Air Operations

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Introduction

In emergency situations, depending on the nature of disaster, accessing program areas or communities can be a big challenge. Air transport is very common and convenient in these circumstances, but can be very expensive. Collaboration and participating in the cluster approach helps reduce overhead costs related to air operations for organizations. Some common sources of air transport for humanitarian organization in emergencies are:

- commercial and aircraft charter companies: e.g. DHL, UPS, FedEx, Atlas Air, Cargolux;
- other humanitarian organizations: e.g. Samaritan’s Purse, IFRC, Mission Aviation Fellowship, Air Serv International, Aviation Sans Frontières;
- common services coordinators: e.g. United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) or ECHO Flight

Humanitarian organizations are regularly asked to organize chartering of long-range ad-hoc cargo flights and their downloading at the airport of entry. One of the main elements to be aware of is the requirement for a licensed freight forwarder. A freight forwarder can provide services at both departure and arrival airports, but during emergencies, these services are not necessarily available at the arrival airports (airports of entry). This topic will therefore also cover the more important issues relating to shipping of air cargo and assume that a Logistics officer is in charge to coordinate the arrival of the aircraft, even if a freight forwarder and/or a ground handling agent is involved.

Developing a Plan of Action (Air Plan)

Normally, an air operation Plan of Action (POA) is part of an organisation’s logistics plan, but can also be published as a stand-alone document.

Generally, the logistics plan defines the logistics requirements and actions needed to achieve the objectives established by the project managers. However, the scope of the air operations POA can extend beyond the scope of the organisation’s requirement because it may include partnering /collaboration with other organisations or support to other organisations. If this is the case, the air operations PAO should be considered as a stand alone document.

The air operations POA should justify the need to charter air assets and provide a rationale for the decision to select one or other of the air operation concept (models). The air operations POA should include the following:

- specify the concept: identify the airport(s) of entry, staging base and the follow-on modes of transport (i.e., truck, rail, train, boat and/or regional aircraft);
- where an airlift service will be the follow-on transport, justify the reason for this approach; provide specifications of aircraft categories and types; identify the operations base and delivery airfields; identify action officer for chartering of aircraft;
- include specifications for and actions to be taken to acquire ground support equipment; identify action officer;
- where a passenger service is required, elaborate guidelines for passenger acceptability; i.e. who will be allowed to use the commuter service?
- identify the resources and deficiencies at the operations and/or staging bases and destination airfields; i.e., security, ground handling, fuel, communications, infrastructure, storage, etc. Identify action officer to correct deficiencies;
where a helicopter operation is proposed, identify operations base, pick-up points and helipads and their resources and deficiencies (e.g., fuel, ATC, communications, security, etc.). Where, for security reasons, helicopters cannot overnight at the pick-up points, identify secure bases and their resources and deficiencies;

- indicate the minimum period for which the chartered aircraft will be required;
- estimate required fuel quantities and availability and any required actions to secure fuel provisioning; identify action officer;
- determine the required staff and their locations; identify action officer for recruitment.
- define responsibilities and deployment staff required.
- determine relationship and interface between different entities involved.
- describe reporting lines and procedures.
- indicate the required operational support equipment, including specifications and procurement needs, inclusive of the office and aviation operational required equipment; identify action officer;
- propose the estimated cost of the required air operation.

Types of Contract

There are two distinct forms of air transport contracting: Air Freight Service Agreements and Aircraft Charter Agreements.

**Air Freight Service Agreements** are agreements where no aircraft are contracted, but where space is made available for cargo in the aircraft. Those agreements are generally based on a per metric ton/kilo basis and scheduled directly with commercial airlines or via freight forwarders. The authority to arrange air freight service agreements is generally delegated to the field. Due to complexity and cost, air freight service agreements should be checked to ensure the appropriate level of exposure to financial liabilities. Additionally, the reliability, legality, and safety of the chartered service should be examined. All these factors need to be reviewed to ensure air freight is the most appropriate form of transportation for the shipment in question.

**Aircraft Charter Agreements** are agreements where aircraft are chartered to perform air transport services and accomplish specific tasks in a specific environment during a specified period. The authority to arrange for aircraft charter agreements is not delegated to the field due to the high costs associated with these types contracts.

