



Air Cargo Journalist of the Year 2024 Runner up Submission

Megan Ramsey

Megan Ramsay, Freelance Journalist, meganlouiseramsay@gmail.com



Handling air freight's growth engine

Air cargo stakeholders have been adapting rapidly to the evolving needs of the ever-growing e-commerce sector. And the return of bellyhold capacity since the end of the Covid pandemic has encouraged some major cross-border e-commerce shippers to turn again to a 'supply direct from China' model, requiring further adjustment, reports *Megan Ramsay*

E-commerce is the fastest-growing segment in the global air freight market, accounting for over 20% of total volumes, according to IATA, and that proportion is considerably higher in some markets. Access to a global

marketplace of products, convenience, and often the low cost of online shopping, make e-commerce an attractive option for consumers, and that looks set to continue. And while the dramatic increase seen during the Covid-19 pandemic has flattened off, growth has not stopped – although the nature of air cargo's

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E-commerce influences global pricing levels by absorbing a substantial portion of the capacity

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Zeid Houssami



Zeid Houssami
Flexport

involvement in its delivery has continued to evolve.

For example, the return of air cargo bellyhold capacity since the end of the pandemic has encouraged some major cross-border e-commerce shippers to turn again to a 'supply direct from China' model that relies more heavily on air freight transport direct to consumers, requiring a further adjustment by stakeholders.

IATA estimates that around 80% of cross-border e-commerce was transported by air. And the surge in e-commerce within the air freight space, specifically, "is largely attributed to the sector's emphasis on timely deliveries", argues Zeid Houssami, vice president and global head of air freight at Flexport.

"E-commerce brands, recognising the critical importance of on-time performance, are prepared to pay a premium for air freight services. This willingness has a significant impact, as it influences global pricing levels by absorbing a substantial portion of the capacity," he adds.

Both air freight and ocean freight transport have become "more complicated" since e-commerce has begun taking up so much space, points out U-Freight America CEO Rick Keller.

"For example, rates from Asia to Europe or the US during peak seasons are very high... There's no real bottleneck with the airlines for e-commerce though; it's more challenging for traditional cargo customers [to find capacity], because e-commerce pays more."

It's more challenging for traditional cargo customers, because e-commerce pays more

Rick Keller

If carriers were to offer dedicated e-commerce flights, they might ease the pressure on capacity for traditional cargo; but the greater expense of routinely using freighters for the capacity would elevate the costs of the air freight component beyond the level that many e-commerce shippers, customers and goods could normally justify or support – and eliminate much of the price advantage air freight has over integrator products and services.

Brian Bourke, global chief commercial officer at SEKO Logistics, observes: "The pandemic disrupted the (e-commerce) business model because this (model) only works as an alternative to integrators or post offices when there is ample passenger belly capacity in the market. That's why we are able to do this efficiently and cost-effectively. When international passenger capacity evaporated within 48 hours, it absolutely disrupted the model.

"Luckily, like other forwarders, we started to do air charters to keep capacity there on behalf of our clients." But of course, that chartered capacity came at a cost.

End-to-end solutions

Currently, e-commerce constitutes approximately 20% of Flexport's total volume, including both B2C and B2B customers.

Houssami outlines: "It's working best for e-commerce brands that need dedicated capacity to ensure reliability and on-time performance" – regular capacity that forwarders can secure on behalf of their clients.

"Our customers are increasingly looking for comprehensive, end-to-end solutions. This includes the incorporation of Section 321 US Customs clearance, parcel injection services, and robust parcel-level visibility to streamline their logistics.

"There's a growing dialogue between



Rick Keller
U-Freight

carriers and some of the world's largest e-commerce brands, focusing on air freight capacity solutions that emphasise dedicated supply chains (end-to-end logistics solutions). However, it's important to note that carriers often face challenges in providing first-mile or final-mile solutions."

Cost is one aspect of this, while in some markets (like the US, for instance), there is a long-running shortage of truck and local courier drivers.

Partial specialisation

Still, the traditional air cargo industry appears to be effectively providing adequate end-to-end e-commerce transport through collaboration and partial specialisation.

