ACW
AIR CARGO WEEK

ACW Digital is sponsored by

ECS GROUP


ECS GROUP
GSSA
DISRUPT
TRADITION

ACW
AIR CARGO WEEK
The weekly newspaper for air cargo professionals

SCAN HERE TO RECEIVE OUR NEWS
No. 1,330 26 May 2025
Follow Us:

Did You Know?

ORIGINALLY designed as a military transport and cargo aircraft in the 1950s, the Antonov AN-12 has proved to be a reliable workhorse, both ...

2

Cold chain investments ...

THE countdown to 1 January 2026—the date set by IATA for the global adoption of the ONE Record standard—is well underway, but the ...

10

Cool corridors strenghten ...

MAINTAINING product integrity in pharmaceutical air logistics is a task that leaves little room for error. With the launch of its new ...

17

'WHITE GLOVE' REVOLUTION IN TIME-CRITICAL CARGO

In an era where speed, reliability, and precision are paramount, Air Partner has taken a highly tailored approach to the time-critical cargo sector—one that deliberately avoids the cookie-cutter logistics of larger, volume-driven players.

The company's dedicated focus on time-critical cargo emerged during the turbulence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The time-critical focus in aerospace developed about four or five years ago, during the pandemic," Eliska Hill, Air Partner's senior vice president of cargo for the UK and rest of the world, said. "As passenger aircraft began flying again, there was a demand for additional capacity. Aircraft were being brought out of storage and long-term maintenance to fly again. Suddenly, there was a strong requirement for parts, spares, and general equipment."

What began as a reactive solution quickly evolved into a fully integrated vertical. "This business grew quite organically, reaching into a completely new space, and taking that initial step into what would traditionally be a freight forwarding, controlled relationship," she continued. "Why offer a logistics solution that everybody else automatically would? We'll try to find a solution that might be a little bit more unique and bespoke, and certainly more cost-effective for the customer. This could entail a direct drive (RFS), onboard courier (OBC), next flight out (NFO), up to a part or full charter flight. There could be a combination of different services, which is where Air Partner's strengths come into their own."

To meet the demands of round-the-clock urgency, Air Partner made a major investment in March 2024 by launching a 24/7 time-critical service desk based at the Air Partner Gatwick Airport HQ. "The requirement has to be truly 24/7. Being able to react and offer solutions quickly at all times of the day and night is critical," Hill stated.

Bespoke, Not Boxed

Success in time-critical cargo hinges on deep listening and tailored execution—not just moving shipments from A to B.

"It's taking that step back to really understand the customer's needs. And obviously, different verticals will have different requirements," Hill explained. "Often the customer will request, 'It needs an Antonov AN124 charter,' and we'll say, 'Well, actually, you probably don't need that,' and provide a variety of options."

It's here that Air Partner's brokerage DNA becomes its greatest asset. "It may be that it doesn't always need to move airport to airport with an aircraft—it can be trucked. And that's where we can offer this alternate option," she noted. "The aim is to move everything on a door-to-door service, which is what the customer actually wants at the end of the day."

This approach, which Hill brands as a "white glove service," goes beyond logistics to encompass operational orchestration at every level.

"The team is reliant on various different touchpoints and entities throughout—there'll be a trucking company, there'll be a customs agent in the country of destination or origin, etc.," she said. "Those relationships have to be in place, and they all have to be working at the same level of service."

Where many freight forwarders offer standard options, Air Partner offers curated solutions backed by a limited, high-touch client base. "We don't work with a lot of customers," Hill emphasised. "We actually prefer to work with a few select customers on a frequent basis."

One such example illustrates the ingenuity Air Partner brings to the table. "We had a case of an aircraft engine failure in West Africa. Normally, somebody would say, 'Right, we're going to do a full charter to move an engine.' But it's actually—do we need to run a full charter from the US to West Africa? No, we don't."

Instead, her team created a hybrid logistics model—trucking, scheduled airfreight, and a short-sector charter—that delivered better speed and lower cost. "Quicker, faster, cheaper," Hill recalled. "And it worked extremely well overall for the customer."

HACTL'S EXPANDING ROLE

BY **Edward HARDY**

CONTINUING to attract a growing list of regional and international cargo carriers, Hactl has signed up Hungary Airlines and Skyway Airlines of the Philippines this year, reflecting shifting global cargo patterns and the rising role of e-commerce.

Hactl's subsidiary, Hacis, now operates "a dedicated e-commerce fulfilment centre, including a cool zone to cater to customers requiring a chilled environment when shipping product," Wilson Kwong, chief executive of Hactl, explained.

What drives new carriers to Hactl? Kwong points to one simple but powerful differentiator: "First and foremost, it would be the commercial neutrality that Hactl offers. It is not an airline and therefore provides equal treatment to all airline customers."

This neutrality, combined with expertise and comprehensiveness, is a winning formula. "Hactl offers a one-stop shop to operators, whatever their size and requirements," from "crew transport [to] liaison with authorities, loading and unloading, building up and breaking down of ULDs, and documentation services."

In supporting emerging regional cargo airlines, Hactl doesn't see the need to adapt — because its services are already in place. "We help them establish themselves in the market. Customers' success is our success: we are truly partners."

Strategic vision

Resilience is another defining trait of Hactl's modern identity — forged in the crucible of Covid-19. "We learned some important lessons," Kwong admitted. The iHCC (Integrated Hactl Control Centre) emerged from that crisis. It now: "Centralises management of all functions, enabling us to streamline operations, obtain instant, accurate snapshots of activity, and optimise the deployment of resources."

Workforce development is integral to this evolution. Hactl ThinkPark, the upgraded training centre, using new technology such as VR training to prepare staff for the future.

"Staff get an opportunity to exchange ideas and brainstorm solutions. This gives staff opportunities to participate in the evolution that creates the solution, so they truly work for them." And what of Hactl's long-term strategy? Kwong is clear: "Our priorities remain investment, innovation, and the relentless pursuit of excellence."

Did You Know?

STILL FLYING AFTER 65 YEARS

BY **Michael SALES**

ORIGINALLY designed as a military transport and cargo aircraft in the 1950s, the Antonov AN-12 has proved to be a reliable workhorse, both within the Soviet Union and in several other regions of the world. Its rugged versatility and payload of 18,000 kg / 39,683 lbs make it ideal for short, rough runways. The high-mounted wings and four-engine configuration give the AN-12 strong lifting capabilities, while the raised tail allows unrestricted access to the cargo hold via a powered door and loading ramp.

A total of 1,248 aircraft were built. Entering into service in 1959, it was reputed to be the Soviet equivalent of the American Lockheed C-130 Hercules.

The AN-12, with its many variations, was designed specifically as a military freighter aircraft, but it is also ideal for medium-range freight charters. With the cockpit set far forward in the design, the freight door height clears 8.2 ft, and the width measures over 9.8 ft. The raised tail and ramp design allow further clearance for machinery and vehicles. The hold itself measures over 45 ft in length, over 10 ft in width, and over 8 ft in height, and can manage a maximum payload of up to 18 tonnes.

The Antonov AN-12 is powered by four ZMDB Ivchenko AI-20M turboprop engines that generate 4,252 shaft horsepower each. The power produced by these engines enables cruising speeds of up to 300 mph, at an altitude ceiling of 34,500 ft. With a full fuel load, the range of the AN-12 is approximately 3,540 miles.

In recent years, new regulations have severely restricted the aircraft's operational scope. On 8 January 2009, following numerous incidents involving the very noisy AN-12 in the UAE, the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) issued a ban on the AN-12 from UAE airspace. In March 2010, the ban was made permanent after the AN-12 failed a GCAA airworthiness test.

Despite these restrictions, the AN-12 remains popular with cargo operators in Africa, Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Thailand, and Ukraine.

T: +44 (0)1737 906107
Advertising: sales@azurainternational.com
Subscriptions: subs@azurainternational.com
Press releases: news@azurainternational.com

Annual subscription rates: Print issue: £150 • € 180 • US$195
(20% will be donated to our NGO sustainability projects)
Digital issue: Free-of-charge

AZURA INTERNATIONAL


Efficient e-Commerce service in Billund
With a dedicated e-commerce facility spanning more than 4,000 m², BLL is rapidly expanding its e-commerce capabilities! Several regional flows are already being served, and there's room for more.
16% general tonnage growth in 2024
22,000 m2 warehouse handling
+50 freighter operations per week
Give me a call, and let's discuss how your e-Commerce could also be delivered to last-mile within 24 hours from ATA.
Kaspar Andreas Nissen
Senior Manager, Air Cargo
+45 20 89 02 81 - knn@bll.dk
Billund Airport

RESILIENCE AND CONNECTIVITY REMAIN STRONG

BY **Edward HARDY**

THE airfreight industry is navigating a complex and often contradictory global environment—one shaped by geopolitical tensions, shifting trade policies, sustainability challenges, and the ongoing debate about the future of globalisation. Despite the uncertainty, there is reason to remain cautiously optimistic about long-term trends and the sector's resilience.

"I'll be honest with you," says Willie Walsh, Director General of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). "When we look at the data in aggregate, it's still positive. There's still strong demand for flying and still strong demand for cargo. It's a strange environment, but it's a positive environment. For both passenger and cargo overall, there are markets that have been impacted negatively, but the big picture is a positive picture."

While headlines have painted a gloomy picture of declining trade and regional fragmentation, Walsh points to data suggesting that global aviation—particularly in cargo—is still robust, albeit with some volatility driven by trade policy. For example, he notes how shippers have pre-emptively moved goods ahead of anticipated tariffs, distorting short-term trends: "Cargo has probably been more disruptive because a lot of stuff is being shipped in advance of tariffs coming into effect. We've seen quite a lot of movement in the booking trends and the shipping trends that you would, in isolation, think there's something weird going on here, but it's principally people taking a view that if they can avoid the tariff, they will."

Globalisation endures

Despite fears that globalisation is in retreat, Walsh remains firm in his belief that nations are too interconnected to unwind. "The US is just part of a global economy," he explained. "While America is impacting on trade with the US, that's not the case with most other economies who are continuing to trade with one another as normal."

Walsh suggests that some markets may actually benefit from US protectionism, as global supply chains adapt. "If I was doing significant trade with the US, do I have a new market that becomes more attractive?" he asks, adding that trade "will continue to move" and that even the US will not become self-sufficient: "That's just not going to happen.

"Trade continues to move and will continue to move. I suspect the US will reset their trade with the global economy, but will continue to trade. They're not going to move to a situation where they're only buying goods from themselves. That's just not going to happen.

"If you look at what President Trump is trying to do, re-establishing some industries in the US makes a lot of sense, but it will take a lot of time. It's not just about building the infrastructure. You've clearly got to get the talent in place to serve some of these markets that are today being served by businesses that are outside of the US."

Shared sustainability burden

Perhaps the most pressing long-term challenge facing the aviation industry is its sustainability trajectory, particularly in the race to net zero by 2050. Walsh stressed that while the industry has committed to ambitious climate goals, it cannot achieve them alone.

