ACE Awards honor top airlines, airports

There were many familiar faces last night during the Air Cargo Excellence (ACE) Awards ceremony. But there were also some notable newcomers that climbed the ranks in this celebration of the top airlines and airports, as chosen by Air Cargo World readers.

Continuing its long streak of Diamond wins in the 1 million-or-more-tonnes category, Emirates has continued to expand its freighter operations along with its belly-hold capacity. The carrier provides belly hold cargo services to more than 140 destinations in addition to 50 scheduled freighter services. In the 400,000-to-999,999-tonne category, Japan Airlines was also a repeat victor, as was Southwest Airlines, for carriers that handled up to 399,999 tons of cargo in 2014.

On the airport side, Hong Kong International Airport (HKG), the world’s busiest cargo airport for the last four years, was the Asian Diamond winner in the 1 million-tonnes-or-more category. HKIA, which handled 4.38 million tonnes of cargo in 2014, is a major gateway connecting Hong Kong, mainland China and the rest of the world, including about 180 destinations worldwide.

Kansai International Airport (KIX), near Osaka, Japan, was tops in the 400,000-to-999,999-tonnes category, and is also a repeat Diamond Award winner. The relatively new airport, built in 1994, has 15 freighter slots and is home to the FedEx Express North Pacific regional hub. The airport has 138 cargo flights a week, with extensive connections to China and other parts of Asia.

Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport (AMS) once again won the Diamond Award for handling 1 million tonnes, or more, of cargo in 2014. Cologne-Bonn (CGN) ruled supreme in the 400,000-to-999,999-tonnes-handled category. Like Schiphol, it is a repeat winner from last year.

Europe’s up-to-399,999-tonnes-handled category was one of the most competitive fields in the ACE awards, with eight of the nine finalists earning above-average certificates. Perennial favorite Zurich Airport (ZRH), however, took the prize, with a dense road network connecting it to economic centers not only in Switzerland, but also in southern Germany, France, Italy and Austria.

First-time winner San Luis Muñoz Mañín International Airport (SJU) in San Juan, Puerto Rico, was the clear victor in Latin America, with 138 points – the highest overall score in the entire ACE survey. Top exports include perishable food, agricultural products, flowers, manufactured goods and pharmaceuticals. This year, SJU is working on a major revamp to modernize the cargo area, including auxiliary installations like ramps and illumination.

It’s no surprise that Dubai International (DXB) was the overall facility winner in the Middle East/India/Africa category, taking the title from Doha, Qatar, since the combined freight handled by it and neighboring Dubai World Central (DWC) jumped 18.1 percent in 2014. The last major expansion at DXB will be completed this year in the form of Concourse D, which will increase passenger capacity from 75 million to 90 million per annum.

In the Americas, Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (ANC) was number one yet again for cargo handled in the 1 million-or-more-tonne category. Anchorage, (Alaska) is a nine-and-a-half-hour flight from 90 percent of the industrialized world. The North American airport that took home the Diamond award for handling 400,000 to 999,999 tonnes was LA/Ontario International Airport (ONT), which was in third place in this category last year, and benefits from UPS and FedEx Express accounting for 90 percent of its business. Another airport that handles mostly freight from FedEx and UPS was Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport (MSP), which was the winner for the North American airport handling up to 399,999 tonnes of freight.

The ACE Awards, now in their 10th year, are determined by surveys that are distributed to Air Cargo World subscribers throughout the world. Carriers are voted on by forwarders, cargo agents and third-party logistics providers. Subscribers identified as those working for an airline voted on the airports. Airlines are rated on customer service, performance, value and information technology. Airports are rated on performance, value, facilities and regulatory operations. A complete list of survey results will be published in the April 2015 issue of Air Cargo World and on aircargoworld.com.
Managing the risks of lithium batteries

Lithium batteries are the energy source of choice to power everything, from data loggers that use lithium metal button cells weighing a few grams, to electric cars that use lithium ion batteries weighing hundreds of kilograms.

