Raya Airways' services — a network for DHL to sustain its service level quality of express and reliable deliveries."

Raya does not currently work with UPS, FedEx or Cainiao and SF Express, however: "We are constantly looking out for partnership opportunities and do not discount potential collaborations with other integrators in the future."

Pre-Covid long-haul passenger services may take three or four years to return. How does he view this, in terms of providing extra freight capacity?

“Air cargo demand is not just recovering from the Covid-19 crisis, it is growing. With that in mind, it is crucial for us as the business-to-business key enabler to establish other connectivity options to cope with this demand.”

The global B2B e-commerce volume is estimated to reach \$20.9trn by 2021, “hence, the focus remains for us to be a key logistics enabler.”

He continues: “We are also looking to expand our product range in shipping live seafood and fresh vegetables, as well as odd-size cargo such as aircraft engine and motor vehicles, with an expertise in dangerous goods’ uplift. Pharmaceutical items will also be a central focus.”

Asked of his vision for the airline, Najib says: “Our role surpasses simply the delivery of things and completion of tasks; we connect countries and major hubs, support the aviation and logistics supply chain and help stimulate the economy through our deliverables — eg, supporting e-commerce and small businesses.”

However, he says that there is a lot more that Raya can do and achieve: “Having said that, transportation and logistics remains a challenge and is undergoing immense change. Like all change, it brings both risk and opportunities — new technology, new market entrants, new customer expectations, and new business models.

“There are various ways Raya Airways could develop further in meeting these challenges — some through transformative initiatives, while others would require more ground-breaking solutions.”

He says that Raya is reshaping its products and services to cater to more time-definite services such as handling of cold chain goods.

Also: “Fast-tracking our digital transformation agenda to provide better efficiency and value for forwarders through data integration and improved visibility across their businesses.”

TAKING HIS CHANCE

Najib began his career as an investment banker in 2006, and in 2008 joined a plantation company, involved in strategic planning initiatives of plantation assets.

However, he was always passionate about the aviation industry, and when the opportunity presented itself, he “jumped at the chance” to join and lead Raya Airways.

“Airfreight is certainly an industry that is not for the faint-hearted, with its robust nature and unique set of challenges,” he says. “Nevertheless, it is definitely an exciting one, and one that is most rewarding.”

He continues: “I have learned the importance of being forward-looking, and having a strong desire for continuous growth. The global pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for air freighters to accelerate digital and sustainable transformation.

“We will not shy away from the possibility of serving a wider network within ASEAN and Asia Pacific.

“We must expect the unexpected and manage stability. This is especially important through



the Covid-19 outbreak, which severely disrupted global supply chains.

“The pandemic required us to immediately increase capacity and resources to meet the demand of additional urgent deliveries.

“In addition, we needed to ensure that all employees were equipped with the knowledge of new regulations, to ensure thorough compliance and to aid in mitigating the outbreak.”

At the height of the pandemic, many airline employees had to work from home — so managing morale and ensuring that they had enough resources was also of utmost importance.

The airline also runs an upskilling programme for staff and an advocacy campaign, which educates employees on the importance of mental health, a subject that Najib holds dear.

“Through it all, I do enjoy the hustle and bustle of the aviation industry and I hope to continue doing so for a long time.” ♦

Raya celebrates the arrival of its latest B767

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FREIGHTER HUBS

ADAPT TO CHANGING TIMES

Demand for medical supplies has provided some relief from the slowdown. Mike Bryant reports

For some air cargo gateways around the world, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have brought new business in the form of vaccine or personal protection equipment (PPE) shipments. But many have also suffered from the dramatic decline in bellyhold cargo capacity.

Cissy Chan, executive director, commercial at Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK), operator of Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA), explains that the Far Eastern gateway has suffered from the decline in belly capacity.

“However,” she says, “AAHK has been working closely with airlines and the government to maintain an agile capacity supply by mounting additional flights to carry cargo.”

HKIA handled a total of 68,660 cargo flights last year, an 18.3% improvement on 2019. Total cargo throughput in the year was 4.5m tonnes, with a year-on-year decline of 7%. The airport remains the busiest international cargo airport in the world, although the overall title (domestic and international) went to FedEx hub Memphis.

Some airlines flying through HKIA have refitted their passenger aircraft to ‘freighters’ to provide all-cargo services.

“Tailored handling procedures and facilitating measures have been established for these freighters,” Chan says, allowing airlines to make good use of their aircraft resources.

The Civil Aviation Department of Hong Kong has also sped up the approval of flight slots for freighters, including chartered cargo flights, as well as applications for freighters. Over the first three months of this year, about 26,000 freighters flew in or out of HKIA, and carried about 9% of the cargo passing through the airport.

In Europe, Vienna Airport has been recording increases in freight traffic for some months, especially in unloaded/imported cargo, says Michael Zach, the Austrian gateway’s vice president sales and finance, ground handling and cargo operations. Much of that cargo has been handled by freighters.

Freighter flights continue to land in Vienna almost daily, Zach observes.

Austrian Airlines, Emirates, EVA Air, Qatar Airways, China



Leipzig/Halle Airport beat its freight-handling record last year, with more than 1.38m tonnes

Southern, Air China and Aeroflot are among the carriers flying them into the Austrian capital.

Full freighter operator visitors include Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, ASL Airlines Belgium, Cargolux, FedEx, Silk Way West Airlines, TNT, Turkish Airlines and UPS Airlines.

Since the passenger cabins of modified freighter aircraft can only be handled manually, as with HKIA, Vienna operator Flughafen Wien has also had to adapt its unloading processes to enable the fastest possible handling, Zach says.

Vienna acts as a freight hub for the eastern Europe region, especially for goods relating to the electronics and automotive industries. And this role has continued during the pandemic.

PANDEMIC RELIEF

Simultaneously, e-commerce traffic has grown, while there has also been freight to be handled in the form of pandemic relief goods such as masks, Covid tests and protective suits.

In fact, between the beginning of the pandemic and April this year, Vienna Airport handled about 1,700 tons of medical-related supplies.

However, Covid-19 vaccines are currently not being supplied to Austria by air, but by truck.

In the Middle East, Dubai Airports — operator of both Dubai International (DXB) and Dubai World Central (DWC) — moved quickly to replace lost bellyhold cargo capacity at DXB by accommodating dedicated cargo operators.

This has maintained the integrity of Dubai’s airfreight supply chain during the pandemic, says Faisal Al Mulla, director of cargo business development at Dubai Airports.

In addition, freighters continue to operate through DWC as well. Apart from home base cargo carrier Emirates SkyCargo, operators being welcomed in Dubai include Silk Way, Cargolux, Etihad (trucking), Saudia and Ethiopian.

As we have seen at other cargo gateways,

Dubai Airports had to respond to the new situation with innovative adaptation, such as handling passenger aircraft repurposed for carrying freight.

Al Mulla expects freighters to be a feature of the Dubai aviation landscape until passenger demand approaches pre-Covid-19 levels.

Many of the world’s airfreight hubs have handled significant amounts of pandemic-related cargo over the past year, and some are now handling vaccine traffic. Some have set themselves up as hubs in the distribution of vaccines.

For example, in January it was announced that Dubai Airports had signed an agreement with GMR Hyderabad, operator of the eponymous gateway, to create a Hyderabad to Dubai global vaccine corridor.