"The perception of our impact on climate change and the reality are very, very different," he noted. "It's two, two and a half percent of global CO2 emissions."

Despite this misperception, the industry faces mounting pressure to decarbonise. Walsh is blunt about the lack of support from critical parts of the supply chain: "What we're seeing at the moment is a concern that the bill for net zero is going to fall to airlines, and airlines only, and that's not acceptable. We need fuel companies to start ramping up the production of sustainable fuels.

"When we committed to net zero in 2050, we were clear that we couldn't do it alone. We had to have the support of everybody in the wider value chain. And it's not good enough that they commit to net zero in 2050 but expect us to pay the bill. They're going to have to share the costs of that transition, which will be very expensive and will be complex. I still believe that it's possible for us to get there, but we're slipping behind all the time, and I think it's important that we see actions on the part of other players to get us back on track."

IATA's role

As the industry's global association, IATA plays a delicate balancing act—sometimes leading, sometimes stepping aside ad letting the industry take charge. "We will take the lead when the industry wants us to take the lead," Walsh said. "It doesn't mean that we're the leaders. We're there to respond to what our members tell us."

On issues like sustainability and digitalisation, IATA has been a vocal advocate. But on others, such as airline alliances, Walsh clarifies that it's not the association's place to take a position: "I don't think people expect us to take a position on behalf of the global industry as to whether alliances are good, bad or indifferent. I clearly have a position that I can express. It's not an issue that we debate as IATA. It's not an issue that has ever been discussed at the Board of IATA."

Group CONCORDE
Since 1985

MARKET EXPANSION STRATEGIES FOR AIRLINES: HOW GSSA DRIVES SUCCESS

"Local Expertise, Global Reach: How GSSAs Power Airline Market Expansion."

In today's dynamic aviation landscape, airlines are constantly seeking smarter, leaner ways to expand into new markets. Whether it's launching a new route, increasing capacity in high-growth regions, or optimizing cargo loads, market expansion requires more than just aircraft and ambition — it demands on-ground intelligence, commercial acumen, and operational precision. That's where GSSAs (General Sales and Service Agents) step in, transforming challenges into growth opportunities.

For over three decades, **Group Concorde** has exemplified the true value of a GSSA. Representing **airlines across Asia Pacific & the Middle East**, Group Concorde doesn't just sell capacity — it enables success. With a powerful blend of local market understanding and global network synergy, the company has helped airlines seamlessly penetrate complex markets, develop sustainable revenue pipelines, and build trusted relationships.

When airlines partner with a GSSA like Group Concorde, they gain more than just sales support. They tap into a **strategic growth engine** — one that aligns with their brand values, understands local nuances, and delivers measurable results. From cargo sales and marketing to operations, regulatory coordination, Group Concorde offers a **full-suite solution** tailored to each airline's commercial objectives.

One of the key strengths of a GSSA lies in **speed to market**. Setting up a new station independently can take months, if not longer. But with a well-established GSA/GSSA, airlines can hit the ground running — leveraging existing infrastructure, trained manpower, and active customer networks. This kind of agility gives airlines a critical competitive edge in fast-moving markets.

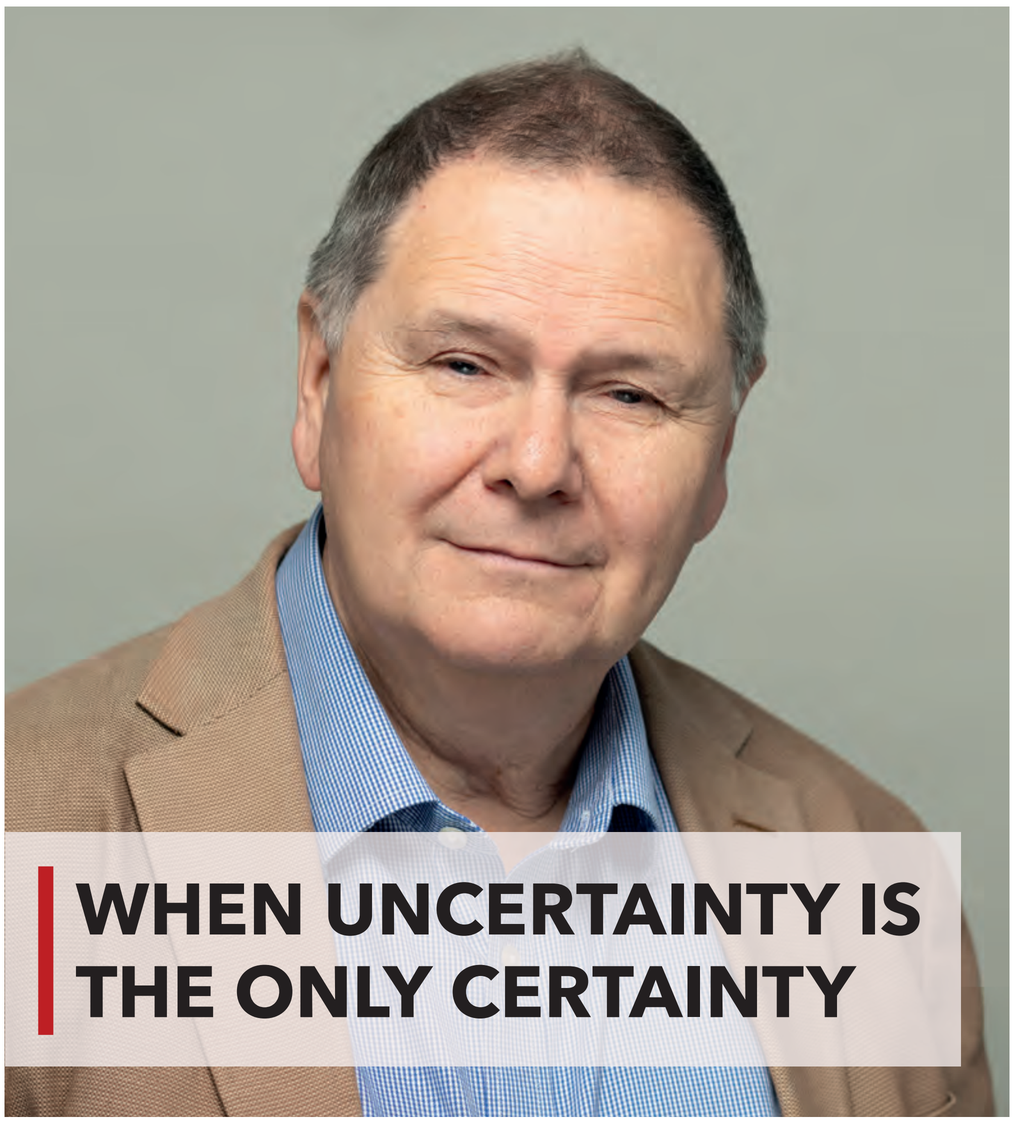
Moreover, a proactive GSSA does more than execute — it advises. With regular market intelligence, cargo trend insights, and route feasibility studies, Group Concorde supports airline principals in making informed decisions. Be it identifying underserved sectors, launching seasonal charters, or integrating road feeder services (RFS), the team ensures each airline's footprint is optimized for profitability and growth.

In a world where cargo routes are increasingly data-driven and commercially scrutinized, having a trusted GSSA partner allows airlines to stay nimble, responsive, and scalable — without the overheads and risks of direct market entry.

As the global air cargo industry becomes more competitive and decentralized, GSSAs like **Group Concorde** are redefining what partnership means — not just as sales agents, but as growth architects.

Market expansion isn't just about new destinations — it's about sustainable, profitable presence. And with the right GSSA by your side, the sky is not the limit — it's just the beginning.

Voice Of The Industry



WHEN UNCERTAINTY IS THE ONLY CERTAINTY

BY **Steve PARKER, Director General, British International Freight Association**

AS I considered what to write about for this Voice of the Industry article, I couldn't help but wonder whether we are currently experiencing the most challenging times ever for the freight forwarding and logistics industry, and the international supply chains that it underpins.

The tangible impact of global geopolitical issues—such as the conflicts in the Red Sea and Ukraine—alongside bottlenecks and an ever-increasing number of extreme weather events, is having a huge effect on the industry across all modes and areas of those supply chains, which face ever-increasing pressure.

Added to that are the slightly less tangible impacts and opportunities connected to issues such as the environment, sustainability, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and the digitalisation of processes and solutions. All are high on the agenda of companies that manage much of the world's international trade.

Many are asking whether the era of unbridled globalisation is over, for now, and what the impact will be on the freight industry. The major economic blocs of the EU, the USA and China are engaged in a trade conflict, the direction and outcome of which is almost impossible to predict under President Trump. New tariff barriers are set, only to be reset, resulting in further economic disruption.

In all regions, people and governments are once again favouring national over international solutions. There is talk of a shift in production and competition between locations for technological development, impacting labour markets and social structures. This reduces the predictability and reliability that had ensured the smooth development of the globalisation process.

Acquisitions and mergers by financially strong, large companies from within and outside the sector are increasing the concentration of the corporate freight and logistics landscape, leaving many medium-sized and smaller businesses pondering how to assert themselves.

All of the above, and more, will shape our industry today and in the future. The situation brings an unprecedented level of unpredictability, volatility, and the need for adaptation—not only for the manufacturing sectors, but especially for the logistics industry.

Companies are therefore facing challenges that place the highest demands on management in terms of willingness to learn, willingness to experiment, and courage.

The industry is left wondering: how can freight procurement remain strategic and future-proof under such conditions? And companies are asking how they can be ready for everything that is forthcoming.

A good way of preparing for these changes is to attend key international conferences such as Transport and Logistics, to engage in the type of discussions that take place, and to become a little more informed about the current state of play in freight forwarding and the key issues affecting the sector.

Just recently, the trade association I lead held its first national conference in almost two decades. We titled it Ignite Today – Accelerate Tomorrow, with the idea that we need to be as prepared as we can to move forward.

Seminars focusing on airfreight, oceanfreight, sustainability, and the ever-evolving customs processing environment provided critical updates and helped delegates prepare for future developments in these key areas.

A well-attended session saw insurance experts attempt to settle the ongoing debate surrounding logistics insurance, whilst another, on cybersecurity, delivered a deep dive into best practices for securing sensitive data—helping attendees to avoid the threat of hostile profiling.

Our conference provided valuable opportunities for professional development, and I hope it will become an annual event for those looking to stay ahead of the curve in an ever-evolving industry.

As a national trade association, BIFA has also been doing all it can to support our members through all of the changes and challenges facing the freight and logistics industry.

We have reinvigorated our programme of regional meetings and added a policy group that focuses on sustainability issues in logistics. April saw BIFA launch a new advisory body to focus on the impact of the planned massive redevelopment of the cargo estate at Heathrow Airport and the associated freight management systems.

At a time when the industry is struggling to recruit and to get the current Generation Z—and the next, Generation Alpha—interested in a career in logistics, we have made the ability to train staff as easy as possible.