For instance, Lufthansa Cargo's heyworld subsidiary – an in-house B2C e-commerce freight forwarding specialist – leverages the capacity and connections of Lufthansa Cargo as well as partnering with service providers for last-mile delivery to offer, effectively, end-to-end cross-border e-commerce services that are fast and yet also affordable on a global scale, the elusive 'hybrid' air freight solution.

According to heyworld managing director Boris Hueske: "The demand for e-commerce solutions in air freight has been growing steadily – and the need for cross-border e-commerce services (especially fast and affordable services) is growing faster than e-commerce overall. Geographically, Frankfurt is ideally located in the heart of Europe and especially within Europe's largest



Hacis has a dedicated cool zone for perishable e-commerce items like chocolates and fresh fruit



Boris Hueske
heyworld



Brian Bourke
SEKO Logistics

e-commerce market – Germany.”

Recognising this potential, heyworld was founded in 2019 and is dedicated to providing specialised e-commerce logistics solutions.

The transport chain for e-commerce is different and more complex than for general cargo. Most important, Hueske points out, is the capability to handle business at parcel level, including Customs clearance and returns. These processes are complex – and absolutely necessary for the e-commerce market, which depends utterly on consumer

demand. The success of this model hinges on integrating the various parts in a fragmented air logistics chain, supported with the right digital tools.

“The sheer volume demands efficiency, and you need to provide speed and visibility,” Hueske adds. “We partner with multiple service providers for last-mile delivery [and] the integration of our IT enables us to share information and have high visibility of data across the e-commerce supply chain.”

He continues: “Our software is at the heart of supply chain orchestration. If

you’re not one of the incumbents with integrated existing supply chains, you have to work with partners to provide full-service spectrum and you need technology capabilities to integrate and connect data to provide transparency.

“We orchestrate different aspects of the supply chain with our own transport management software and with our own sorting capabilities in Frankfurt. In particular, a robust and interconnected multimodal network is essential for the fast delivery of goods in e-commerce. Thanks to Frankfurt’s central location in Europe and its one-of-a-kind transportation network, we benefit from an advantageous multimodal system.”

The ‘hybrid’ approach

Wilson Kwong, chief executive of handler Hong Kong Air Cargo Terminals Ltd (Hactl), says the ‘hybrid’ approach to moving e-commerce has been “hugely beneficial” to the traditional air freight industry.

“In fact, it’s exactly where our value-added logistics subsidiary Hacis is today, collaborating with e-commerce forwarders to provide an alternative to dedicated uplift and single-entity end-to-end supply chains, and also providing airport-based fulfilment,” he says.

E-commerce traffic through Hactl, as a handler, is not always clearly identifiable, as some e-commerce supply chains rely on bulk shipping to regional distribution centres and fulfilment centres where product is broken down into individual consumer orders.

“What is identifiable, though, is the e-commerce traffic handled through Hacis, which now operates a dedicated E-fulfilment Centre to provide physical handling and processing for intermediaries who wish to have an airport base in Hong Kong. This traffic is growing steadily,” Kwong highlights.

Hacis is generating business not only for Hactl, but also for its customer airlines, as its setup in Hong Kong is facilitating and attracting traffic that might otherwise not exist, or which might be shipped direct from China.