Dubai Airports is also part of the Dubai Vaccine Logistics Alliance (DVLA), which includes Emirates SkyCargo, DP World and the International Humanitarian City, and it supports the World Health Organization’s (WHO) campaign to equitably distribute 2bn doses of Covid-19 vaccines in 2021.

DXB is handling vaccine shipments on both scheduled freighter services as well as freighter charters, and Al Mulla expects this to continue into the foreseeable future.

Since February this year, HKIA has also been handling the delivery of Covid-19 vaccines.

Some shipments have been for deployment in Hong Kong; some are being transhipped to other parts of the world, such as Mexico.

Vaccines have also been also driven to Macao over the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

A series of tailored arrangements was put in place by a combination of AAHK, the airlines involved, relevant government departments and other business partners for vaccine handling.

These arrangements currently include allocating the aircraft a parking stand close to the cargo

Airport Authority Hong Kong’s Cissy Chan



terminal for priority unloading and towing, and expediting customs clearance and priority truck loading at the cargo terminal to enable a quick release.

Back in Europe, Mario Patyk, head of business development cargo/logistics at Mitteldeutsche Flughafen, operator of eastern Germany's Leipzig/Halle International Airport, reports that the airport acts not only as a hub for express and e-commerce shipments, but is also now acting as a handling centre for medical aid and protective equipment. The airport is a DHL hub and the first European airfreight centre for Amazon Air.

In addition to the regular scheduled freight services operated by customers including DHL, AeroLogic, AirBridgeCargo (ABC) and Cargo-Logic Germany, millions of antigen tests have been flown to Leipzig/Halle on board passenger aircraft during recent months.

"We are expecting more such flights too," Patyk confirms, predicting that transporting medical items and protective equipment will continue to play an important role in activity at the gateway. There is also the possibility of handling vaccinations at Leipzig/Halle.

"All in all, we believe there is huge potential in the field of humanitarian logistics, as our airport provides the ideal logistics platform for this — for all our customers," he says.

"This role will become even more important, not least thanks to the planned establishment of a new European logistics centre for disaster management very close to our airport."

Meanwhile, Mitteldeutsche Flughafen is also continuing to see "huge demand" for freighter capacity, Patyk notes. Supplies for the automobile industry are regularly being flown from Leipzig/Halle to North Africa, for example.

In Dubai, Al Mulla points to "unprecedented" growth in e-commerce traffic as a consequence of the pandemic; in the Far East HKIA has been enhancing its ability to capture opportunities in the booming e-commerce sector, Chan says.

Such efforts started well before the outbreak of Covid-19, but the sector has grown strongly during the pandemic.

Leipzig/Halle Airport beat its freight-handling record last year by handling more than 1.38m tonnes of cargo, a volume up by about 12% on the 2019 figure.

"We are expecting further growth in 2021," Patyk forecasts. Initial months of this year supported this view, he confirms, with volumes that "make us very optimistic about the future".

Cargo traffic handled in January and February increased by more than 18% in comparison with the same months of 2020, for example.

Ken Ryan, director of cargo at Chicago Rockford International Airport, and Zach Oakley, deputy director of operations and planning at the US's 19th-biggest airfreight hub in terms of cargo volumes handled, are enthusiastic about the gateway's current performance and its future prospects. In 2020 Rockford recorded 1.2m tonnes of landed weight cargo; this figure was up by 15% on 2019's.



Vienna Airport's Michael Zach (left) and Dubai Airports' Faisal Al Mulla


Key to supporting the ongoing increase in freight volumes through Rockford will be the airport's investment in new infrastructure.

A new 90,000 sq ft warehouse was due to open in a couple of weeks time when Ryan and Oakley talked to *Freighters World* in mid-April, while confirmation of the interior structure and fitting out of a second facility of 100,000 sq ft is under way. A third facility is being discussed.


UPS, another of its freighter operator customers, has moved some vaccines domestically on its network.

At Vienna, Zach says that the airport is "ideally positioned for the current dynamic market environment, with rapidly increasing freight volumes in Europe".

Over the course of the pandemic — between the beginning of March 2020 and April this year — and more than 100 cargo-only flights, a total of 30 new cargo destinations around the world were served to and from Vienna. ♦



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Feedstock availability and purchase cost of suitable passenger aircraft are two elements in deciding whether to opt for a freighter conversion.

A third factor is the likely demand profile for airfreight and rates. The pandemic changed all those dynamics.

A number of older aircraft models were grounded early in 2020 and are unlikely to fly again as passenger jets.

For some aircraft types, this surge in feedstock numbers — with fewer flying hours than would be expected and a lower price — is now making itself felt in the conversion market.

The Boeing 777-300ER is a prime example despite a production line freighter, based on the B777-200ER, still flowing out of the factory.

More than 800 of the passenger version have been manufactured since 2004, serving 50 airline customers.

It is now an attractive conversion option, both in terms of efficiency, pilot familiarity and engine commonality.

It was interesting to hear the thoughts of Sir Tim Clark, Emirates president, when addressing the virtual World Aviation Festival. Firstly, he believes that freight rates will continue to be high: “It is possible you will get a high level of sustained freight rate until the restoration of supply comes back to into equilibrium.”

He was questioned about his view on whether Emirates would be converting aircraft to freighters: “Yes, we are looking very seriously at that, and to be honest with you we have quite a number of B777-ERs which are coming to the end of their passenger lives.

“We are looking at retaining those and basically converting them into freighters. They have about a 90- to 100-ton capability and a huge volumetric capability. They would fit into our network very well.”

Ben Smith, chief executive Air France KLM, was asked in the same question later.

He responded: “We are a passenger business as a group and we have six dedicated freighters, two triple sevens and four B747s.

“Whether we should choose to convert some of the existing passenger aircraft or bring in

A NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

A number of airlines are seriously looking at switching the B777-300ER to freighter use in order to give the widebodied favourite a new lease of life

additional cargo aircraft is yet to be seen.

“As global capacity returns, yields will come down but [cargo] is still a viable business for an airline that is mostly focused on passenger business.”

Smith then referenced the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) B777-300ER conversion programme, pointing out that the lead time to secure a slot is “quite long” and, although he did not indicate an intention to join the queue, called it “an interesting option”.

In terms of future feedstock, Etihad Airways chief executive Tony Douglas did not mention the conversion of passenger aircraft but did confirm that the Abu Dhabi carrier would be shedding its 19 B777-300ERs after the end of this year.

All of that is good news for IAI and aircraft lessor GE Capital Aviation Services (GECAS) who in spectacular fashion passed the planned halfway phase of the Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) development programme for the GE90-powered ‘Big Twin’ B777-300ER freighter conversion.

The IAI and GECAS ‘Big Twin’ conversion project has moved on to the construction phase — and is garnering plenty of interest

The IAI prototype took part in a countrywide flyover to celebrate Israel Independence Day.

There is already a taker for the Big Twin, with US freighter carrier Kalitta Air signing up with GECAS Cargo for three aircraft, making Kalitta the first operator of the type.

B747 freighter airline Cargolux is also examining the B777-300ER conversion programme although comments made in November last year by chief executive Richard Forson have yet to result in orders.

IAI is not alone in the market, with Kansas-based Sequoia Aircraft Conversions teaming up with finance house Split Rock Aviation to bring the B777-300ER converted freighter to market.

The two partners believe that the B777-300ER is now entering the optimal window for a passenger to freighter conversion, extending the life of the asset by another 15-20 years.