Types of Aircraft Available for Cargo and Passenger

The type of aircraft selected will depend on the needs identified and the mode of distribution. For example, air-drops in flooded and conflict environments require different assets than passenger movements to an established airport.

For additional information on aircraft:

- **Aircraft Types- Pictures and General Information**
- **Aircraft Characteristics- Payload Capacity**
- **Aircraft Characteristics- Payload/Range/Required runway**
- **Aircraft Characteristics- Payload Capacity and Volumes**

**Factors affecting the selection of an aircraft**

- type of product to be moved/number of passenger;
- function for which the aircraft is required for air drops, cargo movement, type of cargo, etc;
- availability of aircraft and cargo ground handling equipment;
- fuel availability (including fueling equipment);
- airstrips and airports - condition, length, access, operating hours etc;
- government regulations;
- weather;
- donor requirements;
- demand by potential users;
customs requirements;
- type of distribution plan; and
- available resources.

WFP Air Transport Manual on-Selecting the right aircraft.

Fuel

In a humanitarian emergency, the availability of aviation fuel is critical. Fuel provision plays an important part in logistics planning, particularly where large-scale air operations are envisaged. A fuel assessment should be undertaken as soon as possible. When it is evident that multiple actors will be operating out of the same airfields in the relief phase, and that fuel provision may pose a limiting factor, the appropriate research must be undertaken to ensure your logistics officer is thoroughly informed of the fuel situation, both present and projected, including available options. To permit rapid decision making in terms of selecting the air operations concept, general information should be collected on:

Fuel at the airport of entry

Normally, all international airports have provisions to refuel aircraft; however, demand may quickly exceed the supply and storage capacity. Local airport authorities should be able to indicate whether or not refueling could become a limiting factor. When in doubt, the chartering and flight planning process should take possible shortages into account - plan flights so that they do not have to refuel at the airport of entry.

Fuel at the operations base

In regional operations, the availability of fuel is a significant factor in selecting the operations’ base. Where local authorities cannot guarantee an adequate fuel supply, the possibility of cooperating with other humanitarian actors, such as ICRC and/or IFRC in establishing or identifying alternate fuel services could be pursued. Where the operations base is a military base, fuel may be readily available but administrative problems may arise in terms of the ability to purchase the necessary quantities. Moreover, verify whether or not the airport has the technical capacity to refuel the required aircraft (e.g. pressure fueling vs. gravity feed etc.) and the appropriate fuel.

Fuel at delivery airfields

If the delivery airfield is a rarely-used airfield, refueling may be a problem. The decision on whether or not to use these types of airfields is dependent on their distance from the operations’ base and the type of aircraft to be used for regional flights. In some cases, fuel can be stored locally but, wherever possible, this should be undertaken in cooperation with professional operators.

Fuel at helipads

Helicopters can operate from the operations’ base, provided it is in range of the affected area. The average flight range for a medium-sized helicopter carrying a maximum payload is 100 NM (185km). Where the distance from the operations’ base to the helipads is more than 100-120 NM, the following options must be considered:

- search for a helipad in the crisis area with refueling capacity;
- select a cargo pick-up point that is reachable by truck from which further dispatching by helicopter is possible. Helicopter pick-up points should be equipped with refueling services. If this is not the case the setting up of a fuel farm should be recommended in the report.

General Procedure in Air Cargo and Passenger Movement Coordination

In an emergency situation where there is centralized coordination of air transport through one entity, general procedures are put in place to facilitate efficient service provision.

The diagrams below depict the activity involved in an Air Coordination Centre (ACC) such as the one set up for Haiti after the earthquake in 2010. Typically, the ACC is established to manage the movement of transport aircraft into an airfield where the sheer volume of predicted aircraft movement is likely to overwhelm the airfield, render operations unsafe and/or limit its usefulness. In Haiti, pre-earthquake, the international airport in Port au Prince handled between 30 to 50 total aircraft movements. At the height of the operation the same airfield, using an ACC to manage parking slots and de-conflict the airspace was able to handle more than 500 aircraft movements in one day.