Clearly, the freight industry continues to face many uncertainties. The other part of that much-used phrase is: knowing how to live with insecurity is the only security.

Only by continuing our collective dialogue can we hope to overcome the uncertainties and deliver a secure future for the freight and logistics industry.

CNS 2025: CLEAR, SMART AND CONNECTED

BY Oscar SARDINAS

The 34th annual CNS Partnership Conference, held May 13–15 at the JW Marriott Turnberry Resort & Spa in Miami, wasn't just another run of the mill industry gathering, it was a clear signal that the global air freight community is ready to evolve with the times, with more resilience, an emphasis on leveraging tech, and above all a genuinely collaborative spirit.

Organised by Cargo Network Services (CNS), an IATA company, the conference featured select airlines, forwarders, ground handlers, airports, manufacturers, and tech innovators, all zeroing in on the same big question: what comes next, and how do we get there together?

Relationship-building

While the world may be amidst a digital revolution, CNS reminded attendees that human connection still drives progress. Whether it was the golf, sailing on Biscayne Bay, the early-morning meetings, or late-night receptions, the conference created a perfect atmosphere space to enhance existing connections and build new ones. The "Meet & Greet" format, designed to match forwarders and carriers for quick business-building sessions, is a perfect example of the emphasis on establishing bonds without all the bells and whistles found at a typical event. Overall the energy on the floor reflected something that's hard to quantify but easy to feel: people want to do business with people they know and trust.

If there is a central theme to the event, CNS President Alicia Lines summed it up perfectly with a call to invest in the people behind the scenes. "We need to work on bringing young people into this industry and upskill the knowledge we already have, because people are the ones making the difference in cargo." And a lot of conversations kept coming back to the shared values: honesty, reliability, and mutual support.

Adam Cunningham of New York based Carrier 911 put it this way: "Face-to-face interactions reinforce the importance of mutual reciprocity. We're not on opposite sides of the table here. We're on equal footing."

New standard

While personal connection powered the conversations, technology and transparency shared the spotlight. Julien Triay of Freightos challenged the industry to rethink how it prices, books, and shares information. "It's important we start moving away from the current opaque pricing model. This ultimately hurts customers by creating unnecessary complexity and potentially higher costs."

His call to action was clear: embrace tools that allow real-time bookings, open up API access for rate searches, and break down communication silos. Other speakers echoed the sentiment, if you want to stay competitive in the fast-moving world of the supply chain, it must become more visible, nimble, and far more connected.

Three Ps

Of course, tech can't solve everything. Regulatory hurdles, infrastructure constraints, and labor shortages continue to shape the landscape.

As reported, Brandon Fried of the Airforwarders Association took the stage and addressed these issues head-on.

"Freeze tariffs, not our ability to trade," he urged, emphasizing the need for stable policy and smarter investments in cargo screening and capacity.

And while much of the conversation centered on innovation, there was equal attention given to foundational issues: talent development, environmental goals, and operational alignment.

With e-commerce demand rising and more shippers shifting from sea to air, panelists stressed the urgency of looking ahead and preparing, as opposed to just reacting.

Why CNS matters

The air freight sector has a wide array of events, but CNS stands out, and for good reason. This isn't just a place to collect swag and brochures. There's less fluff, people share big ideas and the environment is conducive for real conversations, and those conversations often turn into actual partnerships.

With a program packed with insight: forward-thinking panels, regulatory updates, and digital transformation case studies, it may have very well been the informal moments, playing golf, out sailing, or over a coffee between sessions—where business really got done.

Attendees didn't just leave with updates on trends. They left with new contacts, stronger relationships, and a clearer understanding of where the industry is heading.

Staying competitive

As CNS 2025 came to a close, a few themes stood out. Resilience isn't just about bouncing back from disruption. It's about building smarter, more sustainable systems that can flex with change, which is inevitable. And while tech is helping get us there, it's transparency, trust, and collaboration that will ultimately carry the industry forward.

The CNS Partnership Conference is an event where those values come to life, be it on stage, in breakout rooms, or across handshake deals. In an industry where so much is in motion, CNS continues to be a place where people pause, reconnect, and plot the course ahead, together.

INDIA'S NEW AIRLINES SIGNAL CONNECTIVITY SHIFT

BY **Ajinkya GURAV**

As India's civil aviation landscape continues its post-pandemic resurgence, four newly launched airlines—Shankh Air, Air Kerala, Alhind Air, and Fly91—are reshaping the country's domestic aviation profile in a way that could hold considerable promise for growth.

While these carriers have entered the market primarily to serve underserved passenger routes, their operational strategies, fleet choices, and network ambitions signal an untapped cargo potential, particularly across tier-2 and tier-3 cities. In a country where more than 85 percent of airfreight continues to move through six primary metropolitan airports, these new entrants could play a pivotal role in bridging India's logistical periphery to its economic core.

Regional aviation meets air cargo goals

India's National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) and its ambitious Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme have long underscored the importance of democratising air travel and regional connectivity. Yet, until recently, cargo operations—especially at smaller airports—remained secondary considerations. That may be changing.

Fly91, which has already commenced over 150 weekly flights with ATR 72-600 aircraft from its Goa hub, exemplifies the operational model that could support decentralised cargo flow. Similarly, Alhind Air, with a focus on intra-state connectivity in Kerala and neighbouring regions using the same turboprop aircraft, has the potential to enable quick cargo transits for time-sensitive commodities like seafood, spices, and apparel.

Meanwhile, Shankh Air and Air Kerala, both adopting the Airbus A320 family for regional operations, are aiming to scale fast across India's heartland—linking cities like Lucknow, Varanasi, and Kannur to primary urban markets. These routes, while designed for passengers, come with modest but usable bellyhold cargo capacity that can benefit exporters and small businesses.

Cargo potential

India handled 3.4 million tonnes of air cargo in FY 2023–24, a number projected to increase to 10 million tonnes by 2030 under the National Air Cargo Policy. But most of this capacity is concentrated in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Kolkata, which together manage nearly 88 percent of the national air cargo load.

By contrast, tier-2 cities such as Gorakhpur, Kolhapur, or Kannur—many of which now fall within the networks of these new carriers—lack dedicated air cargo infrastructure or frequent feeder flights. This mismatch between demand and capacity is a long-standing constraint for industries like e-commerce and agriculture.

According to the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Uttar Pradesh alone accounted for over $2 billion in agricultural exports in 2022–23. The availability of same-day or next-day airfreight services from tier-2 cities could reduce post-harvest losses by an estimated 15 to 20 percent, especially for perishable categories like fruits and vegetables.

India's e-commerce sector, currently valued at around $70 billion, also stands to gain. Faster order fulfilment from regional warehouses enabled by short-haul airfreight services could reduce delivery times in remote areas, improve customer satisfaction, and lower logistics costs per shipment.

Operational trade-offs

While the ambitions are high, aircraft choice imposes constraints. The ATR 72-600, used by Fly91 and Alhind Air, has a maximum bellyhold cargo capacity of approximately 1.8 to 2.5 tonnes, which fluctuates based on fuel and passenger loads. A320 aircraft used by Shankh Air and Air Kerala offer greater capacity—typically 4 to 5 tonnes—but still far below that of widebody freighters.

In the case of regional connectivity, operators must navigate a tight balancing act. They need to optimise load plans for weight and volume, especially at smaller airports with short runways and limited refuelling or cargo ground-handling capabilities. Further, most tier-2 airports lack cold chain storage, high-speed handling systems, or bonded warehousing for exports. This limits the scalability of perishable cargo operations. Many airports under the UDAN scheme have limited customs clearance capabilities, creating additional layers of documentation and delay.

Infrastructure gaps

Infrastructure remains a central challenge. As highlighted in various government think tank reports, India's smaller airports frequently suffer from inadequate last-mile connectivity, limited cargo bays, and the absence of trained handlers for specialised shipments.

In response, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched cargo-specific offshoots of UDAN—most notably, Krishi UDAN 2.0, aimed at facilitating air transport of agri-produce. However, implementation remains inconsistent. Policy experts argue that offering viability gap funding (VGF) or operational subsidies to regional airlines that dedicate part of their fleet or frequency to cargo can help create commercial certainty.

In tandem, the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP), being piloted across sectors, must also be extended to regional airports, streamlining customs documentation and tracking. Regional cargo must move from being a 'by-product' of passenger flights to a line of business in itself. However, incentivising dedicated short-haul cargo operations—even using the same fleet—will require a strategic push and regulatory clarity.

COLD CHAIN INVESTMENTS PAY OFF

BY **Anastasiya SIMSEK**

A surge in demand for specialist airfreight—particularly in pharmaceuticals—and continued investment in digital services helped IAG Cargo increase revenues by 6.7 percent in 2024, with further double-digit growth already reported in the first quarter of 2025.

Camilo Garcia Cervera, chief sales and marketing officer at IAG Cargo, attributed the company's 2024 performance to a combination of product development and infrastructure expansion: "Our specialist products, such as Constant Climate, which serves the pharmaceutical industry, saw a 22 percent increase in tonnage, while our express products, such as Critical and Prioritise, performed well as customers increasingly looked for faster delivery options."

According to Garcia Cervera, the trend has accelerated into 2025: "In Q1 2025, we built further on this momentum, with revenues up 12.4 percent year-on-year. This growth reflects our clear strategy—invest in what matters to our customers."

Expansion and focus

IAG Cargo's Constant Climate, designed for temperature-sensitive pharmaceutical shipments, has seen sharp growth, driven by an increase in biotech volumes and stricter regulatory requirements.

"The continued growth of our Constant Climate product, up 22 percent in 2024, highlights the trusted role we play in supporting the pharmaceutical and life sciences sectors," Garcia Cervera said. "This is a market where reliability, control and consistency matter more than ever."

IAG Cargo has ramped up infrastructure to support this growth. "In 2023, we opened New Premia at our London Heathrow hub, doubling our cold chain handling capacity. Alongside around 100 approved Constant Climate stations worldwide, and expert teams in place, we are well equipped to maintain the high standards our customers expect."

Expansion efforts are also extending beyond Europe. "Our expertise extends well beyond Europe. We have a dedicated global Constant Climate team supporting pharmaceutical customers around the world," Garcia Cervera said. "A key addition to this team is Eunyoung Kim, our newly appointed Constant Climate specialist sales manager for the Asia Pacific region."

Digital infrastructure and market agility

Alongside sector-specific product growth, IAG Cargo is investing in digital tools designed to give customers more control over their shipments. Garcia Cervera described the company's digital development as an "ongoing programme", with improvements aimed at both efficiency and usability.

"At every opportunity, our teams are enhancing our website, with recent improvements making it easier to access the best available rates and book quickly with confidence," he said. "We are also continuing to build more self-serve functionality into the site, improving user experience not just in Europe, but across our global network."

This focus on digitisation also plays into IAG Cargo's response to volatility in global trade lanes. Garcia Cervera pointed to recent geopolitical disruption in the Red Sea and outlined how flexibility remains central to the company's capacity strategy.