The production line version, with a slightly higher payload, is still very popular.

Silk Way West Airlines signed up for five B777Fs at the end of April, just the latest in a constant flow of orders or deliveries.

Latest data from Boeing has 40 orders outstanding for the B777F, estimated at \$64m per unit.

It has no competition on the widebody production freighter front, other than the farewell order for the B747-8F from UPS.

A sustained growth in e-commerce and the unpredictable return of plentiful long-haul bellyhold capacity will determine whether airlines or the considerable lessor market opt for a production line or converted B777. ♦



Always room for improvement

Perishables transportation is evolving in several key ways, writes **Megan Ramsey**

The transport of perishable goods by air is nothing new, but the airfreight community is continuously looking for better ways to deliver these delicate items safely.

One carrier that has launched a dedicated perishable goods service recently is Singapore Airlines (SIA).

ThruFresh “offers swift and quality delivery that meets the stringent demands of transporting delicate and short-shelf life products, such as live seafood, chilled meat, fruits and vegetables by air”, according to Geok Suan Ong, general manager key accounts and verticals at SIA Cargo.

Its features include priority uplift and handling, quick ramp transfers and cold room facilities.

Ong says: “Singapore’s geographical location and SIA’s extensive network connectivity enable us to be well positioned as a hub for perishables, moving a wide variety of products such as meat, seafood, fruits and flowers from key perishable markets, such as south west Pacific, west Asia and Africa and Southeast Asia, to our customers around the globe.

“Our dedicated cold rooms at SATS Coolport, with an area of 8,000 sq m, can handle perishable cargo from -28 to 25 degrees Celsius,” she continues. “The wide temperature range allows us to accommodate different types of perishable cargo such as frozen meat, flowers and live seafood.”

Most of the perishable goods at Singapore’s Changi airport are inbound, as the nation’s food production is limited.

Sam Gould, head of cargo in Singapore for handler dnata, says: “Every day, a great deal of perishable cargo comes in from India and Indonesia; there’s also salmon from Europe and beef, pork and lamb from Australia and New Zealand.”

Gould says demand for imported fresh food went up during the Covid-19 pandemic; public confidence in supply chains was low, and Singapore’s low level of domestic food production was an added pressure.

“There was a bit of panic that things like eggs or flour would run out,” Gould recalls. “People are also spending more on things like high-end meats now, as they can’t spend their money on travel.”

There are seasonal patterns too, such as dramatic spikes in demand for imported pork and oranges during Chinese New Year, or flowers for Valentine’s Day.

Handler dnata’s state-of-the-art, 1,400 sq m pharma and perishable handling centre at Changi Airport can process 75,000 tonnes of temperature-sensitive goods annually.

Opened at the end of 2013, it was built to satisfy increasingly high expectations around the shipment of perishable goods, and to handle a large amount of perishables at the same time, at different temperatures, with goods segregated to avoid contamination. The cool chain centre has 14 different chiller rooms.

Trucks back onto a temperature-controlled dock, which is separate from those used for general cargo. The staging area is also temperature-controlled.

“This means any checks can be done under temperature-controlled conditions and there is no break in the cool chain,” Gould says.

The handler has similar facilities across its global network. For instance, says Mohammed Akhlaq, chief commercial officer — UK and Europe at dnata: “January this year saw the opening of our new, state-of-the-art dnata City North facility at Manchester Airport. With additional capacity and the largest of its type at the airport to handle pharmaceuticals and perishables, the facility provides the local industries based in the UK regions and the north with the ability to have a greater level of movement of such critical cargo.”

Investment

In Turkey, another handler has been investing in its perishable cargo services.

Over the past two years, Havaş has



dnata began rolling out its new cool dollies at the end of last year

been using reefer trucks to transport special cargo such as medicines and foods between aircraft and its warehouse.

Havaş general manager Mete Erna says: “Havaş is the first company in ground handling services in Turkey to use reefer trucks.”

The company has also doubled the size of its warehouse at Istanbul Airport and invested in brand-new technologies and hardware at its warehouse facilities at Ankara, Izmir and Antalya airports.

“We will continue to increase the efficiency of our operations and adopt innovations to contribute to the success of all our business partners,” Erna says.

The aim of such investments is to minimise the risk of perishable cargo being damaged or spoiled during transit, and the same is true of IATA’s CEIV Fresh certification, which dnata’s Singapore station attained in April.

“The philosophy is to continuously review procedures and equipment to keep reducing risk as far as possible,” Gould states. “You have to show evidence of this in order to renew the certification.”

Among the changes dnata has made recently to improve the quality of its perishable handling services at Changi is segregation of certain types of fruits that can affect how quickly others ripen if stored together. The company has also added new specialist equipment, introducing two cool dollies at Changi.

“These were a significant investment after we analysed the risks at the airport,” Gould says, noting that

transit between aircraft and terminal constitutes a potential break in the cool chain.

“In the past we used insulation blankets and so on to mitigate the high temperatures on the ramp here in Singapore — but the cool dollies really close the gap.”

Dnata received the two cool dollies in November 2020 and rolled them out in December.

It also introduced cool dollies at its Australian stations earlier this year.

Terence Yong, cargo development director, Asia Pacific at dnata, says: “We have invested in the handling and transportation of perishable goods in both Sydney and Melbourne. Each location has two cool dollies with adjustable temperature ranges that enable perishables to be staged before or after a flight, and two 8 degrees Celsius chiller rooms to store delicate cargo, including fruit, vegetables, dairy products, flowers, fish and meat.”

At the moment, the two cool dollies at Changi are enough, Gould notes.

“With Covid, the number of flights here has fallen by about two-thirds and the flights we do have are more spread out through the day.

“If we get back to 65 or 70 aircraft turns a day, we’d need to see how it goes and whether we could justify more cool dollies.”

Perishable goods currently make up 13-15% of dnata’s total tonnage in Singapore. In the last calendar year the handler processed about 40,000 tonnes of perishable cargo — so volumes have been gradually increasing from the 30,000 tonnes processed during the cool chain →

→ centre's first year of operations.

Over the lifetime of the facility so far, there has “definitely been a shift in customer expectations”, Gould says, with accessibility of detailed information being one increasingly important requirement.

Dnata is working on real-time data sharing. Gould admits that communication between various software systems is an issue: “We’re about halfway towards digitalisation; we use some paper processes, but some digital timestamps and so on are built into our facility.

“We’ll be implementing a new cargo handling system before the end of this year that will make information more readily available and transparent to our customers.”

Collaboration

SIA, too, is committed to improving and enhancing its product offerings to serve its customers better as their requirements evolve, Ong says.

As such, the IATA CEIV Fresh certification the carrier attained in February is “an affirmation to our dedication to uphold high safety and quality standards in the transportation of perishable cargo”.

Ong adds: “This is achieved through quality and risk management, trained staff for the handling and movement of perishables, active collaboration and transparent communication with stakeholders and supply chain partners; as well as advocating a standardised approach for the transportation of perishables.”

The trend for collaboration within the cargo community, especially for perishables, is noticeably on the up.

For example, Gould says: “Changi Airport Group (CAG) takes an active role in improving and increasing the quality and services we offer at Changi. CAG brings together handlers, airlines, trucking companies, forwarders and the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore to create working groups that share best practices and issues.