The attraction of lithium batteries is due to their power-to-weight ratio, allowing for more power in a smaller battery that takes up less space and weighs less. However, all of this extra performance comes with a potential risk, as lithium batteries – if not designed, tested, manufactured and prepared for transport in accordance with the regulations – can pose a fire risk.

Lithium batteries are grouped into two categories, based on the battery chemistry:

- Lithium metal batteries, which include lithium alloy batteries. These are typically non-rechargeable (primary) used in long-life applications, such as watches, calculators and emergency locator beacons; and
- Lithium ion batteries, which include lithium polymer batteries. These are rechargeable (secondary) batteries used in consumer electronics, such as mobile phones, laptop computers and tablets, and in larger applications, such as e-bikes and motor cars.

The risk posed by lithium batteries in transport is mitigated by a requirement that all lithium cell types, and battery types containing such cells, must pass stringent tests that have been developed by the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. In addition, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Dangerous Goods Panel (DGP) has developed specific packing and shipping requirements, all of which are aimed at reducing the risk to a level acceptable for air transport.

The international dangerous goods transport regulations provide for general exceptions from most of the regulatory requirements for “small” lithium metal and lithium ion batteries, as these smaller batteries are seen as posing a lesser risk, and therefore a relaxation from the full regulations is warranted. The limit for “small” is:

- Lithium metal batteries: a lithium content of 2 g (approximately equivalent to an AA battery);
- Lithium ion batteries: a Watt-hour rating of 100 Wh (a typical laptop battery has a rating of approximately 60 Wh).

For air transport, packages of “small” lithium batteries, including where batteries are packed with equipment or are contained in equipment, are not subject to the standard dangerous goods acceptance check. There is also no requirement for these shipments to be shown on the written information to the pilot-in-command. There is, however, a requirement for a minimum standard of packaging and a limit on the mass of lithium batteries per package. Each package must bear a specific lithium battery handling label and information must be provided to the airline on the air waybill indicating the type of lithium battery (metal or ion).

Despite efforts by the UN Subcommittee and the ICAO DGP to develop robust regulations that act to minimise the risk associated with the transport of lithium batteries, incidents involving fires from lithium batteries continue to happen. The incident data, though, shows that, almost without exception, the incidents with lithium batteries in cargo were as a consequence of the shipper (consignor) not complying with the existing regulations. There have also been incidents resulting in fires caused by lithium batteries that were in air mail, despite lithium batteries being almost totally prohibited in international mail.

The ubiquitous nature of lithium batteries and the exponential growth of e-commerce means that they are being shipped as cargo and in mail, by people who are completely unaware of the dangerous goods regulations and the specific requirements for lithium batteries. IATA and industry partners such as the Universal Postal Union have been working hard to reach out and raise awareness of the dangerous goods issue and lithium batteries in particular. There is guidance freely available on the IATA website at www.iata.org/lithiumbatteries. For five years the association has run workshops, with the next one taking place in Montreal this September. Shippers have been catered for with the lithium batteries shipping guidelines (now with a Chinese version). Finally, carriers and cargo stakeholders might be interested in the new document “Risk Mitigation Strategies for Operators,” also freely available on iata.org.

Despite all these examples of outreach, non-compliance – sometimes deliberate – continues. This is where there is a need for the regulatory authorities to step up and be more active in conducting oversight, surveillance and, where necessary, enforcement of the broader supply chain, including shippers of lithium batteries.

— By Dave Brennan, Assistant Director, Cargo Safety and Standards
Will CEIV keep pharma from shipping by ocean?

The Center of Excellence for Independent Validators (CEIV) is the odd, and not particularly informative, name for a program launched by IATA in 2013, with the aim of upgrading and standardizing the entire pharmaceutical supply chain in an effort to convince the life-science and pharmaceutical industries that shipping their products by air is safe, reliable and transparent.

The move was driven by media coverage of serious dissatisfaction with the air mode expressed by shippers and forwarders at an air cargo handling conference in Lisbon in 2013. The complaints were many, but the common thread running through them was that shippers and forwarders were turning from airfreight to seafreight for pharmaceutical shipments not because of price, but because the ocean mode was more reliable – that ocean carriers could be trusted to do a better job.