"Thanks to the flexibility of our global network and strong collaboration across the Group, we're able to maintain stable flows," he said. "In response to the challenges in the Red Sea area, we successfully offered alternative capacity solutions to customers who saw their supply chains affected."

Shifts from sea to airfreight are also creating opportunities for IAG Cargo, particularly on intra-European and Asia–Europe lanes, where speed and reliability are becoming more critical.

"We are well positioned to support this change, with a global network, fast transit times, and a digital platform that gives customers the flexibility they need," Garcia Cervera said.


Be ready to find the right balance and reach new markets
Go **all the way** by expanding your reach quickly and efficiently using Maersk Air Freight.
Scan the QR code to know more
MAERSK AIR CARGO
MAERSK
ALL THE WAY

REGIONAL SUPPLY CHAIN OPTIMISATION

BY **Ajinkya GURAV**

CEVA Logistics—part of the CMA CGM Group—has announced a substantial expansion of its operational footprint across the country. The initiative includes the establishment of a central hub in Mumbai and the integration of Stellar Value Chain Solutions, a major Indian contract logistics firm, into its operations.

India's airfreight throughput stood at 3.4 million metric tonnes in FY 2023–24, with government projections aiming to increase this volume to 10 million tonnes by 2030. The expansion of CEVA's physical and operational capabilities offers much-needed capacity in warehousing, ground handling, and multimodal integration.

The acquisition of Stellar Value Chain Solutions adds 7.7 million sq ft of warehousing space across more than 70 facilities in 21 cities. Additionally, the inclusion of 8,000 employees with deep operational experience strengthens CEVA's local footprint.

The establishment of a Mumbai-based central hub positions CEVA closer to major trade corridors, including Nhava Sheva Port and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA)—both key nodes in India's import–export ecosystem. With this, CEVA now plays a more prominent role in facilitating air–sea and air–road multimodal flows—a stated priority under India's Bharatmala and Sagarmala initiatives.

Implications for efficiency

From an airfreight perspective, CEVA's strategic buildout offers several operational and policy benefits. The integration of warehousing and distribution centres with proximity to air gateways can reduce dwell times, facilitate express shipments, and enhance cargo velocity—particularly for high-value and time-sensitive goods such as pharmaceuticals, electronics, and perishables.

"CEVA's new capacity and geographic coverage will provide needed redundancy and route diversification across India's secondary airports," said Paras Rawal, CEVA's managing director of the India subcontinent. "This directly supports India's push to integrate tier-2 and tier-3 cities into global value chains."

It is also expected that CEVA's digital logistics platforms—including track-and-trace systems, warehouse management software (WMS), and automated inventory control—will be deployed across new facilities, aligning with government-led digitalisation under the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) and the Gati Shakti masterplan.

Capacity constraints

CEVA's expansion dovetails with India's airfreight infrastructure bottlenecks. While metro airports such as Delhi (IGIA) and Mumbai (CSMIA) have reached near-saturation levels, regional facilities often lack adequate ground handling and warehousing infrastructure. The deployment of CEVA's facilities across 21 cities provides much-needed decentralisation and capacity balancing.

Moreover, the company's global sustainability roadmap—which includes the use of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), emissions monitoring, and modal shift strategies—will be critical for meeting environmental compliance in India. As airfreight faces increasing scrutiny under ESG (environmental, social and governance) reporting frameworks, CEVA's integrated sustainability metrics could serve as a model for other freight operators.

"Decarbonisation is a priority for global freight networks. CEVA's logistics operations in India must now address not only cost and speed but also environmental performance," said Rawal.

Catalyst for cargo ambitions

CEVA's India expansion can be seen as more than a business move—it represents a strategic bet on India's ability to become a central node in global logistics. With India's National Air Cargo Policy aiming for a threefold increase in airfreight volumes by 2030, such investments signal international validation of the country's logistics potential.

The broader airfreight industry stands to benefit through capacity spillovers, improved intermodal linkages, and a more competitive handling environment at major and emerging airports. However, success will depend on how well CEVA and its partners navigate regulatory compliance, infrastructure gaps, and the speed of operational integration.

"Our expanded presence enables us to better serve both international and domestic clients," added Rawal. "As India continues its economic transformation, CEVA is committed to providing innovative supply chain solutions that enhance efficiency and reliability for businesses operating in this dynamic market."


ETIHAD
CARGO
BEYOND BORDERS
ETIHADCARGO.COM

ALHA group

ABOUT US

WHO WE ARE

Alha Group is the leading air cargo handling company in Italy, providing comprehensive and customized solutions for all your air cargo needs, including cargo handling, ramp handling, and secure transportation. We are committed to operational excellence, continuously investing in quality and innovation to be a trusted partner in the air cargo industry.

STREAMLINING AIR CARGO PROCESSES

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

We leverage our expertise and cutting-edge technology to optimize operational efficiency. Our integrated warehouse and ramp services at Malpensa Airport ensure smooth and efficient cargo flow. Our off-airport network enables us to handle large volumes, always maintaining operational efficiency.

TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED SOLUTIONS

COOL CHAIN

Our state-of-the-art Pharma Centers and CoolBox technology guarantee the integrity of temperature-sensitive products during all stages of handling and transportation.

YOUR TRUSTED AIR CARGO PARTNER

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our vision is to be the preferred air cargo handler in Italy, committed to safety, efficiency, and sustainability.
Our mission is to provide our customers with seamless and reliable air cargo solutions, exceeding their expectations through operational excellence and continuous improvement.

CARGO HANDLING

We provide efficient and reliable cargo handling services, leveraging advanced technology and robust infrastructure to ensure the safe and timely processing of your cargo.

RAMP HANDLING

Our expert ramp handling team utilizes state-of-the-art equipment and rigorous training to ensure seamless ramp operations, with a focus on safety and efficiency.

TRUCKING SERVICES

We offer secure and reliable trucking services for any type of shipments, including pharma and high-value goods, utilizing TAPA-certified trucks. Our fleet includes temperature-controlled vehicles to maintain the integrity of temperature-sensitive cargo.

info@alhagroup.com
www.alhagroup.com

BY **Edward HARDY**

THE countdown to 1 January 2026—the date set by IATA for the global adoption of the ONE Record standard—is well underway, but the industry still has considerable ground to cover.

"From our perspective, the industry has made good progress toward accepting ONE Record as the standard but is still a good distance away from full adoption," said Robert Pedersen, senior Director of Product Management at Descartes.

While early steps have been promising, he cautions against expecting complete compliance by the deadline:"The industry will not have 100 percent adoption across all business types by 1 January 2026, as processes and software ecosystems are still reliant on the stable and dependable Cargo-IMP (and Cargo-XML) messaging."

This points to a deeper truth: legacy systems remain deeply embedded within the fabric of global airfreight. Many stakeholders—from freight forwarders to regulatory agencies—are still tethered to long-standing infrastructure, complicating the transition to a data-centric, API-driven model. And while ONE Record's promise of a "single source of truth" is compelling, the practical realities of change management across such a vast ecosystem are daunting.

Nonetheless, Descartes is playing a proactive role in bridging the gap. Its Air Messaging™ platform is already primed to accommodate JSON-based APIs, offering clients a migration path that does not disrupt operations. "Data transformation is a core function of that service," Pedersen noted—a necessity in an industry where backward compatibility remains essential, even amid forward momentum.

From legacy to leading edge

Implementing ONE Record is not as simple as flipping a digital switch. Pedersen was quick to highlight the historical weight carried by existing systems: "One of the largest [challenges] is that Cargo-IMP has served the trade well, with minor alterations, for nearly half a century."

That legacy has created deeply entrenched practices—both human and machine-based—that resist rapid change. "Many legacy cargo systems—and regulatory bodies like CBP—rely on Cargo-IMP or its variants for the exchange of cargo documents," Pedersen explained.

Migrating to a data-first paradigm upends these processes, requiring not only technical innovation but also cultural and procedural overhauls.

Descartes, however, is positioned to lead this transition. "We have been a leader in the movement of data and the transition to data-first solutions," Pedersen noted.

Their ongoing work involves converting traditional Cargo-IMP data into formats compatible with RESTful APIs, essentially offering a bridge from the old world to the new.

Insights gleaned from early adopters such as Lufthansa have proven instrumental. "Even though ONE Record is presented as a global solution, there will be opportunities to navigate and update current business requirements, ensure data security, and re-establish both human and network connections," he stated.

Security, compatibility and control

With the rise of data-centric systems, the issue of data ownership, control, and security becomes paramount. Pedersen stressed that for Descartes, these are not afterthoughts—they are foundational. "Security first is our approach in all product development," he affirmed.

This guiding principle ensures that the shift to ONE Record doesn't compromise the integrity or privacy of sensitive data. "We have worked with our partners to ensure that the exchange of data elements via ONE Record maintains the security profile they've come to expect," Pedersen expressed. Whether handling proprietary airline data or regulatory filings, Descartes remains committed to delivering secure, reliable service.

Equally vital is interoperability with legacy systems, which remains a core challenge across the air cargo landscape. Here, Descartes' Air Messaging solution plays a pivotal role. "It is designed to connect and translate messaging for clients, regardless of the format," Pedersen explained. "Our services are the 'single source of truth' that will drive the ONE Record JSON restful API for our clients."

The cost of inaction

The industry still has stubborn obstacles to overcome—chief among them, fragmented compliance landscapes and legacy habits. "The regulations aren't so much as evolving as being shattered and put back together with superglue," Pedersen declared.

This chaotic regulatory environment places enormous pressure on stakeholders to respond quickly and cost-effectively. "One message yesterday is likely now three messages—and there is a cost to this," he added. The inefficiency of fragmented messaging underscores the importance of unified data standards like ONE Record, which Descartes believes will ultimately reduce cost and complexity.

But achieving this vision will require deep collaboration. "It is very critical to collaborate with all stakeholders to define processes and workflows," Pedersen asserted.

While IATA has "set out a map," it's up to the collective industry to "find the route forward." "Rapid onboarding of air carriers and other trading partners reduces the amount of paper exchanged and improves the productive time of resources, helping them focus on higher value work," he explained.

SETTING THE PACE FOR GLOBAL LOGISTICS

BY **Anastasiya SIMSEK**

"air cargo Europe continues to be the sector's highest-level meeting, bridging the industry's past resilience with its digital and sustainable future."

transport logistic and air cargo Europe 2025 will take place from 2nd to 5th June at the Messe München exhibition centre, once again providing a meeting place for the international logistics industry.

With over 2,500 exhibitors from more than 70 countries and a sprawling footprint across 12 halls and outdoor areas, the event promises to bring real substance to the industry's most pressing challenges.

The conference programme fills 60 slots in four forums with presentations and discussions across all modes of transport and sectors. A total of 154 large and small logistics brands will present themselves on the stages in Halls A1, A2, A3 and B1. The focus will be on market developments with risks and opportunities, as well as processes and solutions.

"This is all about the future of logistics," said Dr Robert Schönberger, Global Industry Lead for the exhibition. "And because that future is inconceivable without people, the trade fair is increasingly also about a future in logistics."