Miami vice

In April, Menzies Aviation won a five-year cargo contract with Avianca at Miami International Airport (MIA) in April. At its 225,000 sq ft warehouse at MIA, Avianca processes approximately 250,000 tonnes of cargo each year.

While exports comprise a broad mix of commodities, imports are mostly perishable goods.

Menzies’ senior vice president eastern US Nigel Shuttleworth says: “Flower activity in particular continues to grow in the Americas region; therefore a key focus of our planning has been how we can streamline processes so that flowers are handled efficiently whilst preserving their condition.”

Avianca Cargo has warehouses and cold rooms at its cargo hubs, located in Miami and Bogota.

‘We are open to exploring partnership opportunities with different industry players’

Geok Suan Ong, SIA Cargo

At MIA, refrigeration plants are in place, maintaining the required humidity and temperature.

All the areas where these products are stored are handled and monitored 24/7 by the operations team.

Ruben Atehortua, cargo operations director, Avianca says: “With an investment of over \$2m we installed state-of-the-art equipment with a storage capacity of 300 tons on racks and 200 tons in full pallet for a total of 500 tons to preserve perishable products and a separate area exclusively for pharma handling.

“Menzies is an essential ally for us. They will be responsible for the cargo handling of Avianca Cargo for its import and export operation in our Miami hub, ensuring a high standard of work.”



Havaş has been using reefer vehicles to transport goods to and from aircraft

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Malpensa looks to new heights

Malpensa Airport is on course to handle up to 650,000 tonnes this year and further expansion is planned, writes **Roger Hailey**



Italy's Malpensa Airport is an established cargo hub in southern Europe, with FedEx, DHL Express and Cargolux Italia among its main customers, but further investment is already planned to supplement the newly completed Cargo City expansion.

The airport handled some 511,000 tons last year, down 6.5% compared with Covid-free 2019, but Giovanni Costantini, senior cargo manager at airport manager SEA, says that the newly opened DHL hub helped generate a 33% surge in 2021 first-quarter volumes compared with 2019, and 22% above 2017 — a historic cargo peak at Malpensa.

Costantini says that Malpensa is on course to have handled up to 650,000 tonnes by year end, if the Italian economy continues to perform well.

Cargo City comprises two main areas, the northern part of which is the historic nucleus of the airport and has two warehouses for ground handlers.

In September 2020, the southern area development of three cargo buildings was completed. As a result, FedEx moved sites and expanded its southern Europe hub footprint in Malpensa from 4,000 sq m to 15,000 sq m.

Its overnight operation has domestic flights but also an international network connecting to Paris, Liege, Dubai and its Memphis US superhub.

In a similar size second building,



there are two handlers, with Beta Trans having a 10,000 sq m warehouse.

Beta Trans has now signed a commercial agreement with ramp handler dnata. Says Costantini: "These two are now able to offer a seamless service at Malpensa."

DHL Express's €110m gateway is a separate complex of some 50,000 sq m including a 20,000 sq m warehouse and the remainder an operational area to unload trucks and aircraft.

The new dual facility, the logistics giant's fourth largest in Europe, integrates all DHL Express processes under one roof, a hub that manages air cargo and a service centre for last mile pick-up and delivery.

Costantini, whose e-commerce customers include ASL Airlines —

offering direct B737F flights for e-tailers — and a frequent if not regular caller in the form of Amazon Air B737Fs, has also welcomed UPS with two B737F flights per day connecting with its Cologne hub.

Malpensa's cargo team is now preparing a masterplan for further expansion — a 60-ha site that will provide extra apron space for freighters and additional first-line warehousing, aimed at the courier and e-commerce sectors.

The plan needs Ministry of Environment approval, which may take two to three years.

Malpensa's strategic location in a large European industrial area — pharma goods are important exports, for example — and its road connections radiating out to key consumer markets provide a strong business case.

Adds Costantini: "We hope that the decision of DHL and Federal Express to be here will promote traffic from other hubs."

But it is not just express and e-commerce. Cargolux Italia, the local offshoot of the Luxembourg freighter giant, and Qatar Airways Cargo are number one and two in terms of pure cargo volumes at Malpensa and both enjoy fifth freedom rights to the US.

Covid has put vaccines and pharma in the global spotlight. Malpensa handlers Beta Trans, BCube and Alha all have their own dedicated pharma

facilities totaling some 4,000 sq m of refrigerated storage for a range of life science products.

For example, in April Malpensa handled a freighter that flew 1m doses of a meningitis vaccine to Brazil.

Costantini says: "Malpensa has capacity for airfreight growth. We have plenty of slots available for cargo aircraft and no curfew except for some very small restrictions during the night."

"The possibilities to make Malpensa a cargo base are very good, and we are well connected by road to northern Italy, to Switzerland and to France.

"Everybody thinks Italian customs procedures are a mess but that is not true. The customs authorities have made a lot of improvements in their procedures and it is now possible to clear shipments electronically with a system that is quick and easy to operate."

He continues: "We still have many things to do of course, and one example is in booking slots for truck arrivals at the cargo area."

"We are working with an IT systems developer on truck slot booking software that will help truck drivers in making their procedures at Malpensa and will also improve the interface between the aircraft and ground system."

"We are working on such systems because digitalisation of the air cargo process is the key to success." **acn**



'Malpensa has capacity for growth. We have plenty of slots available for cargo aircraft'

Giovanni Costantini, SEA



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For Cargojet, new orders for freighters have been a routine affair in recent years, as Canada's largest all-cargo carrier added to its fleet of B767 freighters to keep pace with rising volumes. But the latest round of expansion, announced in February, marked a departure from the mould. In addition to five B767-300 freighters the airline is also getting B777s.

It signed a firm order for two of these for delivery in 2023, with options on another two for 2024.

Executive vice president Jamie Porteous says this is the first time that the company has signed up for a plane in anticipation of demand, rather than on the heels of contracts for new business.

The B777s also signal a shift in focus. Cargojet has until now concentrated on the domestic market, hauling parcels overnight for the major players. International work was largely confined to some ACMI jobs with DHL and a weekly transatlantic flight from the Maritimes to Cologne. The latter is now twice weekly.

The airline has also stepped up international charter flights. This spring it started charters for a client from Shanghai to Chicago that are expected to run for several months. The B777s will give it a stronger tool in the long-haul market and allow it to extend its reach to Asia.

"We see demand for international air cargo remaining strong over the next three to five years minimum," says Porteous.

The first of the new B767s is due to arrive in October and is earmarked for ACMI work. Three of the B767s on order will replace older planes.

Air Canada (AC) is also waiting for B767 freighters. The first should arrive by August or September, with the second in October, so AC will have two for this year's peak season.

By the time the 2022 peak season ends, the airline stands to have seven B767Fs in its fleet altogether.

With B767s on the way out from the main airline, management saw an opportunity to turn some into all-cargo configuration, no doubt encouraged by the contribution cargo has made to the bottom line over the past 14 months.

AC's cargo business generated over C\$920m in 2020, an increase of 28% on the 2019 result. The money from cargo alleviated the pain from passenger operations, which produced a net loss of C\$4.6bn for 2020.

AC was one of the first airlines to remove the seating from some of its passenger planes to augment cargo capacity. Four of its B777s and three A330s have operated in this configuration. This spring they are joined by three more seatless B777s and two A330s. In addition, AC brought two B787s that were parked in the desert back for cargo flights (without cabin modifications).