“We have identified a demand for fulfilment and processing of time- and



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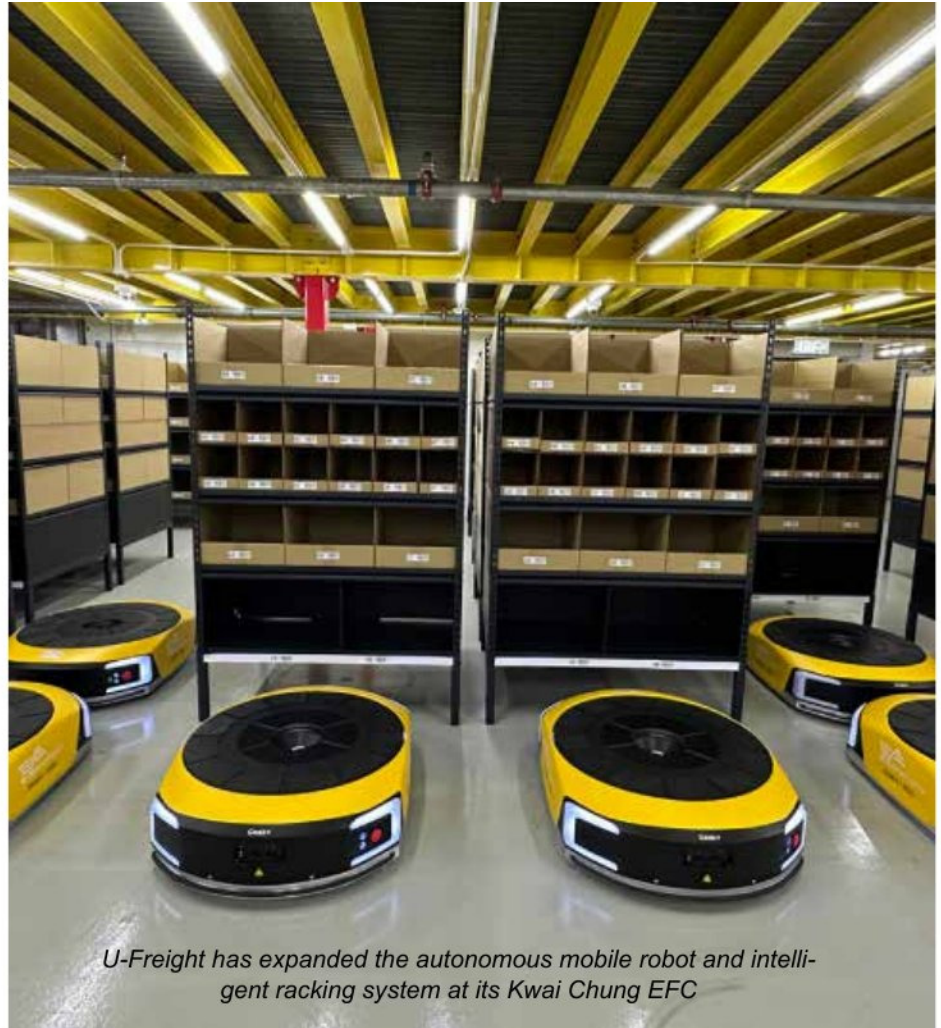
temperature-sensitive e-commerce goods such as chocolates and fresh fruit, and responded by opening a dedicated Cool Zone where all handling is carried out at controlled temperatures,” Kwong goes on.

Digital information flows

Hacis is also collaborating on digital information flows to ensure that all parties to the e-commerce supply chain – including the end customer – have access to the stock flows and status information they demand.

Kwong notes: “The ‘traditional’ industry needs more systems integration and digitalisation of processes in some locations, but overall the principle that traditional airfreight can provide a viable alternative service, at attractive cost, to e-commerce customers is already well proven. The final mile is likely to remain where it is: satisfied by a combination of own-account and outsourced local delivery resource.

“Carriers can, in our view, provide



U-Freight has expanded the autonomous mobile robot and intelligent racking system at its Kwai Chung EFC

Logistics firms fine-tune solutions for SMEs

Forwarding and logistics companies are developing new services to bring smaller e-commerce players the ability to participate competitively in cross-border markets.

For example, U-Freight Logistics' e+Solutions (ePlus) product allows small online retailers with limited resources to buy space in U-Freight's 290,000sqm warehouse in Hong Kong, offering a comprehensive e-commerce logistics package, from dedicated storage space for products to order processing and fulfilment services.

“[Retailers'] inventory is managed via an app, and we deliver to their customers,” Keller explains. “Sixty percent of people start with one bin, and within six to 12 months they are taking an entire shelf system.”

U-Freight intends to expand ePlus in

2024. For instance, Tokyo would be a perfect market for the product, Keller says.

More generally, U-Freight wants to grow its presence in southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa, and intends to add automation to its facilities in Los Angeles and Chicago in 2024. Research into suitable robotics is currently in progress.

In 2023, the company finished expanding the autonomous mobile robot and intelligent racking system that was installed two years ago at its 2,000sqm eCommerce fulfilment centre (EFC) in Kwai Chung, Hong Kong.