The 2025 edition will offer a deep dive into the interwoven realities of airfreight, cybersecurity, sustainability, AI, career development, and multimodal connectivity — all under a single, tightly curated programme.

Core topics come into focus

The Exhibitor Stage in Hall B5.133/234 will host 33 sessions. With a focus on automation, multimodal solutions, customs, and smart infrastructure, these presentations are geared toward logistics practitioners looking for tangible insights.

Startups will also play a central role. Initiatives such as Logistics for the Future and Logistics Changers: Startups Rock Logistics highlight the industry's appetite for new thinking. ÖBB Rail Cargo Group will even host a locomotive naming ceremony.

In addition, artificial intelligence will be addressed not as a buzzword, but as a functional lever. From last-mile efficiency to rail freight competitiveness, the conference will examine practical use cases with the potential to reshape operations across the board.

Aerial ambitions

Back for its tenth edition, air cargo Europe has outgrown its traditional footprint. Now occupying two halls — A1 and A2 — and operating under the banner "At the Cutting Edge," the show will convene top global players in freight to tackle critical issues across four panel discussions.

Topics include the future of AI, sustainable transformation, and combating the industry-wide issue of "greenhushing" — the practice of underreporting sustainability efforts due to fear of backlash. The latter will be led by Women in Aviation and Logistics, reflecting a growing movement for transparency and authenticity in ESG reporting.

The World Air Cargo Awards, hosted by Air Cargo Week, will return on 3rd June at 18:00 at the conference area in Hall A — spotlighting the sector's leading innovators and contributors.

"air cargo Europe continues to be the sector's highest-level meeting, bridging the industry's past resilience with its digital and sustainable future," said Schönberger.

Beyond technology, this year's programme recognises the increasingly fragmented geopolitical backdrop against which logistics professionals now operate.

Panel sessions will tackle topics like "Global supply chains in transition", My Nation First—Antiglobalisation, Trade Wars, Hot Wars, and Future of Air Freight and Freighters. Amid these tensions, questions about the survivability of mid-sized operators and the future of SMEs will be addressed in sessions hosted by Verkehrsrundschau


MUNICH AIRPORT
LIVING IDEAS – CONNECTING LIVES
Your Gateway
to Growth
YOUR CARGO. OUR DRIVE.
MUNICH AIRPORT –
FAST. RELIABLE. SCALABLE.
MUNICH-AIRPORT.COM/CARGO
DHL

Advertorial

IN LOGISTICS, SILENCE IS RARELY GOLDEN

www.cargo-net.co.uk

When freight forwarders need answers, they need them now - clearly, quickly, and from someone who understands the pace of their world.

That's where Cargonet comes in.

For over 12 years, we've supported freight forwarders as a dedicated, 100% neutral airfreight wholesaler—offering capacity, compliance expertise, and reliable solutions that make a real difference. We don't compete with forwarders, we empower them, acting as a behind-the-scenes partner to help deliver exceptional service to their own customers.

We know that in this business, time is critical, but so is communication. That's why when you call Cargonet, you'll speak directly to someone who knows your account, understands your goals, and is ready to act. No forcing our customers to an online portal, no generic call centres - just responsive, human support from a team that genuinely cares. And yes, we always pick up the phone in three rings or less.

Cargonet is built to handle the operational load, so you can focus on growth. We manage customs, compliance, and documentation, ensuring every shipment moves smoothly and stays fully aligned with regulatory requirements. Whether you're managing last-minute bookings, urgent requests, or high-volume moves, we're here to help make things easier.

Our customers rely on us for more than just strong rates and broad capacity. They come to us for consistency, transparency, and a partnership built on trust. We take pride in offering personalised service tailored to your business, not a one-size-fits-all approach. The result? Flexibility when it matters most, and confidence that your cargo is in safe hands.

And because the pace of logistics doesn't slow down, we've adapted to meet that demand. Our team is available Monday to Saturday, 08:00-18:30, a change driven by customer feedback and our ongoing commitment to being there when it counts.

Whether you're looking to streamline your operations or strengthen your global reach, Cargonet is here to support your goals, with people who listen, and service that delivers.

To learn more about working with **Cargonet**
visit **www.cargo-net.co.uk**,
call us on **01276 543641 (London), 0161 383 2558 (Manchester)**,
or email **sales@cargo-net.co.uk**
and speak directly with someone who understands your business.

"You talk, we listen"

and the Federal Association of Freight Transport and Logistics.

Digital transformation will feature prominently here as well. The Expert Council on Digital Transformation in Transport and Logistics will hold a session on how freight forwarders are adapting in real time — both to seize opportunity and to mitigate risk.

Future-proofing

Sustainability will not be an afterthought. Dedicated tracks will address the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) aspects of logistics from both technical and strategic angles. Technologies for transport management, electric mobility, and carbon reduction will be explored.

Rail will also take centre stage — not just as a mode of transport, but as a key to long-term decarbonisation. The Association of German Transport Companies (VDV) will ask: How can non-craneable trailers be transported by rail? The LKZ Prien alliance will stress: Every metre counts, advocating smarter use of service areas and tracks.

The German Transport Forum (DVF) will pose an important provocation: "Reshaping Combined Transport: How do we take it to a new level?"

HR and workforce development are also on the agenda. The final day of the trade fair will turn the spotlight on people: from employer branding sessions hosted by Wirtschaftsmacher to gender-focused career panels by LogWorkPINK. Challenges such as the driver shortage, retention, and career motivation will be addressed in both academic and business-led formats.

The Campus Plaza in Hall B1 and Employer in the Spotlight area will offer direct access to talent pipelines and job candidates — supporting logistics as both an industry and a career destination.

Why it matters

More than just an exhibition, transport logistic & air cargo Europe 2025 positions itself as the heart of a rapidly evolving industry — one that requires both legacy operators and startups to think in terms of ecosystems, not silos.

The conference will not only reflect the changing face of logistics — driven by automation, AI, geopolitics and sustainability — but also push attendees to consider how people, policy, and technology intersect.

In the words of Dr Schönberger: "The conference programme is growing as the industry becomes more significant. We are proud of the great commitment of the exhibitors, media and partners. transport logistic is an important platform for discourse in the community."

"transport logistic is an important platform for discourse in the community."

HOW GULF HUBS ARE REWRITING AIR CARGO STRATEGY

BY **Anastasiya SIMSEK**

"These adjustments show how we're listening to the market and improving welfare outcomes through practical, science-based decisions."

What does the future of air cargo look like when growth alone isn't enough? In the Middle East, the race is no longer just about scale—it's about precision, speed, and smart design. From AI-powered tools that predict cargo flows to pharma hubs built to anchor national health strategies, carriers are rewiring their networks for resilience and agility.

Etihad Cargo's chief cargo officer, Stanislas Brun, outlined how the Abu Dhabi-based carrier is preparing for what's next, with a roadmap grounded in partnerships, product innovation, and smarter digital interfaces that match the accelerating needs of global shippers.

With macroeconomic headwinds easing and global trade flows entering a new phase of recovery and realignment, Etihad Cargo is leaning into network expansion to better serve growth corridors and high-value verticals. The airline's 2025 schedule features new widebody flights to Prague, Warsaw, and Atlanta—three gateways strategically selected to deepen connectivity between Europe, the US, and the Middle East.

"In 2025, we are introducing new widebody flights to Prague, Warsaw, and Atlanta, while doubling capacity into Spain and France," Brun said. "In Greater China, there has been an 18 percent increase in main deck capacity, supported by additional freighter frequencies to Shenzhen."

The decision to reinforce links into China reflects a broader regional strategy. "China continues to show strong demand across verticals, and our freighter deployments to Shenzhen are part of our strategy to capture that growth," he explained.

Etihad's partnership with SF Airlines—China's largest express carrier—has already positioned Abu Dhabi as a primary UAE gateway for Chinese cargo. Other areas of momentum include India and Japan.

"India continues to deliver double-digit growth across verticals such as pharma and perishables," said Brun. "Japan and North Asia remain high-priority regions as the Osaka Expo accelerates inbound and outbound cargo flows."

Digital acceleration

Etihad Cargo's network strategy is backed by a digital roadmap that aims to remove friction from every stage of the shipment journey. At its core is a growing set of API integrations and self-service tools, designed to give customers faster, more intelligent access to services, rates, and status updates.

"In the past year, we have enhanced our digital platforms by expanding direct API integrations with global forwarders, upgrading our online booking portal, and rolling out real-time shipment monitoring via our Cargo Control Centre," Brun said.

One of the more recent developments is the Instant Offer Rate tool, which delivers dynamic pricing within seconds—reducing lag and giving forwarders more control over planning. This functionality is being embedded in collaboration with Etihad's newly created Customer Experience Department.

"By embedding feedback into service design and collaborating across commercial, operations, and product teams, the department ensures digital tools are shaped by real user needs," Brun explained.

This user-centric approach extends to industry partnerships. "Our collaboration with Abu Dhabi's Advanced Trade and Logistics Platform (ATLP) simplifies export bookings and rate visibility, helping customers better navigate complex supply chains," he added.

Automation is also being scaled inside the airline's own processes. Etihad has partnered with Wiremind to introduce a revenue management and palletisation suite featuring CargoStack Optimiser and SkyPallet. These tools improve capacity planning, particularly for high-volume e-commerce cargo. "These data-driven tools significantly increase flight efficiency and capacity utilisation, ensuring e-commerce consignments are managed with speed, precision, and flexibility," said Brun.

As digital infrastructure grows, so too does the ambition. "We are investing in AI-powered tools to improve capacity forecasting, customer engagement, and shipment tracking," Brun confirmed. "Automation across our warehousing, booking, and customer service platforms is being scaled to streamline operations and enhance responsiveness."

Focus on standards

Beyond general cargo, Etihad Cargo is investing heavily in premium and regulated shipments. The most notable development is the expansion of its CEIV Pharma-certified cool chain network, along with the opening of a new regional vaccine distribution hub in Abu Dhabi.

"This hub is part of a wider public–private collaboration between Etihad Cargo, the Department of Health Abu Dhabi, Rafed, and GSK," Brun said. "It aims to improve access to life-saving vaccines, boost healthcare logistics, and position Abu Dhabi as a centre of excellence for pharmaceuticals and life sciences in the region."

That vision is backed by infrastructure: Etihad has doubled the capacity of its cool chain facility at Zayed International Airport and now operates over 2,350 certified trade lanes. Support tools such as thermal blankets, cool dollies, and container tracking solutions add resilience to sensitive shipments.

"In addition to advanced technology, we maintain a strong focus on compliance and customer support," said Brun. "We ensure that product integrity is preserved throughout transit."

Etihad Cargo's commitment to welfare also extends to live animal transport, where its CEIV Live Animals certification covers both equine logistics and pet travel services. Brun highlighted recent policy updates which extend permitted carriage times for pets and introduce seasonal restrictions for sensitive breeds.

"These adjustments show how we're listening to the market and improving welfare outcomes through practical, science-based decisions," he said.