The challenge was laid down in Lisbon by forwarder Kuehne + Nagel, when EVP Marcel Fujike said: “We need you, IATA, to spearhead the air cargo GDP standard development. It can only be you, and we are waiting for a long time already – way too long, and I don’t know why it is not happening. My question to IATA and the carriers behind IATA is – are you really willing?”

IATA took up the challenge, but quickly realized that the problem didn’t lie specifically with airlines, but rather with every player in the entire supply chain. Many pharmaceutical shipments are so temperature-sensitive that even the briefest moment of inattention can render them useless. So, whatever effort IATA and its member carriers put into ensuring that shipments were perfectly handled while in the air would be wasted if every trucker or ground handler or airport or forwarder involved in the shipment didn’t put forth equal effort.

Which, of course, led to a second problem: How could any player determine which other players were reliable partners?

IATA’s answer was to work in conjunction with representatives of all links in the supply chain to come up with a set of standards for the handling of pharmaceuticals, and a path that any company could take to gain certification that it had met those standards. To implement the program, IATA created the Center of Excellence for Independent Validators, or CEIV.

Fast forward to 2015, where the first fruits of the program were on display at the “CEIV Pharma Workshop” on Day 1 of the IATA World Cargo Symposium in Shanghai. Present for a full day of discussion were not just IATA executives, but also executives from some of the first companies to gain CEIV certification, or whose companies were currently going through the certification process, and a room full of those whose companies were wondering whether CEIV certification would be worth the time and effort required to gain it.

The answer to that last question – at least from the truckers, handlers, airports and carriers who have been certified – was pretty much an unqualified “yes.” In their view, the bottom line was, well, the bottom line. Achieving CEIV certification, they said, had made them more attractive to existing and potential customers.

With the exception of Singapore-based handler SATS, CEIV certification has so far been achieved by less than a dozen European companies, all of them are members of the Brussels Airport cool chain community. But a supply chain has two ends, and the big question hanging over the CEIV program is: Can it go global? GDP (Good Distribution Practices) programs exist in a variety of locations around the world, but they are often vague about processes and standards, and often not compatible with one another. Participants in Monday’s Workshop all agreed that the real value of the CEIV was that it had the potential to create a single global standard. Something that could be used by regulators, shippers, and supply chain participants worldwide could use to determine how best to move time- and temperature-sensitive pharmaceutical shipments from any point on the globe to any other point.

But if it is not embraced globally, if only a small number of players from a few developed regions are willing to undergo the training and certification process, then its value is reduced. True, knowing that all the cool chain players at, say, Brussels Airport have been CEIV certified will make it more likely that shippers choose to move their shipments to and from Europe via Brussels, but the ultimate goals of making air freight more attractive to the pharmaceutical and life-sciences industries, and ensuring the better health of patients worldwide, will only be met if CEIV is accepted worldwide.

Which brings us finally to the concept of “pharmerging.” Haven’t heard of pharmerging? No surprise there, because it’s a word invented only recently to describe the future of the pharmaceutical industry. Most of the shipments, by value, of pharmaceuticals today are between developed (or almost developed) countries. But demand in the so-called emerging markets is projected to grow so strongly that soon countries in Africa and South America will become major consumers of pharmaceuticals. That is, they are pharmerging. And in order for the supply chain to be safe, reliable, and transparent in those countries, their carriers, airports, handlers and truckers, as well as their regulatory agencies, must buy in to the CEIV concept in the same way players in the developed world have.

It is IATA’s job to convince them that buying in is both possible and worthwhile for them – surely not an easy task. Is IATA up to the challenge? That remains to be seen, but in answer to Marcel Fujike’s question, “Are you really willing?” at the Lisbon conference in 2013, IATA in Shanghai has clearly answered “yes” in 2015.
ULDs finally get the respect they deserve

Unit load devices (ULDs), as we know them, have been around for at least 45 years, but for some reason, they are still the Rodney Dangerfield of the aviation industry. During Monday’s “ULD Regulations Workshop,” they finally got the respect they deserved as critical safety parts of every cargo aircraft with newly revised IATA regulations and the debut of a video that gives ULDs the Hollywood treatment.