In addition to the USA, U-Freight has fully functioning EFCs in Hong Kong (where e-commerce accounts for approximately 40% of its revenue), Penang, Incheon, Amsterdam and Heathrow (Sunbury). It is planning to turn its existing hubs in Japan, Shanghai and Thailand into full EFCs, too. ■

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Hacis is collaborating with e-commerce forwarders to provide an alternative to dedicated uplift and single-entity end-to-end supply chains
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Wilson Kwong

services that are suited to the e-commerce sector, with our support. But it is not necessary for them to offer dedicated e-commerce services, which are really the province of logistics service providers and forwarders,” he emphasises.

Forwarders choose the airlines and airports they use for e-commerce business carefully, though. Bourke explains: “We are selective in who we work with, because some airlines are more supportive of the efficiency that e-commerce needs.

“B2C or forwarding for international e-commerce has similarities with shipping perishables: it has to get there right away,

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Wilson Kwong

and consumers have expectations. If these are not met, the reputation of the brand is lost, so there's pressure – but also opportunity, as companies need the services freight forwarders can provide.”

Bourke says international e-commerce accounts for 35-40% of SEKO's air freight revenue, noting: “The integrators are very good at what they do because they have built out and invested in all of the touch points and transfers around the world. We're working with a lot of different partners – airlines, ground handling agents, airports – and there can be challenges.”

Plus, government requirements for data sharing are increasing and will continue to evolve. Harmonisation between governments would be helpful, Bourke says, because “borders wouldn't appear overnight, for example”.

Despite the difficulties, partnerships remain a promising model for enhancing the quality of e-commerce air logistics, Houssami believes, particularly as major global gateways are increasingly developing e-commerce and parcel sort centres, which are crucial in this model.

“These centres are strategically located for quick access to cargo straight from the runway, enabling expedited operations to integrate parcels into networks swiftly,” he observes.

Acquiring expertise

Given that a key factor in achieving a fully integrated solution is working on a scale similar to the operations of

integrators like UPS and FedEx, Houssami points to strategic acquisitions aimed at rapidly building the necessary scale to compete effectively. Flexport last year acquired the assets of Shopify Logistics, including Deliverr, in order to offer a fully integrated e-commerce solution. Then-CEO Dave Clark describing the acquisition as “the last piece of the puzzle that enables us to drive technology-fuelled solutions across the entire product life cycle from the manufacturer's floor, across the oceans and skies, through ports and fulfilment, and, now, right into the hands of customers.”



Wilson Kwong
Hactl





Flexport acquired Shopify Logistics, including Deliverr, in order to offer a fully integrated e-commerce solution

In Houssami's view, the integration of e-commerce fulfilment specialists into 3PL operations is a useful way forward, particularly since e-commerce is the fastest-growing vertical in the global air freight market.

"Such acquisitions can bring together the agility and specialised capabilities of e-commerce fulfilment entities with the extensive networks and resources of larger 3PLs," he says. "This synergy has

the potential to create more-efficient, responsive, and comprehensive logistics solutions tailored to the dynamic needs of the e-commerce market."

However, effectively merging these acquired entities with the existing forwarding networks of 3PLs can be challenging. It involves not only logistical integration but also the harmonisation of different data models – connecting parcel-level data with broader shipment

information. As such, Flexport's technology platform is at the heart of its e-commerce solution, Houssami notes.

Going direct

Another shift in the industry is a move away from local distribution centres in consumer markets, towards more direct shipping from source to end customer.

Most of SEKO's e-commerce business comprises B2C shipments, which combine its air freight line haul with first- and last-mile partners. "This is the primary driver of our growth," Bourke says.

"The biggest shift that we saw [during the pandemic] was that rates were very elevated when capacity was constricted, so a lot of companies looked to position their inventory closer to consumer markets. We offer fulfilment services around the world to help companies with that if it makes sense for them. You don't need to be in the same country – you could just be in the region, so it's still cross-border transport," he adds.

Now, as capacity has come back, direct shipping has returned to favour. The move away from the traditional approach of using local distribution centres, primarily supplied via surface transport, to a 'supply direct from China' model that relies more heavily on air freight transport direct to consumers, is gathering pace, largely driven by companies like Temu, Shein, TikTok Shop and Alibaba.

The direct-to-consumer model allows e-commerce sellers to reduce carrying costs and accelerate their order-to-cash cycle. However, there is a trade-off, Houssami continues. "Sellers often have less control over lead times, as they depend on manufacturers to fulfil orders and select carriers.