That same customer focus applies to last-mile delivery and exception handling. "We control every step of the journey, from initial freight to final mile," he said. "Following the guidelines and applicable regulations is key to ensuring the quality and safety of both healthcare and live animal shipments."

COOL CORRIDORS STRENGTHEN CONTROL

BY **Anastasiya SIMSEK**

Maintaining product integrity in pharmaceutical air logistics is a task that leaves little room for error. With the launch of its new Cool Corridors, Kuehne+Nagel is taking a more controlled, data-driven approach to global temperature-sensitive transport—shifting strategy, integrating new monitoring tools, and expanding its GxP-compliant HealthChain network to meet rising demand for pharmaceutical precision.

The Cool Corridor concept addresses a clear need: safe, sustainable, and consistent temperature control in pharmaceutical air cargo. "The Cool Corridor is an innovative solution that prioritises product integrity while meeting the increasing demand for efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable healthcare logistics," said Kristine Palm, vice president and global head of healthcare air logistics at Kuehne+Nagel.

Central to the new corridors is a strategic move from active to passive packaging. "This allows pharmaceutical shippers to optimise packaging strategies—such as shifting from active to passive solutions—resulting in enhanced product safety, reduced logistics costs, and improved environmental performance," Palm explained.

By embedding the corridors into the company's HealthChain-certified network—comprising over 100 fully GxP-compliant, IATA CEIV-certified airfreight stations—Kuehne+Nagel is pushing for global quality uniformity. "We handle everything from pre-conditioning, re-packing, ULD build-up, and break-down inside our +2 to +8 degrees Celsius facilities," she said.

Consistency is reinforced by strict internal standards. "Our service is regulated by stringent quality standards based on industry best practices and goes above and beyond global regulations," she said. "As the first in the industry to achieve over 100 CEIV Pharma-certified stations, Kuehne+Nagel guarantees that its handling of pharmaceutical shipments is aligned with the highest standards."

Monitoring and risk mitigation

Technology plays a central role in ensuring that product safety is not left to chance. All Cool Corridor shipments are monitored continuously through Kuehne+Nagel's HyperCare team.

"We provide real-time visibility throughout the entire journey, with full access to the data on our MyKN platform," said Palm. "Our 24/7/365 team monitors the shipments, with the ability to intervene and inform in case of delays or unplanned temperature changes throughout the entire transportation process."

She added that the team also integrates weather forecasts and PESTLE monitoring into its standard risk assessments. "Our HyperCare monitoring service, which is always applied for Cool Corridors, incorporates weather forecast monitoring and PESTLE monitoring so that we can proactively take mitigating measures in case of any disruptions."

Limiting time out of range (ToR) is a key performance indicator, and Palm said the corridors are specifically designed to keep ToR at an absolute minimum, even in transit. "We work closely with trusted strategic partners to ensure a limited time out of range, even when the shipments are in transit."

Global stategy

The corridors are not standalone projects—they are part of a broader expansion plan.

"New Cool Corridors have been established between Brussels and Chicago, and between Brussels and Singapore. More corridors will follow to strengthen Kuehne+Nagel's global healthcare network and provide secure, scalable solutions in key pharmaceutical markets."

"Together, Kuehne+Nagel and QuickSTAT offer healthcare solutions across the entire product life cycle, including time-critical solutions by QuickSTAT," Palm noted.

The company is also opening its quality processes to customers to drive further improvements. "By sharing our quality protocol with our clients, we are able to work with the feedback they provide to further enhance the solution according to their specific needs.

"We have seen great interest from clients and have received positive feedback on our approach to partnering with airline carriers to develop a solution that provides greater geographic reach."

> **"We handle everything from pre-conditioning, re-packing, ULD build-up and break-down."**

INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS FOR A COMPLEX WORLD

BY **Edward HARDY**

General sales and service agents (GSSAs) are under increasing pressure to deliver more than just sales support.

"Aeroprime Group has evolved into a new-age, tech-enabled GSSA by strategically leveraging its comprehensive service portfolio to offer airlines a streamlined and integrated solution in today's complex logistical environment," Abhishek Goyal, Executive Director of Aeroprime Group, said. "Recognising the increasing need for efficiency and reduced administrative burdens, Aeroprime provides a single point of

Advertorial

THE SMART WAY TO LIGHTER, MORE EFFICIENT, SUSTAINABLE AIR CARGO OPERATIONS

www.aircargopackaging.com

Fuel consumption is a key cost driver in air cargo. Reducing weight directly lowers fuel consumption and leads to significant cost savings. Lighter pallets and packaging materials help reduce weight, cut fuel costs, speed up handling, ease strain on workers and equipment, enhance efficiency, and minimise environmental impact—resulting in greater profitability and sustainability.

In air cargo, every kilogram matters, every second counts

Traditional wooden beams or planks used in air cargo transportation add unnecessary weight, resulting in higher costs and emissions. **By replacing the square timbers used to create the overhang on the ULD with lightweight AirCargoRunners, airlines and ground handlers can significantly improve efficiency and sustainability. Even a small weight reduction of 50 kg per flight can lead to substantial fuel savings.** For example, on the Helsinki-Seoul route, a weight reduction of 50 kg per flight, multiplied by 354 flights in one year, would result in estimated annual fuel savings of 8,500 kg—the impact is significant. **Eltete's AirCargoRunner is a strong, lightweight, and 100% recyclable alternative to wooden beams.** Designed for durability without adding extra weight, it optimises payload capacity, allowing airlines to transport more cargo per flight and maximise revenue. Additionally, it improves cargo handling by reducing ground delays and minimising strain on equipment and personnel. The lighter weight leads to lower fuel consumption, cutting CO_2 emissions and supporting environmental initiatives. AirCargoRunner, with its strength validated by independent labs and ISPM-15 compliance, is globally accepted without restrictions or fumigation costs, underscoring its reliability and operational benefits in the air cargo industry.

Unlocking Cost and CO_2 Savings at Scale

The financial and environmental benefits extend far beyond a single flight. On a fleet level, **replacing traditional beams with AirCargoRunner unlocks significant savings.** With fuel prices fluctuating and a CO_2 emission factor of 3.16 kg per kg of fuel burned, the weight savings quickly add up. Imagine a medium-sized airline operating 20–100 aircraft—how much could they save annually by making this simple switch?

Weight optimisation doesn't stop with AirCargoRunner. Airlines and handlers can further enhance efficiency by incorporating **AirCargoPallets, AirCargoBoard80, and AirCargoBoxes** into their operations. These solutions provide added flexibility, ensuring that last-minute cargo adjustments don't affect performance.

Rethink weight in air cargo and unlock new opportunities for cost savings, efficiency, and sustainability. Our team is ready to support you in making a smooth transition to AirCargoRunner and our full range of lightweight materials to optimise your operations.

Learn more at **www.aircargopackaging.com** or reach out to us directly at **info1@eltete.com**.

Eltete TPM is one of the global leaders in sustainable transport packaging solutions, driven by the motto 3R—Reduce, Replace, Recycle. With a worldwide network and over 50 years of expertise in eco-friendly packaging, we help businesses transition from unsustainable materials to cost-effective, sustainable solutions that reduce both costs and CO_2 emissions while ensuring ease of recycling. Our innovative products are designed to meet the highest industry standards, offering reliable, environmentally responsible alternatives for modern, sustainable logistics.

Everything you expect from a major cargo airport—except high costs and congestion

SBD International Airport delivers the fast track to an estimated 4.7 million consumers in Southern California's Inland Empire. Easier access to this thriving market has fueled the expanding operations of FedEx, UPS, and Amazon Air at the airport, which consistently ranks as a leader in cargo growth nationwide.

A WINNING STRATEGY

Just 60 miles east of Los Angeles and adjacent to major transportation corridors, SBD pairs its ideal location with updated infrastructure and comprehensive financial incentives—a winning strategy for companies seeking a greater presence in the region.

- The region's lowest airport user fees
- Access to Foreign Trade Zone and tax incentives
- 10,000 x 200 runway
- Strong interstate and warehousing connections
- Parking and equipment available for transient cargo operations

VIEW AIRPORT VIDEO

flySBD.com

+1.909.382.4100 | flysbd.com/air-cargo

SBD
International Airport
Southern California's Cargo Connection

contact for cargo management, intricate government liaison, and seamless flight handling."

More importantly, Aeroprime's operational model is built on the backbone of technology. "This integrated approach, underpinned by technological advancements, translates into significant time and cost savings for airline partners, allowing them to focus on their core operations," said Goyal.

In a competitive and capacity-constrained market, these efficiencies can make or break an airline's bottom line. "The resulting faster turnaround times and reduced risks of delays or compliance issues create a more attractive value proposition compared to traditional GSSAs offering fragmented services," he added.

It's this operational clarity — driven by modern tech and centralised execution — that Aeroprime believes is its key differentiator. "Implicitly showcasing Aeroprime's commitment to a modern, technologically driven operational model," Goyal continued, "is exactly what the future of GSSA services should look like."

Digital first

With innovation at its core, the industry is looking to create globally integrated, tech-forward platforms that enhance both operational efficiency and customer experience.

"As a company, we are committed to innovating the traditional GSSA model, which has remained largely unchanged for decades, by creating a more globally integrated and technologically driven GSSA platform," Goyal said.

In practical terms, this vision is taking shape through strategic technology investments, including the adoption of advanced cargo management software capable of delivering real-time tracking and visibility.

"This includes the implementation of advanced cargo management software that provides real-time tracking and visibility, allowing for proactive issue resolution and improved customer confidence," he explained. For Aeroprime, transparency and predictability are no longer optional — they're essential deliverables.

A cornerstone of this transformation is Cargo Next, Aeroprime's proprietary platform that enables seamless booking and real-time tracking. "Aeroprime aims to continue expanding its network, focusing on digitising air cargo operations through the development of a platform called Cargo Next," Goyal noted. "This platform will enable seamless booking and real-time tracking for customers, addressing communication challenges that currently exist in the cargo industry."

Beyond its internal tools, Aeroprime is also actively cultivating a tech ecosystem. "We are also working on various strategic partnerships with global players offering various technological platforms for the cargo industry to assist our partner airlines," he shared.

The goal is to create a digitally agile GSSA offering that adapts quickly to changing market needs. "We heavily use data analytics tools to gain valuable insights into market trends and performance metrics," Goyal outlined.

These insights inform everything from route optimisation to capacity planning. "Our commitment to innovation, technology and a customer-first approach is at the heart of everything that we do, for both passenger and cargo aviation," he highlighted, "driving global expansion and operational excellence, fostering improved coordination and smarter logistics."

Maximising capacity

Air cargo space is among the most precious commodities in a post-pandemic world marked by fluctuating demand and unpredictable disruptions, leading companies to look at how they can ensure optimal utilisation of cargo space through data, precision and execution.

"At Aeroprime, we tackle the challenges of fluctuating demand and capacity constraints by relying on a combination of technology, data and operational expertise," Goyal expressed. This approach begins with analytics. "We use advanced analytics to forecast demand, which allows us to help our airline partners adjust capacity dynamically and make more informed decisions."