The ACC using manual, MS Excel based solutions, or web-based tools ensure that there is adequate separation between flights, that there is sufficient space on the airfield to park and offload and that there is adequate ground handling equipment and staff to do the offloading. Priorities are determined by the humanitarian priorities. The ACC is manned by aviators drawn from civil aviation, the military (often the first responders) and humanitarian air transport management specialists. Allocated slots and flight details are communicated to air traffic control (ATC) and the civil aviation authorities responsible for the air space in which the airfield is located.

The activity is essentially a coordination activity which is dependent on communications with many players.
Diagram 1: General Procedures Cargo Request / Movement

Key: ACC: Air Coordination Centre; ATC: Air Traffic Control; Rep: Representative; Slot Requests/Allocations - essentially requests for permission to land and park for offloading - are applied for by the aircraft operators.

Cargo

Cargo Reservation Procedures

- Confirmed reservation on scheduled flights shall be issued on a first come, first serve basis;
- in case of limited space, management will set the priorities;
- the cargo aircraft schedule will be issued within an agreed period of time;
- the final cargo list will be distributed to all concerned at an agreed local time and day; and
- the Cargo Movement Request form must be fully completed and submitted to the relevant officer. The request shall include:
  - weight
  - volume
  - dimensions
  - type of packing
  - number of items
  - contact details
- *(Current and accurate information is essential)*
- cargo reservation can normally be made in person, by email or fax;
- inform customers regarding the air service at the time of cargo reservation and on request in accordance with the Customer Service guidance;
- commitments: each person requesting cargo space should be aware of their responsibility of compliance to the country customs and transport arrangements at both departure and arrival points;
- timely notification of customers of known delays, change of cargo schedule or cancellations;
- the reservation office must offer timely notification of the status of the cargo reservation;
- the cargo should be delivered to the dispatch office or airport cargo office an agreed number of days before departure. It needs to be in accordance with the request and supporting paperwork and be properly packed. It will only be accepted if the delivering person is a known or approved point of contact;
- special rules and procedures apply when cargo contains dangerous goods items. If the goods are shippable in accordance with the IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations, the Shipper’s Declaration specifying type of dangerous goods and additional details needs to be submitted to the Cargo Reservation Office.
• pouches with important official documents/mail/letters should be sealed and not weigh more than the restricted weight. The measurements should not be more than what is officially provided, and must be sealed and signed by the delivery officer. No currency, contraband or dangerous cargo, solid items or ornaments are to be placed in the pouches.
• the logisitician should verify rules for cancellation of cargo reservations and the condition of cancellation, i.e. fee or penalty.

See Cargo Movement Request form in Annexes.

Packing and Labelling

The consignor/shipper has the responsibility to arrange for proper packaging. This should be done in accordance with the specific regulations and recommendations in the IATA TACT and, in the case of hazardous cargo, with the IATA DGR. In addition, certain goods demand special treatment (cold chain, fragile items, etc). Aircraft capacity is limited so it is advisable to verify that shipments with oversized dimensions fit into the plane.

It is important to ensure that shipments are properly labelled and contain the full style address of the consignee. Consignments are often sent through transit hubs or air cargo platforms, where large amounts of cargo are handled. Special handling signs like fragile or up/down, protect the cargo and must be clearly visible from at least two sides of the package. Besides the name and address of the consignee, the goods should be marked with the commodity tracking number and the description of the goods.

Dangerous Goods

Dangerous Goods (DG) are all goods that could be a hazard risk to passengers, aircraft, baggage and cargo. It is in the interest of safety to prevent accidents and to increase the awareness of the dangers involved in the air transport of hazardous goods - corrosives, explosives, gases, anything classified as a firearm, etc.

The procedures to transport DG require a Freight Forwarder certified for DG packing, labelling and documenting. When DG are carried on board, the Person-In-Charge of the aircraft must be informed of the precise nature and stowage location of such cargo and of the recommended precautions to be taken in handling. All dangerous goods must be accompanied by a NOTOC (Notification to Captain Documentation or manifest) and a Shippers Declaration form. Precautionary actions have to be taken when carrying DG, for example:

• ensure that the articles or substances are not forbidden for transport by air;
• determine tracking number, proper shipping name, class or division followed by the subsidiary risk (where applicable);
• ensure that the packing requirements relevant to the article or substance are met;
• ensure the proper marking and labelling of each package of dangerous goods;
• the crew reserve the right to refuse any dangerous goods that are not declared on the dangerous goods transport document; and
• "Shipper's Declaration" which includes proper shipping name, class/division, packing group, number of packages, net quantity and any other applicable information.
• Some countries over flight clearances can change if there is hazardous material on the aircraft Early communication is essential