"In response to these changes, air freight operators have adapted their networks. They are now accommodating more loose cartons in their consolidations.

"This adjustment is particularly attractive because it allows for better utilisation of air freight capacity. Such a cargo profile is advantageous in the evolving e-commerce logistics landscape, where speed and efficiency are key."

Driving air freight's green transition

At the start of the pandemic in 2020, shippers "just wanted capacity", and paid little attention to sustainability, according to SEKO's Brian Bourke, who notes: "It didn't matter if that was on a 30-year-old Boeing 747. But now, interest in sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) has skyrocketed and the industry is coming together.

"For example, United Airlines is investing in the production of more SAF because demand is outpacing supply and rates are going up. This (shortage of supply and rising prices) is not good if we're to decarbonise the industry; it's

going in the wrong direction."

SEKO itself has been working with Air France KLM Martinair Cargo on the carriers' SAF programme, and is looking to expand to other airlines this year in response to demand from customers. Bourke continues: "This trend is driven primarily by e-commerce and high-tech items.

"We're not far from the tipping point; there are a lot of other technologies out there that will lead to complete decarbonisation of the industry, but SAF will get the industry closer in the medium term. There is a lot of potential and promise for increasing supply in the future." ■

Fulfilment closer to source

Developments in Hong Kong, too, suggest that fulfilment is gradually moving closer to source. Although such a move might impact business levels for some logistics companies and forwarders, and possibly some carriers and handlers, the underlying growth in the market with a constant influx of new operators should more than mitigate the impact, Kwong believes.

“We are also conscious of a subtle switch to air from ocean where supply chain resilience is important, such as in the ability to fulfil e-commerce orders in a timely manner,” Kwong adds.

At U-Freight, Keller wants to see ocean e-commerce traffic and revenue increase and become more consistent.

“People don’t tend to think of ocean freight as being used for e-commerce shipments, but customers purchasing significant volumes from factories will ship via ocean to their distribution centres and then from there to the end customer, hybridising the e-commerce product,” he observes. “Even Amazon does this. It

depends on the product – if it’s heavy, you’ll tend to use ocean freight, while retailers selling smaller products often use air freight to supply direct to the end customer.”

Thus, U-Freight uses direct injection into the mail or last-mile delivery system in some locations, such as South America, while elsewhere it holds stock in its warehouses for fulfilment, as it does in Amsterdam. The latter model also works for a high-density population like Hong Kong.

Long-term business

However the air freight industry handles it, e-commerce is here to stay for the foreseeable future and volumes look set to continue to grow. Consumers have the world at their fingertips, as Bourke puts it, adding: “That type of differentiation or customisation is hard to scale in any one country, so there will always be demand for goods shipped from other countries. With the continued rise of the Internet and the rise of total retail sales coming from e-commerce, this will continue.”

The convenience factor plays a main

role in this sustained growth. Consumers worldwide have become accustomed to the ease with which they can purchase a vast array of products online.

Houssami notes: “While certain products will inevitably continue to necessitate in-person shopping experiences, the majority of consumer needs are increasingly being met through digital channels. Furthermore, technological advancements, particularly in augmented reality (AR), are poised to further revolutionise the e-commerce experience.

“AR technology has the potential to bridge the gap between the physical and digital shopping realms, offering consumers a more immersive and interactive online shopping experience. This advancement is likely to drive consumers towards e-commerce further, accelerating the shift in spending habits,” he believes.

Eventually, e-commerce growth is likely to slow as it reaches its logical market share of all trade, says Kwong, “but we are years – perhaps even decades – away from that point”. ■

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Creatures in comfort

Carrying live animals is a big business sector and volumes are now growing again after a lull during the pandemic. Several carriers and airports have invested in specialist facilities for horses and other species, writes **Megan Ramsay**

Badly affected by the challenges of Covid, the transport of live animals appears to have recovered, with the airfreight community as intent as ever on ensuring the wellbeing of this very special category of cargo.

“The key thing to understand about live animal transport is that there are segments within it, so a variety of expertise is needed,” says Charlie McMullen, chief executive at live animal air charter broker Intradco Global. “It’s about the type of animals, and the demand on a particular lane.”

For instance, more than 200 racehorses are shipped by air every day. So, it is hardly surprising that equine transport is the biggest portion (about 70%) of Intradco’s business.