But forecasting is only part of the puzzle. Execution on the ground matters just as much. "We focus on the approach where we ensure we always have sufficient cargo in hand and the entire sales team sets their targets accordingly," he explained, highlighting the importance of a proactive and aligned sales strategy in driving utilisation.

Digital tools play a pivotal role, particularly the Cargo Next platform. "Our digital platform, Cargo Next, plays a key role by providing real-time booking and tracking capabilities, ensuring transparency and better coordination across the cargo chain," he said. This real-time visibility minimises inefficiencies and enables smarter, faster decisions.

Aeroprime's network is another asset in the efficiency equation. "We've also built a strong interline connectivity network and road feeder services that connect smaller regional hubs with major international airports, making cargo movement more efficient," Goyal pointed out. "By staying close to the operations and continuously innovating, we're able to maximise cargo space utilisation and deliver real value to our airline partners, even when the market is unpredictable."

ADAPTATION IN A GLOBALISED ECONOMY

BY Edward HARDY

Positioned at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, Turkey gives Sabay Logistics a strategic geographic advantage. Yet, as Chairman Bulent Aymen acknowledged, location also brings exposure to regional instabilities. "Sabay Logistics is located in Türkiye. Türkiye is a strategically important hub for the European and Middle East corridor. It is a significant advantage. However, most of the neighbouring countries are facing economic and geopolitical risks. We have also been impacted by these problems."

Capacity constraints, volatile fuel costs, and the unpredictable impact of geopolitical shifts continue to challenge the airfreight market. Positioned at this key intersection, Sabay Logistics has seen first-hand the effects that regional instabilities have had on the sector.

"Türkiye is a strategically important hub for the European and Middle East corridor. It is a significant advantage. However, most of the neighbouring countries are carrying economic and geopolitical risks, which have impacted our operations," stated Aymen, chairman of Sabay Group.

To counteract these pressures, Sabay has developed a multi-pronged strategy. "Key challenges include capacity limitations, volatile fuel costs, and geopolitical instability," Aymen stated. "Sabay Logistics addresses these through proactive carrier partnerships, strategic capacity planning, and by maintaining a risk-mitigated routing strategy that ensures reliability, even in uncertain environments."

Rather than retreat in the face of volatility, Sabay sees it as an opportunity to differentiate. Emerging markets, in particular, are central to the company's expansion strategy. "Emerging markets present strong growth potential due to rising e-commerce and infrastructure investment," Aymen noted. "Sabay Logistics is focusing on building local partnerships, establishing regional hubs, and offering tailored solutions such as time-critical shipments and customs clearance support to penetrate these markets."

Scaling without sacrificing agility

As the logistics sector becomes increasingly globalised, Sabay Logistics has developed a model that balances international reach with regional precision. Much of this is made possible by its worldwide agency network. "Sabay Logistics relies on a vetted global agency network to ensure consistent service standards, faster transit times, and local expertise across all major airfreight corridors," Aymen stated.

This collaborative framework not only facilitates scale but also allows for greater responsiveness. "This collaborative model allows for greater responsiveness, real-time updates, and seamless end-to-end visibility for customers."

Compliance—a non-negotiable aspect of global logistics—is handled with equal seriousness. "The company maintains a dedicated compliance team that monitors changes in international regulations such as IATA and ICAO standards. Regular staff training, electronic documentation systems, and audit trails are implemented to ensure full compliance and mitigate customs or security-related delays."

Innovation and e-commerce

Technology is not just a tool but a pillar of Sabay Logistics' strategy for operational excellence. As Aymen outlined:

"Sabay Logistics has deployed digital booking platforms, cargo visibility tools, and AI-powered demand forecasting." These digital solutions are not just internal efficiencies—they are direct value-adds for customers.

"These tools improve operational efficiency, reduce errors, and provide clients with real-time tracking, automated documentation, and responsive customer support."

Managing capacity has become one of the defining challenges of modern airfreight, particularly amid fluctuating demand cycles and space scarcity. Sabay is leveraging a flexible, hybrid freight model. "Through strategic partnerships with carriers, predictive analytics, and a hybrid freight model (combining scheduled and charter services), we optimise load planning and scale operations to meet demand surges without compromising service quality."

This agility has also allowed Sabay to step into the fast-growing e-commerce logistics space. "Sabay Logistics launched the SBY Express service for e-commerce logistics in 2019, after obtaining a licence from the government," Aymen stated. "SBY Express supports e-commerce clients with express airfreight solutions, fulfilment centre connectivity, and integrated customs brokerage. Its ability to handle high-volume, time-sensitive parcels makes it a reliable logistics partner."

In addition, Sabay integrates rigorous cargo security protocols—critical in airfreight, where cargo integrity is paramount. "Security is reinforced through tamper-evident packaging and real-time GPS monitoring. Sabay also works closely with airport authorities and carriers to ensure secure handling from origin to destination."

Five-year vision

Sabay's experience during the COVID-19 pandemic served as both a stress test and a catalyst for long-term change. "Sabay implemented contingency planning, flexible routing, and increased charter operations during the pandemic. It also accelerated digital adoption and maintained open communication with customers to manage expectations and maintain service continuity," Aymen outlined.

These learnings are now embedded into the company's ongoing resilience strategy. Sustainability, too, is becoming an increasing priority—even in the inherently carbon-intensive world of airfreight. "While airfreight is inherently carbon-intensive, Sabay is investing in carbon offset programmes, optimising load efficiency, and supporting clients with emission reporting tools."

Looking ahead, Sabay is planning a robust expansion strategy built around both regional depth and technological innovation. "Sabay plans to expand its airfreight footprint by opening regional hubs in Southeast Asia and Africa, increasing digital service capabilities, and strengthening vertical-specific solutions for healthcare, high-tech, and perishables," Aymen concluded. "Innovation and customer-centricity will remain core to its growth strategy."

EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT TO UNLOCK FULL CARGO POTENTIAL

BY Edward HARDY

East Midlands Airport (EMA) has revealed an ambitious long-term development strategy aimed at cementing its role as the UK's leading express airfreight hub. The bold new vision, announced at the UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) in Leeds, outlines proposals to develop four key airport sites to meet a forecast 54 percent surge in cargo demand by 2043.

The plans could support up to 21,300 new jobs and inject £3.9 billion into the UK economy, according to expert analysis. The airport, already the country's top performer for express freight, is positioning itself to capture a significant share of the growing demand for fast, reliable cargo transport. A recent study commissioned by EMA from consultants York Aviation and MDS Transmodal predicts cargo volumes will grow from 370,000 tonnes in 2023 to 583,000 tonnes in 2043.

Unveiled before an audience of 16,000 property, investment, and policy leaders at UKREiiF, the airport's development blueprint targets over 50 hectares of land across four prime plots on the airfield. Three of these sites would benefit from direct runway access, made possible by new taxiways and apron space for up to 18 additional aircraft.

The proposal includes:

- 122,000 sq m of new warehouse facilities
- 51,000 sq m of landside yard space
- 1,000 parking spaces

Two of the plots also fall within designated Freeport tax sites, part of the East Midlands Freeport, for which EMA serves as the port. This status provides businesses with tax incentives and streamlined customs processes—key advantages for logistics and trade operators.

The airport's strategic location and infrastructure give it a unique edge. With 85 percent of the UK population reachable within a four-hour truck drive, and proximity to 81 percent of large-scale warehousing, EMA is ideally placed for growth. Unlike many UK airports, it operates 24/7 with fewer restrictions on night flights and no competition from passenger slots, allowing it to prioritise dedicated cargo operations.

Steve Griffiths, managing director of East Midlands Airport, highlighted the scale of the opportunity:

"EMA is already a vital backbone for the UK's express freight network, supporting high-value industries and advanced manufacturing. With this new vision, we aim to enhance our infrastructure to meet soaring demand and drive regional and national growth.

We're keeping an open mind on how the four sites can be developed and welcome investment ideas that can unlock their potential. Our ambition is to build a future-ready cargo hub that creates thousands of jobs and strengthens the UK's position in global trade."

The proposed development forms part of a wider national strategy to address unmet UK cargo capacity and support economic resilience. With no need for passenger aircraft to carry freight, EMA's purpose-built cargo operations promise faster, more efficient logistics connections to global markets.

The airport's growth strategy is expected to support 12,600 new jobs and £1.8 billion in additional gross value added (GVA) by 2030, rising to 21,300 jobs and £3.9 billion by 2043.

The Mayor East Midlands Claire Ward said: "East Midlands Airport connects our region to the world, and we need to get the most out of those connections to grow the economy in a way that lands here – boosting our businesses and bringing people together.

"EMA's cargo expansion is consistent with this objective and is a game-changer not just for us, but for the UK. With up to £1.8 billion in additional GVA and 12,600 new jobs by 2030—and even greater gains by 2043 – this is a nationally significant opportunity to meet the growing demand for air freight services, strengthen our role in global trade, and create thousands of high-quality jobs for local people."

Advertorial

AEROPRIME GROUP: PROPELLING THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN AIR CARGO

www.aeroprime.com

The air cargo industry is at a turning point, driven by rapid digital transformation and evolving market demands. At Aeroprime Group, we don't just adapt to change - we lead it.

Revolutionizing Air Cargo with Digital Innovation

The air cargo industry is undergoing a digital revolution, where process automation and real-time data analytics are transforming traditional operations. These advancements enhance efficiency, accuracy, and customer experience. At Aeroprime Group, we harness the power of digitalization to equip airlines and freight forwarders with intelligent solutions that streamline operations, optimize revenue, and drive operational excellence. As the trusted GSSA of many leading airlines, our technology facilitates seamless booking, tracking, shipment management, and operational efficiency, ensuring our partners stay agile and competitive in an evolving market.

Aeroprime Group's Cutting-Edge Digital Solutions

At Aeroprime Group, we go beyond conventional air cargo management and GSSA services by offering a suite of digitally enabled GSSA solutions designed to enhance revenues and drive efficiencies. Our technology-driven approach ensures seamless integration, enabling businesses to operate smarter and faster in a rapidly evolving industry.

- **Intelligent Booking Platforms:** Our intuitive, next-generation platform, CargoNext, simplifies booking processes by providing real-time shipment booking, payment, tracking, and seamless cargo management.
- **Advanced Data Analytics & Revenue Optimization:** Leveraging AI-driven insights, we offer deep analytics that enable businesses to optimize capacity utilization and generate incremental revenue.

Setting the Benchmark in Air Cargo Digitalization

We don't just provide GSSA services; we set the industry standard by driving innovation in air cargo. Our solutions foster operational excellence, helping our airline partners seamlessly transition into the digital era with confidence.

Driving the Future of Air Cargo

As the air cargo landscape continues to evolve, digitalization is no longer an option - it's a necessity. Aeroprime Group delivers innovative, scalable, and reliable solutions tailored to the needs of airlines.