For further information on provisions for transporting lithium metal and lithium batteries, please see the following document from IATA - 2020 Lithium Battery Guidance Document

Customs

It is possible for humanitarian organizations to negotiate facilitation measures with the host government Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the import of humanitarian commodities into a country affected by a humanitarian emergency. Facilitation measures involve the application of simplified customs procedures in order to speed up the delivery of international humanitarian assistance, including deliveries provided by military, civil defence and civil protection assets. Despite the existence of numerous international agreements few countries have ratified them, thus procedures for obtaining duty and tax free waivers vary from country to country. Furthermore, despite the existence of facilitation measures, normal import procedures may continue to apply.

Facilitation measures are granted only where humanitarian organizations comply with import procedures. Therefore, the organization must take note of the local procedures and ensure that all concerned parties are informed. This is to ensure that consignors and carriers prepare the necessary documents for importing humanitarian commodities. If a logistics cluster has been activated further customs information can be found on the Logistics Cluster website.

Security

If cargo belonging to another organization has to be transported, the client agency must deliver the cargo to the agreed-to freight forwarder for proper identification, documentation and manifestation.

Only cargo properly labeled and delivered to the chartered aircraft shall be accepted.

To avoid possible tampering with the cargo after it leaves the logistics warehouse or hub and during transport to the airport and prior to loading, the consignor must adopt a system to prevent this from occurring such as sealing vehicles carrying the cargo or assigning an escort.

Before loading cargo onto the aircraft, all cargo must be visually inspected to determine whether the box, bag, container and/or parcel have been tampered with.

Passengers

Generic Passenger Check-In Procedures

• Passenger check-in is carried out at the airport, unless passengers have been informed otherwise.
• Check-in deadlines may vary from station to station due to local conditions. The check-in normally opens one hour before scheduled departure and closes 30 minutes prior to departure.
• The passenger lists and tickets need to be ready before start of check-in.
• Passengers travelling on a chartered aircraft must carry valid travel documents. It is the passenger’s responsibility to hold necessary travel documents required for the whole journey including transfer stations and final destination.
• Travel document are documents the passenger need for his / her journey:
• organization official ID card
• ticket
• security clearance (if required)
• passport and visa (if required)
• The passenger must be present during check-in to ensure that the documents belong to the traveler.
• When the passenger arrives at the check-in counter with the ticket, please check the following:
  • flight number
  • date
  • routing
  • ticket expiry date
  • name
  • valid organizational photo ID card
• Passenger bag weights and dimensions should be checked. In some situations excessive baggage can impact aircraft performance.
• Check passport/ID’s expiry date, photo in ID/passport to correspond with the holder presenting the ID and name in ID to correspond with name in ticket.
• Issue boarding pass entitling the passenger to enter the aircraft. Seating is on the basis of free seating unless otherwise advised by the flight crew.
• Confirmed passengers arriving after closing time may lose the right to their seat as stand-by passengers will be confirmed after deadline of check-in.
• Stand-by passengers will be allocated a seat on first come first served basis. The first stand-by passenger arriving at the airport will be considered the number one on the stand-by list.
• Passengers arriving after deadline might be accepted on-board provided this poses no threat to flight safety or on-time performance/departure. This will be at the discretion of the flight coordinator.
• No passengers are allowed on-board without a ticket, this concerns all passenger categories.

See: Passenger Movement Request

Planning and Coordinating Air Transport in Emergencies

Passenger and cargo movement must be carefully planned and coordinated to maximize the limited available capacity and ensure that movement costs are not unnecessarily high due to flights not being fully loaded.

Aircraft are primarily used in situations where weak infrastructure, poor security, or lack of water access inhibits other modes of transportation.

In sudden on-set emergencies such as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, humanitarian organizations prioritize speed over cost in order to save lives. Without coordination, organizations may inadvertently respond to the same needs, duplicate efforts, compete for limited resources and transport assets and thereby drive up transport costs. In response to such challenges the Logistics Cluster encourages humanitarian logisticians to collaborate and coordinate in emergencies to eliminate duplication.