Canada in transition

Tectonic shifts are rippling through Canada's airfreight market as the major carriers change direction, writes **Ian Putzger**



Edmonton International Airport has lost its international passenger services, but its cargo operation is soaring

Cargo vice president Jason Berry says that in May, it ran 250-260 cargo flights with passenger aircraft, compared to about 150 weekly flights in the 2020 peak season.

To some extent the airline performs ad hoc flights in response to market demand, but for the most part the focus has been on running a scheduled network that gives customers some planning security, Berry says.

Recently AC started a twice-weekly flight to Basel. "We've been looking at that for a long time. It's the only widebody between North America and Basel," he says, adding that pharmaceutical traffic is high on the list of commodities on this route.

Until the freighters come on board there will be no further increase of cargo capacity for AC. "We're maximised," Berry says.

But the market is clamouring for more. "If we had an additional aircraft now, we could easily fill it. People are begging for capacity," says Porteous. "We're getting a lot of requests for charters. The only thing that's prohibiting us from doing more is lack of aircraft."

Cargojet currently has two B767

freighters in heavy maintenance, which limits its flexibility.

Berry describes AC's additional capacity as "a drop in the bucket".

"We're seeing demand across the board. There's not enough capacity," he remarks.

Capacity shortage

Lift is still severely curtailed. "We're still operating about 40% of our capacity. Nobody is at 100%," says Joe Lawrence, president of GSA Airline Services International (ASL).

By and large, the space shortage is a bigger headache for forwarders on the inbound sectors than for exports, but there are plenty of challenges in either direction.

Lift to South America has shrivelled up as belly capacity all but disappeared. Historically forwarders have trucked this cargo to US gateways if there wasn't enough lift available out of Canada, but the combination of higher export rates from the US and hefty trucking charges has undermined this option.

Instead, British Airways flies freight out of Canada to London to connect with its departures for South

America, notes Michelle Lawrence, director of marketing at ASL.

The bottlenecks in capacity have also severely crimped interline possibilities.

For ASL, which feeds a number of its airline clients through connecting flights, this avenue has become less straightforward.

Besides the loss of frequencies or flights altogether, interline rate agreements have gone out of the window. Every time such consignments are charged on a spot rate basis, Lawrence says.

The Canadian government has added to the challenges by designating only four airports — Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal — as gateways for international passenger flights. This forces forwarders to truck cargo from places like Ottawa or Edmonton, which used to have international connections.

Moreover, these points were handy for overflow cargo when the major gateways had constraints, notes Jeff Cullen, chief executive of Rhenus Logistics Canada.

Edmonton International Airport has lost its international

→ passenger services, but that has not held back its cargo growth. Freighter landings were up 16% last year, and the airport's tally of cargo charters soared 214%, says Alex Lowe, global network development manager. Cargo throughput rose 7.5% in 2019.

Fuelled by strong growth in economic activity, the airport has kept expanding capacity and adding capabilities, like a perishables facility and the push for CEIV accreditation.

This year the focus is on parking positions for freighters.

Later this year, construction of an additional 47,000 sq m of cargo apron space is expected to start, creating space for up to five freighters. The airport also plans to install a hydrant system for cargo refuelling and to add 1,400 sq m of cold storage space. This will more than double Edmonton's cooler capacity, bringing it to almost 2,000 sq m altogether.

Thanks to a growing cluster of pharmaceutical firms on its doorstep, the airport has seen strong growth in this traffic.

Overall, though, e-commerce has been the most potent driver of air cargo growth in the Canadian market.

One good example of this is Cargojet, which signed a deal with Amazon at the beginning of April to fly two B767 freighters for the e-commerce behemoth on a CMI

basis. Their agreement is for four years, with multiple renewal options for additional two-year spells.

This is on top of Amazon's use of Cargojet on a block space basis, plus charter agreements at peak times.

"Potentially this could dilute what we're carrying for Amazon on our aircraft, but they're growing faster than projected," says Porteous, adding that the e-commerce giant needs a carrier licensed in Canada to run its intra-Canadian operations.

Dedicated offshoot

AC has chosen a more direct route into e-commerce. After some pilot trials at the end of 2020 and early this year, the airline officially revealed its own dedicated e-commerce offshoot in February.

This utilises a platform developed in close collaboration with SmartKargo, which had earlier built a similar platform for Brazilian airline Azul. The platform ties into the websites of merchants that use the service, as one of the options for delivery for consumers to select during the check-out process.

Berry says early trials leading up to the launch were successful and that a second client came on board in April. Several other firms have expressed interest and are talking to AC about it, he adds.

AC's e-commerce offering, which



Cargojet's latest order includes five B767-300 freighters

outsources the first and final mile segments to local partners, does not have an international component at this stage. It focuses fully on the domestic arena, where its large network enables the carrier to offer faster transit times than competitors.

Apart from taking its network capacity to the e-commerce market, the airline is also trying to extend its reach through booking platforms.

Its agreement to market capacity through cargo.one, which was announced at the end of March, made it the first North American airline to use a rate and booking portal.

"I believe we have to be in these spaces. There are no secrets anymore — everyone knows what capacity is out there," comments Berry.

"This allows us to expand our reach


to forwarders who don't have relationships with us."

The airline's journey into harnessing third-party platforms will continue. "This is not a nice-to-have, it's a must-have. This won't be our last one," Berry says.

From the forwarders' side, booking and getting price information has been challenging, given the volatility in schedules and prices. For their part, they have felt pushed to narrow their windows for quotes as well.

AGO Transportation used to guarantee pricing to its clients for 15-30 days, but now this window is down to about seven days, says vice president Sandra Farah.

A lot has been changing in the Canadian market — and more change is clearly underway. **acn**



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PREIGHTERS

Quick change delivers the goods

A reversible cargo-in-cabin conversion for Airbus A330s, which can be installed in a few days, is helping Finnair Cargo to transport Covid supplies. **Rachelle Harry** reports

Lufthansa Technik and Airbus recently partnered to develop a reversible cargo-in-cabin solution, known as a 'temporary cargo cabin', for Airbus A330 aircraft.

The solution enables passenger cabins to be transformed into cargo-carrying spaces with the kit supplied by Lufthansa Technik, increasing capacity by up to 15 tonnes depending on the aircraft configuration.

The first carrier to use the temporary cargo cabin solution in one of its aircraft is Finnair.

A key benefit of the solution is the installation time, the partners say.

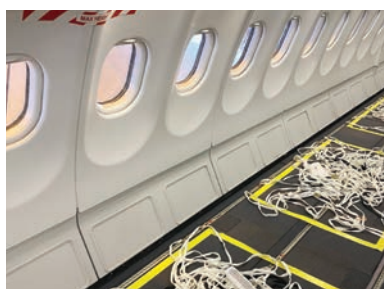
Nea Maeda, a cabin engineer at Finnair, says the conversion took four days, but "if we were to modify another aircraft, I think it would only take three days because we now know the modification process inside out".

By comparison, although the time for 'regular' cabin conversions varies, depending on the aircraft model, they typically take weeks or even months to be carried out.

Maeda says: "Usually the installation is the most laborious part; but with this solution, the removal of the seats, cables and monitors took the longest time and the installation part was quite light by comparison."

Tommi Voss, head of cargo operations at Finnair, says the solution has enabled the company to meet the demands of its customers throughout the pandemic.

