STRONG INDUSTRY FUTURE FOR FREIGHTERS, ATLAS AIR CCO SAYS

News / Airlines

Freighters have a secure future in air cargo despite the rise of bellyhold capacity, according to **Atlas Air Worldwide's** (AAW) executive vice-president and chief commercial officer, Michael Steen.

Speaking to Air Cargo Week at the Air Cargo Americas conference in Miami from 4-6 November, he says the US freighter aircraft lessor has a positive outlook for all-cargo aircraft.

Steen says: "There are lots of headlines of the death of freighters, and the business going south, but this is not true. The global economy is growing and airfreight represents 35 per cent of the value and that will continue.

"There is also the expansion of e-commerce, which is all airfreight. It is massive with the likes of Alibaba in China and Amazon in the US. If you look at what is happening in e-commerce and the electronic capabilities we have, it is very much going to play to airfreight and freighters as well, as that is how integrators are investing."

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Globally he says according to International Air Transport Association (IATA) figures, freighters carry 60 per cent of freight, with 40 per cent on bellyhold: “I would argue it is changing and going above 60 per cent, as in IATA’s numbers we dont have integrators. I argue it will stay for a longer period of time. Freighters serve markets where the freighter is needed and it is not an either or, and is certainly not as dire as people think.”

He is positive about the future: “Global trade is growing and everyone is saying airfreight is under pressure, this is not necessarily true as globally airfreight is growing.” He points to the good performance of the express segment which is growing very fast and is a market AAW is very active in.

Steen feels AAW’s extensive network and global coverage are a competitive advantage: “We are very active in general airfreight market across the world and last year served 124 countries and 430 destinations and that global footprint is unprecedented in the world. Combined with we serve the growing market segments it has helped us grow.”

The industry’s main challenge Steen feels is making sure new growing markets brought on by different buying behaviours are served.

AAW has the world’s largest freighter fleet and this month it took delivery of its 67th freighter.

“We are quite confident about our future and I am confident about the future of airfreight too,” Steen concludes.

25 NOVEMBER 2015

SOURCE: AIRCARGOWEEK
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https://virginia.50skyshades.com/news/airlines/strong-industry-future-for-freighters-atlas-air-cco-says

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