Urs Wiesendanger, Manager of Cargo Network Control, ULD Logistics at Air Canada, said the latest version of IATA’s ULD Regulations manual (ULDR) helps emphasize the importance of treating ULDs with proper care. ULDR represents a “single set of regulations for all parties involved, conforming to all legally applicable regulations.”

Despite their importance, ULDs are vulnerable to mistreatment and damage. Zhi Yong, Manager of Business Process & Standards at IATA, said a ULD is possibly the only part of an aircraft “that leaves the airlines and then return back from multiple unregulated hands and has an impact on airline safety.”

All speakers at the session emphasized that ULD’s equal critical safety equipment, citing several tragic accidents that were caused by improperly secured cargo loads, such as the 2013 National Air Cargo 747 crash at Bagram, Afghanistan, and the 1997 Fine Air Services crash of a DC-8 freighter. As a result, FAA responded with the AC 120-85 Air Cargo Operation regulation, which recognized ULDs as critical safety equipment.

Despite this official federal recognition, many parts of the supply chain have largely ignored the importance of these safety devices, with most ULD operations now outsourced to third parties.

Of all the reports of ground damage in the aviation industry, the No. 1 most common was ULD containers, with 191 reports, Liao said.

Bob Rogers, Vice President, Industry Affairs, for Nordisk Aviation Products and member of IATA’s ULD Operational Advisory Group, said that “While the airlines operate in highly regulated modern world, there is also an unregulated world of ground handlers, cargo terminals and forwarders, where a ULD isn’t an aircraft part anymore.”

To help alert the rest of the industry about this serious issues, IATA and ULD Care, a Canada-based consortium of companies that handle ULDs, produced a 9-minute video called “SOS ULD: Time to Take ULD Care!” The free video – that is downloadable at sos-uld.com – describes how ULDs are used and often abused, and proposes solutions to help limit mishandling.

Wiesendanger said the video will be a “high-quality communications” tool to help raise awareness about abuse of ULDs worldwide and gain buy-in from airline executives, cargo heads, shippers, ground service handlers and forwarders. “I like to call it pushing on an open door,” he said.
Cooperating to promote e-freight in Shanghai

IATA and Shanghai are partnering on an initiative to help stamp out cumbersome paper processes in the logistics industry.

Yesterday, Shanghai Customs, Shanghai Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau, Shanghai Airport Authority, China Eastern Airlines, and Shanghai E-port all signed a Letter of Initiative (LOI) with IATA to jointly promote e-freight in Shanghai.

Under the terms of the LOI, the six organizations will cooperate to:

- Improve efficiency and reduce costs in existing processes by phasing out the need for a security check stamp on paper air waybills (AWB).
- Eliminate the need for paper AWB and facilitate the implementation of paperless customs clearance at Shanghai Pudong Airport.
- Optimize and streamline data sharing between the parties

“China is the second-largest market for international freight by air. With much of the world’s manufacturing taking place in China, it is essential that processes are kept as efficient as possible,” said Zhang Baojian, IATA’s Regional Vice President for North Asia. “This can be achieved through partnership and adoption of global standards. This agreement will bolster Shanghai’s position as a leading airfreight hub in China and in the world.”

The air cargo industry is well-known for its paper-intensive processes. E-freight is a global initiative to modernize the air cargo industry and enhance efficiency by eliminating the pouch of more than 20 documents that accompany every air cargo shipment. It will contribute to the industry’s goal of reducing shipping times by 48 hours.

Implementing e-AWB is an important enabling step for e-freight. The industry target is to achieve 45 percent e-AWB penetration globally by the end of 2015, and 80 percent by the end of 2016. At the end of 2014, the penetration rate was 24.9 percent.

