

ABC targets pharma traffic growth while charters up

AirBridgeCargo Airlines (ABC) is building infrastructure as it aims to become a major player in pharmaceutical logistics.

The Moscow-headquartered carrier is continuing to enhance its capability for the transportation of pharma products, which it expects to be generating between five per cent and 10 per cent of its business by the end of the year.



Last November, it became the first airline in Russia and only the 7th in the world to be awarded IATA's Center of Excellence for Validators in Pharmaceutical

Logistics (CEIV Pharma) certification for the global transportation of pharma products via its cargo hub in **Sheremetyevo International Airport**.

Meeting this important industry standard is also a further milestone in the strategic partnership between **Volga-Dnepr Group** and its hub, which is focused on long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation to develop the airport's role as an international cargo hub in Moscow.

Joint compliance with the CEIV standards by both the airline and airport it says is a tangible step towards raising the airfreight market for pharma shipments in Russia to a new level, delivering a globally-recognised level of service for customers shipping temperature-sensitive medical goods.

ABC's general director, Sergey Lazarev, says the airline's ultimate goal is to become one of the



leading carriers of pharma products for customers across the globe. "Good health is one of our core corporate values so we clearly understand the importance of this certification. IATA CEIV is a confirmation that our quality procedures for the transportation of pharma products, including temperature sensitive goods, fully comply with IATA's standards.

"Every player in the pharma supply chain must follow strict procedures to ensure products reach consumers in good time and in perfect condition. AirBridgeCargo was able to complete its preparation for CEIV certification in just four months and as part of this we have also delivered specialist pharma training to 200 of our employees," he says.

Leading ABC's focus on pharma is Andrey Andreev (pictured), the airline's vice president for Europe, and now also sales director for global pharma.

He says: "For us, CEIV certification is the entry ticket to the market. It proves the airline is on the right track in respect of the pharma handling rules and regulations set down by IATA. For our customers it is a good sign of our intent but we also recognise that we are working in a global industry an on specific lanes where there are also specific local requirements we have to meet. And, of course, customers have their own strict internal rules and standards," he comments.

As an all-cargo airline, ABC already has an important advantage, Andreev believes: "If you look at the market, 80 per cent of pharma shipments still move as general cargo and the remaining 20 per cent is carried within an active or passive cool chain environment.

"It's true that a good percentage of this business is carried in the bellyholds of passenger aircraft but we believe a lot of pharma customers will be attracted to working with us as an all-cargo airline because for us cargo always comes first and they want that level of assurance."

ABC's fleet and network also add to its appeal for pharma customers. Its Boeing 747-8 Freighters offer an advanced temperature-control capability, including being able to create separate onboard climate zones.

The airline is also already a prominent player on the major pharma tradelanes, notably connecting Europe and North America as well as the growing Southeast Asia market where it's already well established in big and growing pharma markets such as China, Korea and Japan.

ABC is also looking at new initiatives to help differentiate its 'abc Pharma' product offering. One of these is set to address the critical subject of monitoring temperature excursions for pharma products during the transportation process.

It is currently evaluating the use of data loggers that enable customers on the ground to track the temperature of their shipment in real-time.

Charter traffic growth

Meanwhile, ABC saw Boeing 747 Freighter charter demand grow 47 per cent in 2016, in addition to continued growth of scheduled operations.

Its latest flights were on behalf of **DHL Global Forwarding** for **Evatec**, a producer of thin film coating solutions used in wireless communications, advanced packaging, MEMS, optoelectronics, high precision optics and power devices.

ABC delivered a series of seven-tonne off-size wooden boxes containing machine tools from Europe to Asia with the first flight from Amsterdam to Hong Kong via its Sheremetyevo hub.

This was followed two weeks later by a second delivery originating in Zurich flown on a Frankfurt - Moscow - Hong Kong route.

ABC transported 80 tonnes of machinery for the mass production of thin film coatings to support Evatec's growing business in China.

Lazarev says: "This is also a strong reflection of the growing demand we are seeing for Boeing 747F charter services, which we are able to meet due to the continued expansion of our 747 fleet."

ABC's fleet of 16 747s includes four 747-400ERFs, three 747-400Fs and nine 747-8Fs.



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