Advantages of central coordination of air assets includes:

• reduced overheads;
• access to a wider area as a result of special permissions centrally coordinated;
• more efficient utilization of the aircraft – less down time, always fully loaded, etc.; and
• better usage of “on the ground” labourers – on/off loading, security staff, etc.

Central coordination of air assets leads to:

• coordinated land transport to and from the airfields;
• fewer administration procedures for each participant;
• increased information sharing – air field quality, warehouses etc.;
• cost efficient use of:
  • labourers
  • fuel
  • warehouses
  • security
• enables those organizations that are unable to charter an aircraft, for whatever reason, to operate at reasonable cost.

Different air operations concepts can facilitate air coordination. Air Operations Concept (Models) The picture below illustrates air distribution of cargo into a crisis region.
Air Operations in Emergencies

Background / Introduction

In 2002, the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) made up of United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) agreed that “United Nations chartered flight operations should be divided into two categories: peacekeeping and humanitarian/other”. In 2003, discussions among members of the CEB on improving safety and security of the United Nations air services resulted in a decision of HLCM to give to WFP “the role as the agency responsible for administering all United Nations humanitarian and other air operations (excluding peacekeeping) as of 1 January 2004” and “for establishing a suitable independent air safety unit” to ensure both the efficiency and safety of these operations.


Global Logistics Cluster/ UNHAS relationship

UNHAS's relationship with the Logistics Cluster lead agency is supportive; UNHAS is a tool of the logistics cluster lead agency and organizations participating in the logistics cluster. However, UNHAS does not report to the Logistics Cluster; once an individual UNHAS is established in the field, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)/ Regional Coordinator(RC) will set up a Users' Group Committee (UGC) in the country, consisting of representatives of NGOs and United Nations system organizations to give guidance on the management of air services. Generally, the RC/HC is designated as its chairperson. When the RC/HC is not the chairperson, he/she is kept informed of the outcomes of the UGC by the Chief Air Transport Officer (CATO).

Launching, Financing, Managing and Terminating UNHAS operations

WFP manages the United Nations Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS), to serve and provide the Humanitarian Community with safe and reliable air transport assets during humanitarian emergencies. UNHAS operations are launched upon either a request from the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) or by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) to the WFP.

An assessment of the possibilities to launch the requested air services is done by WFP and the assessment report is presented to the HCT/Humanitarian Coordinator for their decision.

The assessment reports include:

- an evaluation of the transport requirement with the expected passengers and cargo;
- an overview of the current existing air service providers operating in the area;
- a gap analysis;
- a technical feasibility study inclusive of the National Civil Aviation Authorities rules and regulations;
- a risk assessment and threat analysis;
- the initial donor response to the proposals.

WFP will appoint sufficient qualified aviation staff, as per the United Nations Aviation Standards for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Air Transport Operations (UNAVSTADs), to run the air operation and will charter the required types and number of aircraft.

WFP has the mandate to manage air services for and on behalf of the humanitarian community. Which enables the possibility of the initial funds for air service operations to be drawn from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

UNHAS is managed by WFP, but is for the use of the humanitarian community as a whole. The interests of the humanitarian community are represented by a user group. WFP will invite the Head of the leading UN client agency or the rotating chair lead to form and chair the UNHAS user group committee. The terms of reference for the user group is limited to administrative decisions and will include:

- establishing administrative policies and issuing administrative directives detailing eligibility and priority of passenger and cargo on the UNHAS aircraft, and ensuring compliance with WFP management and operational policies and procedures;
- deciding on the destinations to be served;
- ensuring compliance with established procedures for the safe and efficient handling of passengers and cargo;
- ensuring timely settlement of dues to WFP;
- monitoring matters relating to the quality of service; and
- forecasting future usage and requirements in order to assist WFP to ensure the timely contracting / release of the appropriate aircraft.

WFP Aviation is responsible for all aspects of the operation of the aircraft, and is to keep the user group advised of the technical, legal, and contractual limitations. It is vital that the user group and UNHAS work seamlessly together.