The company was the logistics partner for the Saudi Cup in February, moving 109 horses to Riyadh from seven locations using 12 aircraft.

Later in the year, Intradco provided a VIP client with a solution to move 77 horses from the UK to the UAE, working with London Heathrow Airport authority and Swissport LHR to bring all horse trucks airside within four hours.

Entry level

For horse charters, Intradco uses its own fleet of stalls, plus rentals when necessary.

“We will soon have 120 horse stalls of a new design, with the first 10 going into production in November,” McMullen says.

“On the new HML and HMR stalls, which are used on Boeing 747s, a double hinge provides level entry, so that horses will

no longer have a step down/step up approach when entering and exiting the stall.”

While equine transport is still the lion’s share of Intradco’s business, the company has branched out into commercial and genetic livestock transport.

This was partly in response to the restrictions and extra requirements pertaining to travelling grooms during Covid, although global appetites for meat and dairy products are also a key driver of demand for live animal transport services.

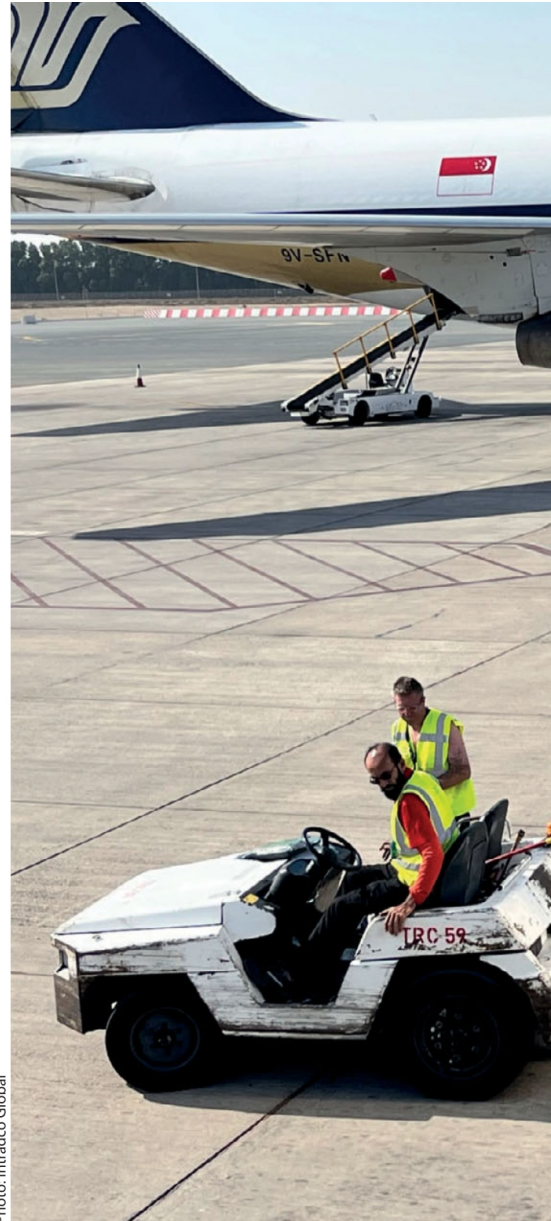
“We fly between 20 and 30 747s full of pigs every year to China – mostly from the US but also from France and Denmark,” McMullen says. “Some go to the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand too.”

Finally, there are the ‘exotics’: animals that are transported for zoological or conservation programmes.



Ruben the lion was moved to a wildlife sanctuary

Photo: Intradco Global



Here again, Intradco is developing its product further, including intra-Africa flights.

For instance: “We have a customer who is relocating animals into areas of Africa that have far lower records of poaching.

“The plan is to relocate 2,500 rhinos over the duration of the programme, so it’s a huge logistical task.”

Also in Africa, Qatar Airways Cargo recently partnered with Animal Defenders International (ADI) to move Ruben, a lion, from an abandoned Armenian zoo to the ADI Wildlife Sanctuary in Free State, South Africa.

Qatar Airways Cargo recently became the official airline partner of United for Wildlife, a British organisation founded by Prince William and The Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales with the aim of making it impossible for traffickers to transport, finance or profit from illegal wildlife products.