Voss says: "We noticed that a lot of our customers required larger amounts of capacity to transport Covid-related supplies like PPE and they needed to transport more than what can typically be transported in the belly of our A330s."



Finnair's converted A330

"We trialled carrying cargo in the overhead bins and below the passenger seats, but this didn't add enough capacity and it was also impractical to do with all the seats still installed."

Maeda says: "We have a longstanding co-operation with Lufthansa and when this solution came along, we knew it would be perfect for us. We wanted to do everything we could to meet demand on our air cargo side."

Voss adds: "The main commodity for the converted A330s is increased volume, rather than increased weight, because the majority of cargo carried is related to Covid supplies and this type of cargo isn't very heavy."

Another key advantage of the solution is its ability to be reversed.

Maeda says: "The aircraft can be returned back to passenger operations, which is what we hope to do eventually."

In spring last year, with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency's permit for exception to make limited changes to aircraft in the pandemic, Finnair modified a passenger Airbus A330 to increase its cargo capacity. The project was led by Maeda. Finnair said installing the temporary cargo cabin solution in an additional A330 this year was a "natural continuation of this work". **acn**

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DATA HUB

AIRLINE DEMAND

Global demand reaches a record high for March

Air cargo volumes in March reached an all-time high for the month, according to IATA in its latest air cargo analysis.

The association said that global air cargo demand, measured in cargo-tonne km (CTKs), was 4.4% higher in March 2021 than in March 2019, which was used for comparison to avoid the “distorted” results in 2020 that reflect the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 crisis. Compared with a year ago, demand is up by 22.1%.

Capacity in March this year, in available cargo tonne-km (ACTKs), was recorded at 12% lower than in March 2019 and the cargo load factor was up by nine percentage points to 58.8%.

IATA said cargo capacity has not yet recovered from the temporary setback in early 2021 when many airlines grounded passenger aircraft because of Covid-related travel restrictions.

IATA director general Willie Walsh commented: “Air cargo continues to be the bright spot for aviation. Demand reached an all-time high in March, up 4.4% compared to pre-Covid levels (March 2019) and airlines are taking all measures to find the needed capacity.”

“The crisis has shown that air cargo can meet fundamental challenges by adopting innovations quickly.”

“That is how it is meeting growing demand even as much of the passenger fleet remains grounded. The sector needs to retain this momentum post-crisis to drive its long-term efficiency with digitalisation.”

Looking at regional performance in March 2021, Africa-based airlines recorded volumes 23.1% higher than in the same period of 2019. Capacity in the region was 4.6% lower than March 2019.

Cargo demand for North America-based airlines was 17.5% higher than March 2019. Capacity was also 3.8% higher.

IATA noted: “The cargo outlook for the region remains promising due to positive developments in underlying demand drivers.”

“US first-quarter GDP rose by 6.4% in annualised terms, up from 4.3% in the fourth quarter, which brings the country’s economy close to where it was before the crisis started.”

Airlines based in Europe posted volumes 0.9% higher than in March 2019, while capacity was 17.1% lower.

“Improved operating conditions and recovering export orders contributed to the positive performance,” said IATA.

Airlines based in the Middle East region achieved

volumes 9.1% higher than in March 2019. Capacity in the region was down 12.5% on March 2019.

“The volumes had been supported especially by robust trade flows on the Middle East-North America and Middle East-Asia routes,” observed IATA.

Air cargo demand for Asia Pacific-based airlines was 2.9% lower than in March 2019, while capacity was 18.6% lower.

“The slight weakness in performance compared to the previous month was seen on most of the trade lanes connected with Asia,” noted IATA. “For now, it’s unclear what caused the setback since

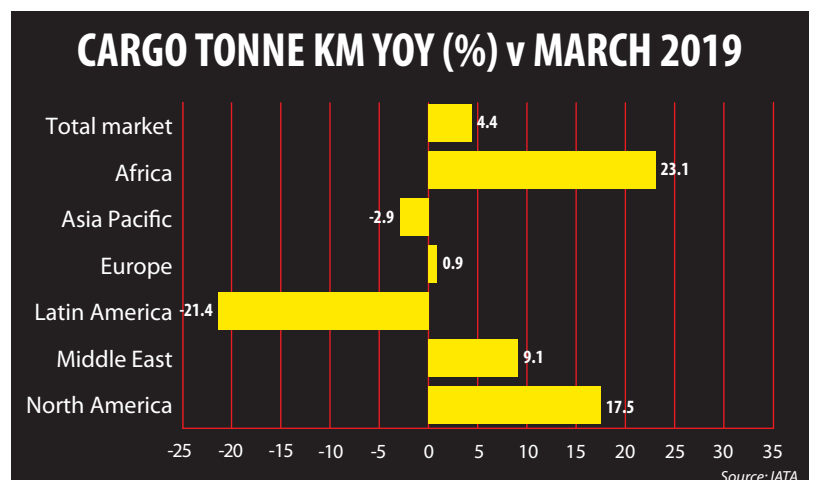
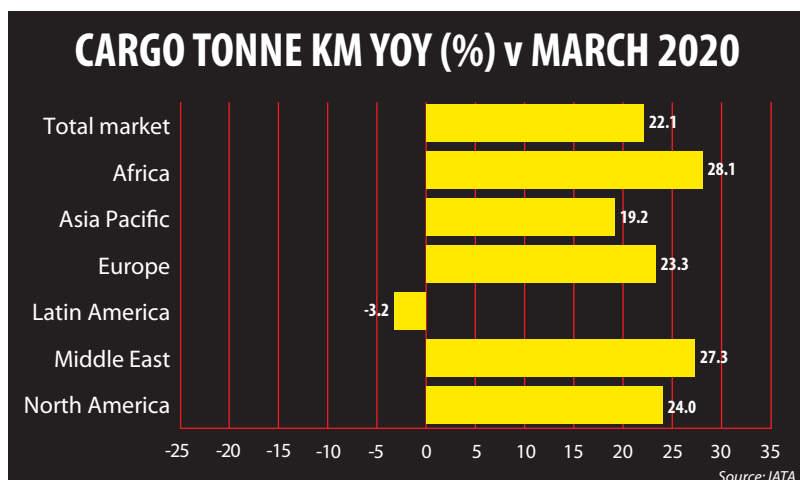
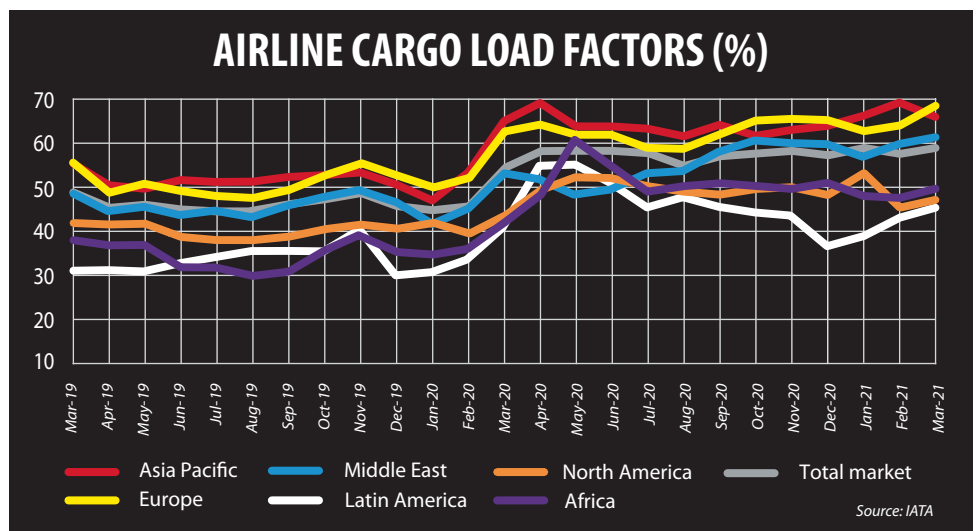
we did not observe any significant fall in capacity nor spike in cargo rates compared with February.”