Explore the next era of Airlines GSSA by visiting **www.aeroprime.com** or contacting us at **partner@aeroprime.com** to discover how our technology-enabled services can enhance your revenues.

Transforming air cargo with cutting-edge, digital-first solutions.
Aeroprime Group: The Visionaries, The Doers

Aeroprime

EASTERN EUROPE STEPS UP

BY **Anastasiya SIMSEK**

AS maintenance slot shortages persist globally, operators across Europe are searching for cost-effective and strategically located solutions. With the opening of a modern maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility at Šiauliai International Airport (SQQ) in northern Lithuania, Airhub Aviation is putting itself firmly on the radar. More than a regional expansion, the new site signals a shift in how mid-life and end-of-life aircraft are managed in an environment of ageing fleets, tighter lease cycles and shifting geopolitical dynamics.

Strategic infrastructure in a dual-use hub

The location speaks volumes. Šiauliai Airport isn't just another commercial airfield — it's also a NATO base with two of the region's longest runways and 24/7 operational capacity. "It's one of the most modern MRO centres in northern and eastern Europe, and one of the most cost-effective options in Europe overall," said Oleg Novak, CEO of Airhub Aviation. "With this new site, we're boosting our capacity to support not only our own fleet but also partner airlines and lessors."

The decision to set up operations in Lithuania aligns with broader regional trends. "Kaunas has already established a strong reputation in MRO services, and we are seeing new infrastructure investments in Vilnius," Novak added. "Lithuania's aviation sector already contributes four percent to the national GDP. By building up our infrastructure here, we're contributing to the country's positioning as a hub for advanced aviation services."

As global fleet age rises, so does the demand for flexible, full-scope MRO. Novak believes Airhub's offering answers an acute need in the current market. "The global aircraft fleet is expected to increase by 28 percent over the next decade," he said. "At the same time, maintenance slot shortages and supply chain challenges are putting pressure on operators."

The Šiauliai facility targets mid-life and late-life narrowbody aircraft like the Airbus A320ceo and Boeing 737NG. Services include heavy checks, engine swaps and aircraft modifications. "More lessors and operators are seeking facilities capable of handling larger and more complex tasks — like second 12-year checks," Novak explained.

Integrated MRO

"At Airhub Aviation, we take a comprehensive, integrated approach to aircraft management," said Novak. "We offer a full suite of services — fleet management, aircraft transitions, component repair, CAMO and MRO." This vertical integration gives clients a single point of contact throughout the asset's lifecycle. "We help clients extend lifespan, reduce downtime and maintain market value," Novak said. "Managing everything under one roof allows us to deliver consistent value at every stage."

While industry forecasts focus on recovery and fleet growth, Novak offers a more grounded take on what it takes to survive volatility. "We all can agree the last five years were super challenging — global pandemic, war in Ukraine and Israel, political tensions," he said. "There are no trends that help you through all of that — but what really helps is instant flexibility and adjustability."

Scaling sustainably

Sustainability remains a challenge in maintenance-intensive sectors, but Airhub is putting systems in place to align with broader industry goals. "Sustainability and responsible governance are at the core of our operations," Novak said. "We're reducing our environmental impact through full operational digitisation and initiatives within our managed AA+ hangar facilities." The company is also investing in solar energy to offset part of its electricity needs.

Airhub's parent, GetJet Aviation Holdings, is not just a shareholder — it's a strategic enabler. The MRO operation was initially proven using GetJet's own fleet before expanding to third-party work. "We've successfully proven our concept by serving the GetJet Airlines fleet, and now it gives us access to solid resources, expertise and operational support," Novak explained. "Being part of a well-established aviation group gives us a solid foundation for growth."

60 Seconds With...

AYTEKIN SARAY

Chief Exeucitve Officer of Global GSA Group

BY **Anastasiya SIMSEK**

With over 25 years of experience in the airfreight and logistics industry, Aytekin Saray began his career at Panalpina, where he developed a strong foundation in international freight forwarding. During the acquisition of ChartAir BV, he had the privilege of working closely with Ismail Durmaz, an industry leader who has since remained a trusted mentor and influential figure in his professional journey.

Durmaz launched Global GSA Group in 1995, and Saray joined him in 2000, driven by a shared vision to establish a comprehensive global network of air cargo solutions. Over the years, he has held various leadership roles in the group, notably as CCO and Managing Director for Central Europe. In February 2025, he was appointed CEO of Global GSA Group, accelerating the company's transformation journey.

What was your dream job as a child?

As a child, I faced significant health challenges, and the compassion and dedication of the medical professionals around me inspired me to dream of becoming a doctor. I was deeply moved by their ability to make a difference in people's lives, and for a time, I envisioned following that path myself.

While life circumstances ultimately led me in a different direction, I discovered a new and equally fulfilling passion in the airfreight and logistics industry. What began as a career opportunity evolved into a lifelong commitment. The dynamic, fast-paced nature of airfreight—connecting people, businesses, and markets across the globe—has proven to be incredibly rewarding. In many ways, the industry has allowed me to make a meaningful impact, just in a different form than I originally imagined.

What is the biggest change you have seen in the industry?

The airfreight industry has undergone remarkable transformation over the years, but the most significant change has undoubtedly been the integration of technology. Looking back to the days when we relied on faxes and manual processes, it's incredible to see how far we've come. At the time, we couldn't have imagined the digital tools and systems we now use daily.

Today, advanced tracking technologies, real-time data analytics, and automation have revolutionised the way we manage supply chains. These innovations have significantly improved operational efficiency, transparency, and customer service. Moreover, the growing emphasis on sustainability and eco-conscious practices marks another major shift, as the industry increasingly focuses on reducing its carbon footprint and adopting greener logistics solutions. Overall, these developments have made the airfreight sector more agile, resilient, and better equipped to meet the evolving demands of the global economy.

What is the most unusual thing you have ever shipped?

One of the most unusual—and emotionally impactful—experiences in my career was handling the transportation of 40 human remains on a cargo freighter. It was a deeply sobering moment that reminded us of the human stories behind the shipments we manage every day. While it was a logistically complex and sensitive task, it also underscored the important role that airfreight plays in supporting people during some of life's most difficult times. Being able to help bring loved ones home to their families, with dignity and care, is a responsibility we took very seriously. It was a powerful reminder that our industry is not just about moving goods—it's also about serving people with compassion when it matters most.

What is one buzzword you secretly dislike?

"Impossible"—I really don't like that word. It feels discouraging and limiting, especially when it comes to discussing dreams, bold ideas, or ambitious goals. In our industry—and in life—seemed impossible has been achieved through determination, creativity, and teamwork.

Instead of shutting down a conversation, I prefer to reframe it with something more constructive, like: "That sounds challenging," or "What would it take to make it happen?"

These responses open the door to problem-solving and innovation, rather than closing it. After all, many of the greatest accomplishments began with someone daring to believe they were possible.

What's the best business lesson you've learned the hard way?

On my very first day in the industry, I asked a question—and a colleague responded with, "Knowledge is power." At the time, it felt dismissive, but that moment stuck with me. Rather than being discouraged, I took it as motivation to learn everything I could and take ownership of my own growth.

Over time, I came to realise that while knowledge is indeed powerful, it's the actions you take with that knowledge that truly shape your path. That lesson has stayed with me throughout my career: never wait to be handed answers—seek them out, stay curious, and keep moving forward. Continuous learning, paired with decisive action, is what drives long-term success.

If you could instantly master one skill, what would it be?

I'd love to instantly master a hands-on skill—something creative I could do as a hobby. I've never been particularly handy, so being able to build or craft something with my own hands would be incredibly satisfying. It's a skill that combines relaxation with a sense of accomplishment—something I really admire in others and hope to explore more myself.

View From The Maindeck

A DIGITAL RECKONING

BY **Edward HARDY**

New tariffs, sudden policy reversals, and region-specific compliance standards have turned logistics into a puzzle that shifts week to week. For freight forwarders, this has meant not just adapting, but anticipating changes.

"One of the ways we've responded is by recommending the use of free trade zone warehouses," says Charles Marrale, CEO of Exfreight. "This enables clients to import cargo in advance, especially given the 90-day pause and reduction in tariffs."

While the strategy of pre-positioning goods may be familiar, what's new is the level of intelligence built into the process. Real-time duty and tax estimation tools now allow shippers to evaluate exposure before cargo moves—transforming trade planning from a reactive chore into a proactive, data-driven practice.

"We've invested in a third-party duty and tax calculator integrated into our booking system," Marrale added. "It allows customers to forecast potential duties and taxes at the time of booking."

Such tools are a response to the growing pressure for transparency and flexibility. With production shifting away from historical strongholds towards more geopolitically stable or cost-efficient regions, the ability to compare sourcing options in real time is now mission-critical.

"Our software also offers the ability to compare rates and fully landed costs," Marrale noted. "This helps customers explore alternative sourcing options in real time across different countries."

Capacity and congestion

Amid pandemic aftershocks and surging demand, capacity constraints in major freight hubs have become the norm rather than the exception. Traditional pricing models, based on static schedules and historical availability, have proven inadequate in this new environment. "The industry used to base prices on assumed capacity," Marrale said. "But that often led to delays during periods of tight capacity, like those seen during the pandemic."

To meet demand for reliability and speed, the industry is moving towards dynamic pricing tied directly to real-time flight availability. "We've leveraged airline API connections to provide our customers with real-time shipping rates based on actual available capacity," he explained. "Customers can request rates from any door location and instantly see the full rate, tailored to specific flights with available space."

This shift from pre-negotiated rate sheets to instant, data-driven pricing mirrors the evolution of passenger airline ticketing. And the stakes are just as high—accurate, real-time pricing isn't just a convenience; it's a necessity for companies managing lean inventories and high service expectations. "Dynamic space-based pricing, integrated via a direct API connection, has saved us significant time and improved our efficiency," Marrale stated. "It removes the need to manage pricing and capacity manually."

Agility over scale

The relocation of production due to trade disputes, war, or rising labour costs means freight forwarders must offer flexibility and responsiveness over brute scale."Exfreight plays a crucial role by offering small and mid-size importers and exporters the flexibility and agility needed to adapt to shifting production bases," Marrale said. "Our network spans over 150 countries, allowing clients to quickly assess fully landed costs for new suppliers."

In this landscape, digital tools are more than customer conveniences—they are requirements. API-connected systems allow businesses to evaluate sourcing options and execute them immediately. "Our instant pricing and booking tools, along with API connectivity to ERP systems, make it easy for customers to evaluate options and make informed decisions," he stated.

Partnerships and integrations are also becoming critical to global responsiveness. Freight networks and digital platforms like Webcargo are enabling smaller firms to access the same reach and pricing as their larger counterparts. "Our collaboration with Webcargo has streamlined the integration of airfreight pricing from our foreign agents into our system," Marrale noted.

"The next 12–24 months are likely to remain unpredictable," Marrale said. "However, we see opportunities arising from this instability, as our dynamic, agile value proposition positions us well to help shippers and importers navigate these uncertainties."