Each UNHAS operation has a agreed upon exit strategy that will be included in all special operation documentation. UNHAS operations are terminated either because of greatly reduced air transport requirements, the emergence of a safe and reliable local air carrier, resumption of road transport, improvement in security situation, or due to the lack of funding.
Logistics Officer Responsibilities

General

At the airport of entry, the consignee is represented by the Logistics Officer (Log Off) who is supported by the Country Office (CO)/National Office (NO). The responsibilities can be discharged to ground handling agents or clearing agents, but the Log Off should monitor their activities. The paragraphs below summarize the most important actions to be taken either by the Log Off, the ground handling agents or clearing agents. It should be taken into account that other actors such as the airport emergency team (AET) and/or donated ground handling teams may be involved in the operation.

Preparing the Aircraft’s Arrival

Initiation

Immediately after his/her appointment, the Log Off should be briefed on the air operations plan of action (POA) and those actions which have already been taken to support the air operations. In the event that insufficient or no actions were taken, the Log Off should go through all the necessary steps to obtain an overview of the air situation and take complementary actions as required.

Assessments

Has the necessary data of the air assessment process regarding the airport of entry been collected? Have the airport authorities been advised of the intended WFP aviation field operations (AFO).

Fuel

If fuel is not available, make sure that the charterer and the carrier have been informed.

If fuel is available, have any arrangements been made with one of the fuel companies? If no, take the necessary actions on refueling and invoicing modalities. Note that the carrier has to pay for the fuel but if the fuel company finds the carrier not credit-worthy, a local arrangement can be made. Such an eventuality should be included in the contract.

Remark:

Some carriers have a strategy to refuel en route at cheaper refueling points and should be allowed to do so, providing the flight schedule is not jeopardized.

Facilitation Measures

Verify whether facilitation measures on import taxes, VAT, over flight taxes, landing taxes and parking fees have been granted. If this is not the case, inform the CO/NO and advise to contact the national authorities. Waivers on landing taxes and parking fees can be directly negotiated with the airport authorities who point the Log Off to the relevant ministry dealing waivers. Facilitation measures should be approved before arrival of the aircraft.

Ground Handling

- If a freight forwarder has been contracted to ship the commodities from the point of departure to the consignee, ground handling and customs clearance is the responsibility of the freight forwarder. In this case, the Log Off shall not be involved in the contracting but the Log Off shall monitor the performance of the freight forwarder.
- Without the involvement of a Freight Forwarder, the Log Off shall be responsible for organizing the unloading of the aircraft. One of the first steps is to check whether a ground handling agent is available with the necessary equipment to unload the aircraft. If it is the case, check their abilities and credibility. If reliable, advise the Logistics Coordinator to make a contractual arrangement, preferably by using the IATA SGHA.
- If no commercial capabilities are available, verify other options. These can consist of military unloading teams and/or airport emergency teams (AET), as was the case during the Tsunami in 2004-5.
- Normally, the task of a military ground handling team will be limited to unloading the aircraft. Further actions will be required to clear the ramp and to transport the commodities to the transit storage for customs clearance. This can be done by a clearing agent. If no such clearing agent is available, transport should be organized locally, possibly by the CO/NO.
- If no ground handling or other support teams are available, the aircraft may have to be unloaded manually. If this is the case, the CO/NO should be invited to provide the necessary manpower. In addition, the charterer, consignor and the carrier should be informed about the absence of unloading equipment.
- The Log Off should receive a copy of the shipping documents as soon as available. The documents are verified and copied to those concerned, including the freight forwarder and clearing agent (if applicable). In case of shortcoming, the Log Off shall ask the consignor to correct or complement the documents. In case of dangerous cargo, the Log Off informs the ground handling agent or the team which takes care of the unloading. Details of available aircraft ground handling equipment should be confirmed.

Transit Storage

The purpose of transit storage is to keep the consignment in a safe place until the customs release the commodities.

The Log Off should verify whether transit storage is required and available. If no arrangements have been made and indications are that problems may arise, take the necessary actions. If required, ask support of the CO/NO.

Customs

Verify whether special import procedures are in place. Make sure that the consignors, consignees and the CO/NO are informed of these procedures. Verify whether the goods have to be cleared by a freight forwarder, clearing agent or any other entity, such as the AET. If CO/NO assigns a clearing agent, the airport and customs authorities should be informed of the identity of the clearing agent so that these authorities can notify the agent of the arrival of goods. An official notification will also prevent non-appointed clearing agents claiming and misappropriating goods on behalf of CO/NO.
If no such system is in place, discuss the clearing modalities and verify whether the customs are aware of any facilitation measures. The Log Off should stay on good terms with customs to ensure that the cargo is cleared without delay.