Latin America-based carriers performed the worst in terms of air cargo demand, which was 21.4% lower than pre-Covid levels. Capacity in the region was also lower than March 2019 — by 39.9%.

IATA said: “The region’s demand recovery has been stalling since Q3 and the already weak supply has started to deteriorate recently (down 4.3% month-on-month in March). The ongoing sharp capacity contraction has most likely contributed to the delayed rebound in cargo volumes.”

‘The [Covid-19] crisis has shown that air cargo can meet fundamental challenges by adopting innovations quickly’

Willie Walsh, IATA



AIRFREIGHT RATES

Rates pushed up by reduced capacity and increased demand

Airfreight rates from Hong Kong to North America took off in April as a combination of capacity shortages and rising demand hit the market.

Baltic Exchange Air Freight Index (BAI) figures show that in April the average price on services from Hong Kong to North America increased by 54.7% compared with a month earlier to \$8.48 per kg.

While some seasonal uplift in pricing is expected at this time of year, this is far above the increases recorded in 2018 and 2019 (last year was affected by the PPE crisis).

Peter Stallion of air cargo derivatives broker Freight Investor Services (FIS) said this was in part driven by

Cathay Pacific reducing cargo capacity from Hong Kong due to stricter crew quarantine rules, which have since been relaxed.

Bruce Chan, vice president of global logistics at investment bank Stifel, said increases were also felt on services from Shanghai to North America, with a wave of consumer spending in the US and low inventory levels driving the rate increases.

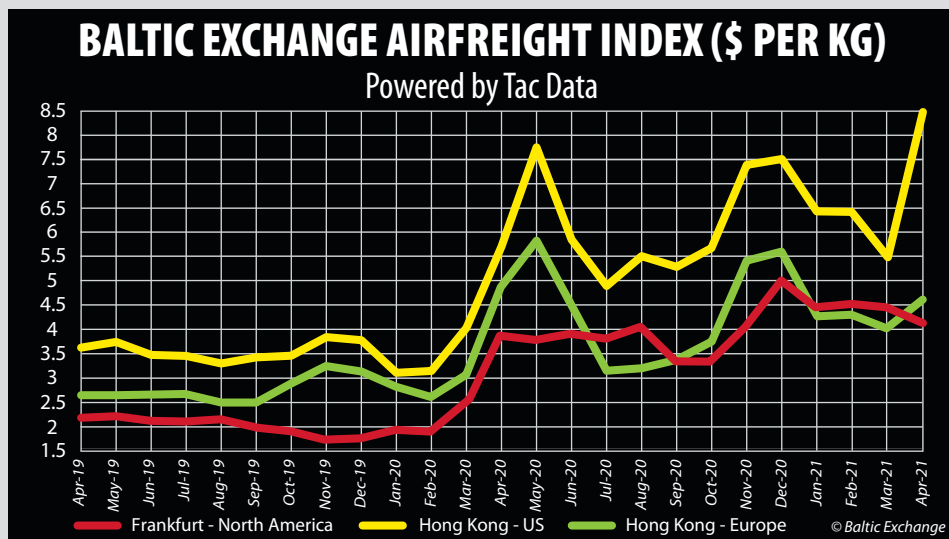
On services from Hong Kong to Europe, April prices also rose compared with a month earlier, although more along usual seasonal lines. These jumped 13.8% on March to \$4.61 per kg.

Looking forward, Chan said carriers could divert

capacity from Asia-Europe to the transpacific to chase higher prices, which could drive up rates on services

from Asia to Europe. Meanwhile, April average rates from Frankfurt to North America fell 7.2% on

March to \$4.13 per kg, but prices are elevated, driven by vaccine cargo and lack of passenger flights.



AIRPORT THROUGHPUT

Hubs note strong cargo demand

Airport cargo statistics for March highlight the impact that the Covid-19 outbreak had on the market last year.

The figures show that even passenger-centric transshipment hubs Heathrow and Changi saw their air cargo volumes increase compared with a year ago in March.

At Heathrow there was a 21.4% year-on-year increase in cargo demand in March. It is the first time since September 2018 that the airport registered an increase.

Over the first three months of the year, demand is down 5%.

Changi, which has reported an increase for the first time in more than a year, saw its air cargo volumes increase 5.3% in March, although for the first quarter volumes are down on a year ago at 5.7%.

Elsewhere, Hong Kong International, which is the largest airport in terms of international air cargo volumes, recorded an increase of 4.9% in March compared with last year.

This represents a slowdown in growth compared with the rest of the year — volumes are up by 13.1% in the first quarter — as stricter crew quarantine rules restricted flights.

“The growth in cargo volume last month was mainly attributed to double-digit growth in imports,” the airport authority said.

“Despite a decline in transshipments due to a shortage of belly capacity on passenger flights, the overall cargo throughput saw an increase

during the month, most significantly in the traffic to and from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Taiwan.”

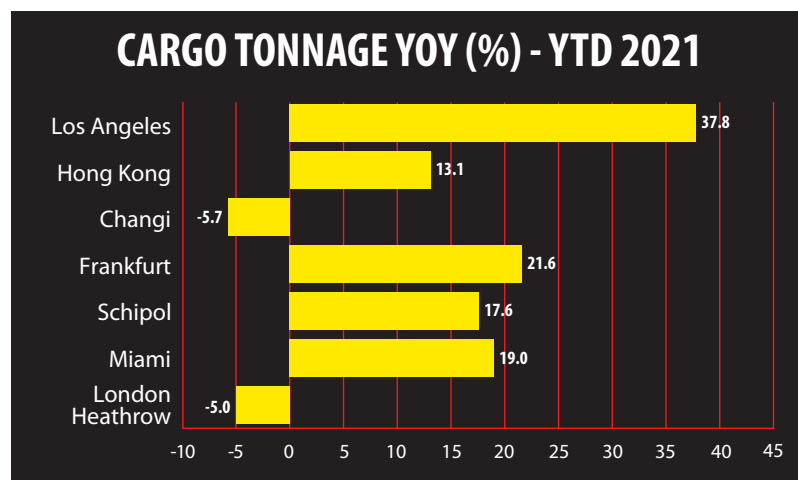
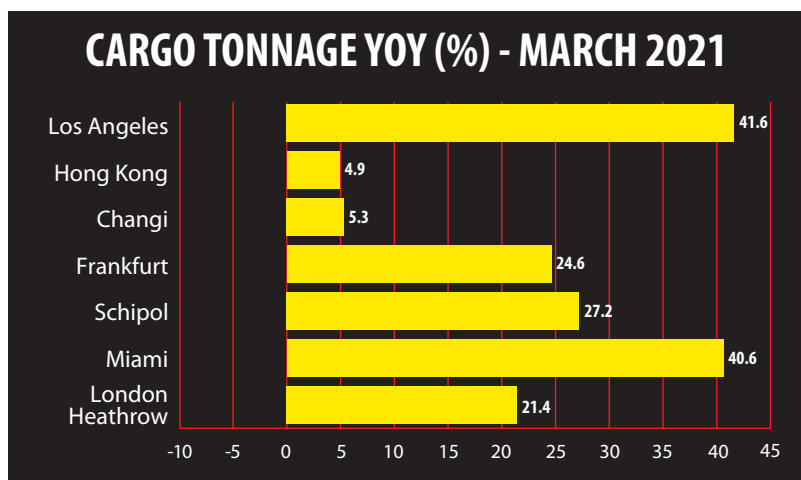
Elsewhere, the US airports of Miami International and Los Angeles International continued their recovery.