Qatar Airways Group chief executive Engr Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, says: “We are taking measures to disrupt this illicit trade in order to conserve biodiversity and safeguard our delicate ecosystems.”

Other carriers involved in United for Wildlife’s work include Delta Cargo, which

Photo: Animal Defenders International



Transporting horses represents about 70% of business at live animal air charter broker Intradco Global

signed the Buckingham Palace Declaration and joined United for Wildlife's Transport Taskforce in April this year.

IATA estimates the illegal wildlife trade to be worth as much as \$23bn a year.

Meanwhile, IATA's Live Animal Regulations provide a useful framework for airlines working in the sector and its CEIV Live Animals certification "establishes baseline standards to improve the level of competency, infrastructure and quality management", IATA says.

Air Canada was the first airline to achieve the certification; along with London Heathrow Airport's Animal Reception Centre, the carrier was chosen to pilot the initiative, which was launched in April 2018.

CEIV "works well for handlers and airlines with bespoke hubs because the whole process is regimented", McMullen says.

But for a broker such as Intradco, the variables change all the time, especially in relation to which airports, warehouses, airlines or aircraft are being used.

'The key thing to understand about live animal transport is that a variety of expertise is needed'

Charlie McMullen, Intradco

At the time of writing, Intradco was visiting Boeing in Seattle to see the new Boeing 777-8F and provide feedback on how the aircraft could be improved to cater for live animal shipments.

"Factors like humidity, ventilation and lighting are important, and we hope this meeting will allow some extra insight into what engineering innovations Boeing could implement to improve overall welfare for animals flying in future Boeing aircraft," McMullen says.

Welfare work

When it comes to the care of live animals, one of the most important things an airport can do is select partners who will value and safeguard their welfare, observes Joost van Doesburg, head of cargo at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, which has two animal hotels run by carrier Air France-KLM-Martinair and handler dnata.

The Air France-KLM-Martinair Cargo Animal Hotel at Schiphol features specially trained animal attendants and an on-call vet.

Dnata's centre, meanwhile, facilitates a Border Inspection Point for live animals.

"The most common type of animal we see here at Schiphol are horses," van Doesburg continues. "We also see a lot of exotic fish, along with pets such as cats and dogs."



Photo: Amsterdam Airport Schiphol

Van Doesburg: "Partners must share our values"

BIP: business as usual...

A SIGNIFICANT PART of the UK's live animal transport infrastructure is Stansted Border Inspection Post (BIP), which is located less than an hour from Newmarket Racecourse by road, making it especially handy for equine transport.

But the BIP at Stansted Airport is currently "in limbo", says Instone Air, managing director Jeremy Instone. Instone Air is the majority shareholder in the facility.

Manchester Airports Group (MAG) is selling the north side of Stansted Airport, where the BIP is located, and the area will be razed and redeveloped.

So, Instone says, the BIP is looking for a new site – preferably on the south side, which is the cargo side of the airport. The move could therefore be good for the BIP, but a lot depends on MAG.

However: "It takes time to design, build, approve, get finance and so on, so it's business as usual for the moment," Instone stresses.

→ Another hub for live animal transport is located at Liege Airport, whose Horse Inn offers a round-the-clock veterinary team, among other benefits.

More than 3,000 horses pass through the facility by road or air every year and it is an approved EU Border Inspection Post.

However, building a live animal centre at an airport does not guarantee success, McMullen points out.

“You need connectivity, lanes that can benefit from that centre,” he says.

“For example, Liege has links with China, Africa and the US. The EU-US lane accounts for up to 60% of the European horse transport market by air – so the match of connectivity and demand has created the right conditions for Liege to become a world-leading equine hub.”

At animal transport specialist Instone Air, managing director Jeremy Instone agrees.

“The only freighter service from the UK to the US is FedEx out of Stansted to Indianapolis, whereas Liege, Amsterdam and Luxembourg have scheduled flights to New York, Los Angeles and Miami,” all important destinations for equine events, Instone says.

Plus, he notes: “Liege is freighter friendly, open 24 hours a day and has no noise ban – so we can send charter aircraft through there without restrictions. We use Liege as one of our hubs.”

Transatlantic links

Air Canada Cargo’s twice-weekly 767F flights from Toronto to Liege, which began in March 2023, are among the services that use the Belgian airport’s Horse Inn.