Security

The Log Off verifies the application of security measures at the airport. Normally, security controls should be established to limit the access to restricted areas. Such areas normally include the ramp, the passenger departure areas between the screening points and the aircraft, the baggage make-up areas, cargo sheds, mail centers, airside cleaning and catering premises.

If security control systems are in place, the Log Off should obtain a permit and ensure that all CO/NO personnel involved in the aircraft unloading activities obtain the necessary authorization to enter the restricted area, if required. Communicate early with the airport to ensure any required training is scheduled and documented for access to the restricted areas.

If no security control system is in place, the Log Off will take measures to prevent unauthorized access to aircraft and consignments.

Aircraft’s Scheduling

Timing

As soon as general data on chartering and flight planning are available, the Log Off should take the necessary steps to obtain a slot time and a parking space. The Log Off should take note of the coordinates of the most important actors, being the charterer, the consignor, the operator (carrier) and the consignee. If a slot time has been assigned and/or confirmed by the airport authorities, the Log Off will inform all concerned. This is also the case if any special flight planning or ATC procedures apply.

The Log Off should receive the confirmed ‘Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) as soon as the aircraft is airborne. He/she informs all concerned (freight forwarder, ground handling/unloading team, clearing agent, and refuelling agent) and verifies with the ATC whether a flight-plan has been received. If unloading is done manually, the CO/NO should be informed of the time at which the unloading personnel should be available. Depending on ATC capabilities a phone call from the departure airport, when the aircraft takes off, will often be the most reliable method to determine the arrival time. If coordinated, the aircraft can often radio the arrival coordinator when they are 15-30 minutes from landing to ensure a smooth turn around of cargo.

Aircraft Arrival

At the arrival of the aircraft, the Log Off verifies all cargo documents and oversees the unloading of the aircraft.

Refuelling is the responsibility of the PIC, but special caution should be taken if unloading is still in progress. A fire-fighting crew and/or equipment should be readily available to intervene. Many airports do not allow passengers on the airplane during refueling and this can cause delays if not properly coordinated.

Once unloaded, the consignment should immediately be evacuated from the ramp and handed over to the proper entity for customs clearance. The Log Off shall make sure that the customs receive all required documents, possibly through the freight forwarder, or the clearing agent.

The Log Off monitors the customs clearance process and makes sure that he/she is available to answer possible questions or provide supplementary information. The Log Off makes sure that transportation is available for transporting the commodities to the relevant warehouse.

The Log Off shall file all customs documents, including cargo manifests, in order to be able to trace and justify the movement of goods, if required.

Logistics Officer at Staging Base

Structure

The Log Off is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the arrival, handling and unloading of aircraft carrying humanitarian commodities. In addition, the Log Off shall take the necessary actions for transit storage and pursuing the onward transport of the commodities.

Aircraft Arrival at Staging Base

The Log Off coordinates the arrival and handling of the cargo aircraft with the local airfield authorities and informs all concerned of the aircraft operations procedures at the staging base. These include slot allocation, aircraft handling, unloading, refueling, storage, and further forwarding of the cargo. The Log Off acts as follows:

- informs local authority of aircraft arrival and monitors reception and unloading;
- verifies cargo documents;
- verifies condition of goods and reports to the Consigner in case of damage; and
- monitors safe transit storage of commodities.

Follow-on Shipping

- inquire on priorities and destination for follow-on shipping;
- coordinate with charterer and carriers on scheduling of follow-on shipping;
- depending on the mode of transport, prepare the necessary shipping documents; and
- inform relevant logistics of client agencies of follow-on shipping schedule.

If follow-on shipping is done by air

The Log Off coordinates the scheduling of the aircraft with the carriers and Log Off at the relevant destination airfields making sure that the right commodities are shipped to the right destination with proper documentation;

- inquire with relevant authorities on acceptability of regional aircraft at delivery airfields;
• agree with carrier and charterer on flight scheduling;
• inform Log Off at destination airfield of ETA;
• monitor loading and inform Log Off at destination airfield as soon as the aircraft is airborne; and
• the Log Off registers and files incoming and outgoing flights and makes regular activity reports to the CO/NO as requested.