Demand in March was up by 40.6% year on year in Miami, while at Los Angeles there was a 41.6% increase.

Schiphol saw its volumes for March increase by more than 27% on last year, with Frankfurt up 24.6%.

Volumes were even ahead of March 2019 levels at Schiphol. “The number of all-cargo flights has increased significantly, from 1,338 to 2,326. This compensates for the tonnage normally transported on passenger flights,” Schiphol said.

“The increase in all-cargo flights mainly took place in respect of North America and Latin America. The number of cargo flights to other continents showed an increase in respect of 2020.”



CONTAINER SHIPPING

Hapag issues huge GRI

The capacity crunch on the US eastbound transpacific trade appears to somehow be getting even worse, pushing Hapag-Lloyd to announce a huge new general rate increase (GRI).

The German shipping line in mid-May said that it would introduce a GRI of \$3,000 per 40ft container on services from east Asia to North America on June 15.

To put that increase in perspective, a year ago the cost of shipping a container on the trade lane was just over half that amount.

Figures from rate portal Freightos show that in mid-May prices to ship a container from China to the US west coast stood at \$5,650 per 40ft, representing an increase of 250% on a year ago.

Prices from China to the US east coast stood \$7,435 per 40ft, up 174% on last year.

However, reports suggest that both

of these figures were far below the amount some were paying.

Freightos research lead Judah Levine said: "Non-stop demand for ocean freight and the resulting delays and equipment shortages pushed spot rates to new heights across major trade lanes.

"But with nearly 40% of containers getting rolled, many shippers are paying significantly more in premiums in the hopes of securing space.

"The latest projections show no let-up in US demand for imports. May's monthly retail import volumes are estimated to be just 2% below the record set in March, with June's imports expected to be 16% higher than in 2019."

Record levels

Levine said that prices from Asia to Europe were also at near-record levels in May and added that prices are not expected to ease until the third quarter.

Looking to the future, UK-based freight forwarder Westbound Shipping described the market out of Asia as broken and said it was hard to predict a return to normal.

"We are experiencing conditions on this trade that we have never witnessed before," it said in a market update.

"We are frequently asked when the current crisis will end, but in truth there is no definitive or certain answer to this question as we continue to operate in unprecedented times, which means all we can do is give our best prediction based on the current information available.

"With delayed vessels arriving back in Asia over the next few weeks, we believe we should see an easing of current market conditions between the middle of June and early July.

"There should be much more capacity and equipment available soon — including a few hundred thousand new containers being added

by carriers in the next two to three months.

"However, we expect demand to be very high following the current period of extremely limited availability, not to mention the traditional peak season period will be approaching.

"Therefore, although we expect to see some improvement by mid-June/early-July, we believe the market will still remain very challenging."

Unexpected events?

This view was echoed by consultant Lars Jensen, who said he believed the situation would begin to ease in the third quarter.

However, he gave the caveat that this depended on there being no further unexpected events, such as the recent Covid spread in India or the US pipeline cyber-attacks.

"The new normal is rate levels lower than the present but higher than 2019," he said.

PEOPLE

Chapman's digital focus

Laurent Jossa

Chapman Freeborn has appointed Laurent Jossa as its new group chief information officer as it looks to transition into a fully paperless organisation.

Jossa has more than 20 years of experience working at a variety of aviation and airfreight companies.

In his new role at Chapman Freeborn, he will manage the company's IT framework, "analysing and mapping functions and processes across all areas of the business, before implementing digital systems to drive efficiencies and improvements".

New development role at Crane

John O'Connor

Crane Worldwide Logistics has appointed John O'Connor into the newly created role of executive vice president, strategic development.

O'Connor, who has more than 28 years of experience in the freight and logistics industry, will drive Crane's strategic development and enhance the integrated supply chain solutions offered to its international clients.



Demmer joins cargo.one

Simson Demmer

Digital booking platform cargo.one has appointed Simson Demmer into the role of senior director, airline products.

Demmer, who has 10 years of experience in the industry, was previously head of analytics and business development — network management at Lufthansa Cargo, where he led its digital transformation process. Before that, he was chief strategy officer at CargoLogicManagement.

Geodis promotes Jordan

Anthony Jordan

Geodis has promoted Anthony Jordan into the role of executive vice president and chief operating officer, Americas.

Jordan, who has worked at the company for 15 years and has 35 years of experience in the industry, previously held the position of senior vice president and head of market line operations, Americas.

His other former roles at Geodis include senior vice president of contract logistics operations, vice president of account management and director of customer care.



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QUOTE OF THE ISSUE

"[Air cargo is] full of brilliant people. We should celebrate that and if we have these amazing voices that aren't being heard, let's help get them out there"

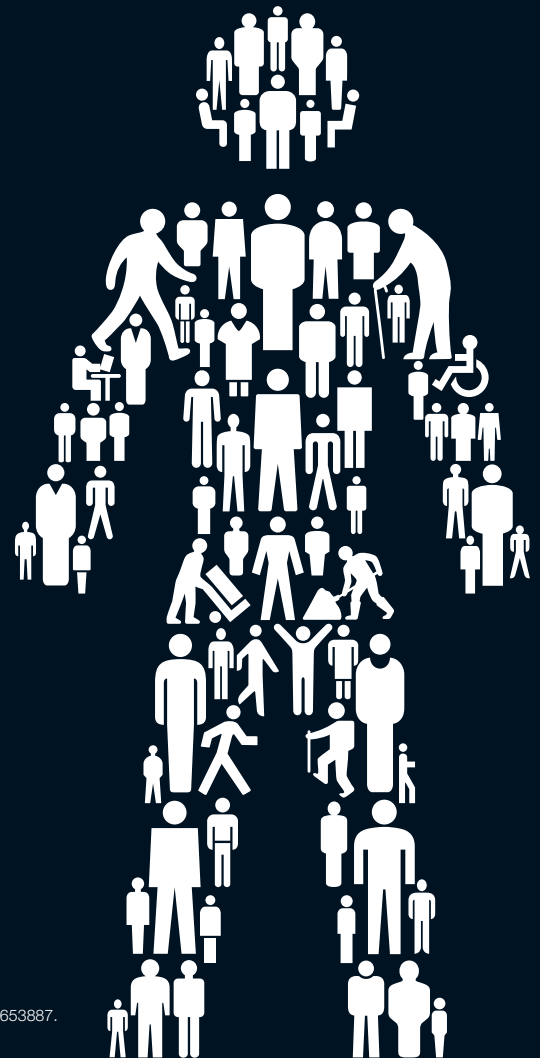
Emma Murray, Meantime Communications

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