E-freight pilots have been implemented at Shanghai Pudong Airport, Guangzhou Baiyun Airport and Beijing Capital Airport. In June 2014, China Cargo Airlines successfully launched the pilot e-AWB pilot at Shanghai Pudong Airport. To date, Shanghai is the leading airport in China in terms of the number of e-AWBs processed.
Trade facilitation is the key to speed

IATA rounded up four heavy-hitters to sit down to a roundtable discussion of an interesting and important subject with a deceptively boring title: “Instruments for Global and Regional Development.” The actual subject under discussion was trade facilitation.

International trade, is the single absolute requirement underlying the entire air freight industry. If trade is made easier, the air freight industry blossoms. If trade is made more difficult, the industry withers.

It is easy to say that international trade is driven by macroeconomic factors out of the industry’s control, but it is an engine that can be stalled or revved up by government policy. Through the recession of the last few years, governments worldwide erected protectionist barriers to trade, and despite the recovery of the last 18 months, those barriers have not come down, much to the detriment of trade growth.

On stage to close out the morning of Tuesday’s Plenary Session at the IATA World Cargo Symposium were Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization; Yi Xiaozhun, Deputy Director General of the World Trade Organization; Tony Tyler, Director General and CEO of IATA; and moderator Andrew Herdman, Director General of the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines.

The four discussed progress, or lack thereof, in the seemingly never-ending Doha Development Round of trade negotiations that began in 2001, and whether the Bali Package agreed to 12 years later would provide the impetus needed to move the Doha Round forward.

And what of the proliferation of regional free-trade agreements that have sprung up, as groups of nations have grown weary of waiting for a global trade agreement? Would these regional agreements, exemplified by the ASEAN agreement, be a push toward a global agreement? As one can imagine, the discussion was complex and esoteric, but fascinating, and, in the end, hopeful.

Yi pointed out that the Bali Package was a big step forward, because rather than being an all-or-nothing affair, it was made up of 35 measures, in three categories, so that the differing needs and abilities of the developed and developing countries could be taken into account. He also pointed out that the developed countries, and organizations, such as the World Bank, stood ready to help.

Mikuriya said that, in his view, the regional free-trade agreements were a step in the right direction, as long as they adhered to global standards.

For his part, Tyler said that trade facilitation, through trade agreements and harmonized customs regulations, was an important factor in increasing the speed of air cargo shipments, and that IATA would work hard to push governments worldwide to ratify the Bali Package.

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IATA’s Shippers Survey: Key Outcomes

IATA’s latest Shippers Survey collected responses from 336 participants in total, from various companies. Here are some key outcomes from the survey response analysis.

Air cargo is a common mode of transport.
- 94% (316) said they ship by air
- 6% (20) said they never ship by air

Most shippers are satisfied.
Among shippers, nearly three-quarters declare being “satisfied” with an average note of 7.91; 19 percent declare being “slightly satisfied” with an average note of 5.44; and only 7 percent of shippers said being “poorly satisfied” with an average note of 2.91.

Q: How satisfied are you with the air cargo services that you have used in the last 12 months? (1 = not satisfied at all; 10 = extremely satisfied)
- Average response: 7.08 out of 10
- 74% responded with a 7-10
- 19% responded with a 5 or 6
- 7% responded with 1-4

Speed is the main advantage of air cargo over other forms of transport.
1. 33% - Time speed (296 respondents)
2. 15% - Customer/supplier requirement (132 respondents)
3. 11% - Reliability (96 respondents)

Air cargo is perceived as competitive with other modes, and innovative.
According to 41 percent of shippers, air cargo is as competitive as other modes of transport but 36 percent of them consider air cargo less competitive. Regarding innovation, 33.5 percent of shippers consider air cargo more innovative than other modes of transport and 46 percent of them consider air cargo is equally innovative compared to other transports.

Q: Compared to other modes of transport, do you consider air cargo competitive?
- Equally 41.1% (130 respondents)
- Less 36.4% (115 respondents)
- More 22.2% (70 respondents)
- NA 0.3% (1 respondent)

Q: Compared to other modes of transport, do you consider air cargo industry innovative?
- Equally 46.8% (148 respondents)
- More 33.5% (106 respondents)
- Less 19.3% (61 respondents)
- NA 0.3% (1 respondent)
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