Steve Harvey, manager, business development specialist sales – cargo at Air Canada Cargo, says: “Its central location means it supports Belgium, the Netherlands and France.

“Europe’s relationship with Canada is very strong too, in terms of the equine business. A lot of that business originates in Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK, and transits through Liege – which, as a 24/7 airport, lends itself to freighter operations.”

Besides Liege, Air Canada Cargo also uses Frankfurt with its Animal Lounge.

Through the carrier’s network, flights from Europe can connect to North America (Miami) and South America (Bogotá, Quito and Lima).

Its main equine business is on routes into Canada, along with Miami.

While it has always had a Live Animals department, the airline began moving live animals on freighters only at the start of 2023.

“In September 2023, we carried out our first horse charter, between Toronto and Calgary. This was a key milestone for us,” Harvey says.

Photo: Intradco Global



A number of airports are now established as world-leading specialist hubs for equine transportation

The move comprised two charter flights on consecutive days, the first carrying 16 horses and the second 13.

Naturally, Air Canada Cargo places the health and wellbeing of its equine passengers top of the agenda.

“Every care and attention is taken to ensure the movement is as stress-free and comfortable as possible for these first-class passengers,” Harvey says, highlighting the

carrier’s brand-new horse stalls and thorough staff training programme.

Grooms accompanying horses on Air Canada Cargo flights are also held to high standards; they must pass a security check and complete online training about the aircraft.

“As with all cargo, a core element to the level of care provided really comes from a love of what you are transporting,” van Doesburg says.



Travelling in style

HONG KONG AIR Cargo Terminals Ltd (HACTL) has added an ‘Animal Limo’ to its live animal handling facilities.

The custom-built vehicle enables smaller animals and pets to travel between SuperTerminal 1 and aircraft in a comfortable environment.

Air conditioning ensures a steady ambient temperature while soundproofing spares the creatures the stress of a noisy apron.

HACTL’s Paws Track programme includes six critical control points: the Live Animals Inspection Area; South Live Animals Handling Centre; North Live Animals Handling Centre; Horse Handling Centre 1; Horse Handling Centre 2; and its Live Animals Container – now including the latest Animal Limo.

HACTL’s Live Animals Inspection Area has been relocated next to the Live Animals Handling Centre to improve efficiency.

Its Animals Handling Centres include dedicated areas for venomous, dangerous and poisonous animals; and its Horse Handling Centres have been improved with features such as new ventilation fans and extra capacity in case of a surge in demand.

IATA CEIV Live Animals certified, HACTL handles a wide range of creatures, including zoo animals, livestock and bloodstock.

It has been the handler for the Longines Masters of Hong Kong since its launch in 2013.

This has involved caring for more than 60 arriving competition horses, and their re-export after the competition’s finish, each year.



Megan Ramsay, Freelance Journalist, meganlouiseramsay@gmail.com

Joining the dots in Africa

Growth in cross-border e-commerce has been one factor driving air cargo demand, investment, and connectivity. But the development of the market and the infrastructure to deliver it varies across Africa, reports Megan Ramsay

There has been significant growth in cross-border e-commerce across the Middle East and Africa region, especially when it comes to imports, and this is one factor driving air cargo demand, investment and connectivity, although the development of the market and the infrastructure to deliver it varies across Africa.

Menzies Aviation's Charles Wyley, executive vice president for Middle East, Africa and Asia (MEAA), notes that in

Africa, particularly, "e-commerce has long been touted as the continent's next high-growth market, driven by a large, relatively young, and tech-savvy population, increasing mobile internet usage, and a rapidly growing middle-class".

Africa's largest airline organisation, Ethiopian Airlines Group, believes this time has now arrived, and in February inaugurated a state-of-the-art e-commerce logistics facility at Bole International Airport, aiming "to set the e-commerce industry in the continent to follow the global trend".

The newly built facility, which is dedicated to e-commerce, mail and courier logistics services, "is aimed at bridging logistical gaps and positioning Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as the cross-border e-commerce logistics hub for Africa and beyond", Ethiopian says. The 15,000 sqm facility, an investment of US\$55 million, boasts a capacity to handle 150,000 tonnes annually and will offer services including consolidation, deconsolidation, sortation, repacking, labelling – also enabling customers to "track and trace their shipments, effortlessly".