Goods Received Note and Claims

• As soon as the commodities have been received by the consignee, the Log Off will complete the goods received note and send back to the consignor, copy to the charterer.
• If there are any claims about the conditions of the goods, or in the case of serious damage, the Log Off will try to find out how the damage occurred. If it appears that the carrier could be blamed, the PIC will be informed. Damage can also occur during the unloading of the aircraft and it should be decided whether further investigation is required. The Log Off should tick the appropriate box in the goods received note and inform the chartering unit and the consignor of the occurrence.

The Log Off should familiarise themselves with the Carrier’s responsibilities and the Aircrew’s responsibilities.

Governing regulations

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the global trade organisation of air transport companies, representing 94 percent of international scheduled air traffic. IATA publishes The Air Cargo Tariff (TACT), a manual containing relevant information regarding the transport by air such as rates and tariffs, airport facilities, etc. The TACT is a working tool for IATA agents when processing international air shipments and all carriers and freight forwarders should use the latest edition as reference manual. Another important publication published by IATA is The dangerous goods regulations (DGR), the rules used by airlines for the transport of dangerous and restricted cargo. The packaging, labelling and the establishment of the dangerous goods declaration must be in conformity with the DGR and the acceptance by the airlines of DGR goods is subject to full compliance.

As a general rule, the consignor and the carrier should comply with the IATA standards.

The consignor can transfer his/her responsibilities to a freight forwarder who should be registered with IATA and comply with all international regulations on freight handling. The company should be prepared to sign the IATA Standard Ground Handling Agreement as per Annex L.

Key documents in use

• Passenger manifest: full details of the passengers should be specified.
• Cargo manifest/Packing List: full details of the commodities should be specified.
• Airwaybill: the AWB is a transport contract and the conditions of carriage are printed on the back of the document. The following information is mentioned on the AWB:
  • shipper (consignor) and consignee;
  • airlines, routing, airport of destination and flight information;
  • designation (or nature) of goods, number of packages, weight and handling information;
  • rate class, chargeable weight, rate per kg, total charges and accounting information;
  • the operator shall be mentioned as the carrier; and
  • the airway bill is issued by the consignor or, if applicable, the freight forwarder.
• Certificate of origin (COO): some destinations require a COO for certain commodities. The purpose of the COO is to authenticate the country of origin of the merchandise being shipped. The COO may be required because of established treaty arrangements, varying duty rates, and preferential duty treatment dependent on the shipment’s origin.
• Proforma invoice/gift certificate: a proforma invoice is an invoice provided by a supplier in advance of providing the goods or service. The proforma invoice should state “Value for Customs Purposes Only/Without Commercial Value”. If the cargo was donated by a donor nation, a Gift Certificate should be provided to confirm that the goods are a donation and supplied free of charge to the relevant user agency (consignee).
• Goods Received Note: this form should be completed by the Log Off or consignee upon arrival of the goods and sent back to the consignor.
• Additional documents for medical supplies:
  • certificate of analysis;
  • a good manufacturing practice (GMP) certificate of quality-control testing of foods and pharmaceutical products.
• Additional documents for food items:
  • health certificate stating that the goods are fit for human consumption (except for cereals/pulses).
  • phytosanitary certificate for cereals and pulses.

Conclusion

Aircraft are the fastest, most reliable means of transport, but are expensive and should be considered only as a last resort. That is in cases when supplies are urgently needed in a location where no other solution is feasible due to limited time frame for intervention, lack of infrastructure for surface transport, or a high level of insecurity.

In emergencies, airlifting may be used as an initial response to the situation pending establishment of a surface pipeline. However in cases where surface pipeline is impossible to achieve, the highly expensive emergency airlift operation can be transformed into a long-term relatively cost-efficient air operation.

When opting for air transport the organisation must recognise that aircraft require extensive and carefully organized ground support in their area of operation. Information should be obtained from civil aviation authorities, airport managers, or any other sources within the aviation industry and ensures that the staff designated to manage the operation are qualified and have the right skills.

References