LAUNCHING NEW AFRICA HUB RWANDAIR PARTNERS WITH QATAR AIRWAYS CARGO

News / Airlines

RwandAir has launched a major new African cargo hub in partnership with Qatar Airways Cargo. The new Kigali Cargo Hub is part of a long-term strategic plan for the cargo division of RwandAir, which has seen cargo carried rise by nearly 26% in the last five years. The initiative will help RwandAir develop Kigali into a regional cargo powerhouse, boosting exports and imports around Africa and strengthening links with key overseas markets. The partnership saw Qatar Aviation Services provide consultancy support to RwandAir Cargo to help improve its already highly successful cargo handling performance.

RwandAir welcomed the arrival of a Qatar Airways Cargo Boeing 777x freighter at the airline's home hub in Kigali, to mark the official launch of the major new cargo facility. Yvonne Makolo, CEO of RwandAir, and Guillaume Halleux Qatar Airways Cargo's Chief Officer, were on hand to watch the aircraft land, as well as local dignitaries, freight forwarders, partners and customers.

Yvonne Makolo, CEO of RwandAir, commented: We are very proud to partner with Qatar Airways Cargo to launch today the brand-new Kigali Cargo Hub, which will open up new cargo opportunities across Africa. Africa is home to a hugely diverse economy, with businesses and

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entrepreneurs looking for better connections to create new markets and expand inward investment. Together have created a fantastic new facility to meet this growing demand across Africa."

Guillaume Halleux, Qatar Airways' Chief Officer Cargo, said: "Africa is one of the world's fastest growing economies, yet for it to develop to its full potential requires investment in logistics and infrastructures. Qatar and Rwanda have long-enjoyed bilateral trade agreements, with both Qatar Airways and Qatar Investment Authority investing in the construction of the new Kigali Airport and RwandAir. It was therefore a logical step that Qatar Airways Cargo supports RwandAir in its cargo ambitions. Our customers will benefit from both a reliable intra-African network through our Kigali hub, as well as enhanced service levels and cost synergies. We are proud to partner with RwandAir in establishing Kigali as the Central African hub in preparation for the Next Generation of air cargo on this fast-growing continent. We are also very thankful to Bolloré, who helped assist us in developing Kigali International Airport as Qatar Airways Cargo's African hub. With its strong African presence, Bolloré will provide around 30% of the baseload on our Qatar Airways Cargo's freighters, as we look to grow with the market."

Since RwandAir began, cargo has been an important component of its operations, which has grown in tandem with the airline. The recent pandemic also acted as a catalyst for the importance of cargo, especially for RwandAir. The airline's geographic location at the heart of Africa has placed it in a unique position to reach every corner of the continent, providing seamless connectivity, promoting trade, and strengthening its relations with countries both within Africa and around the world.

With the launch of the new cargo hub, RwandAir will continue to offer customers reliable, high-quality cargo services across Africa. It is supported by the entry into service of its first dedicated freighter aircraft - a Boeing 737- 800- and enabled the launch of new freighter services to the airline's key destinations across Africa and the Middle East. This includes Johannesburg, Lagos, Lusaka, Brazzaville, Harare, Maputo, Entebbe, Nairobi and Sharjah in the UAE.

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The recent arrival of RwandAir’s third wide-body aircraft - an Airbus A330-200 - and the launch of direct flights to Paris in June, will ensure Rwanda has greater cargo connectivity not just regionally, but internationally, across Europe, the Middle East, China and beyond.

Under the partnership with Qatar Airways, a Qatar Airways Boeing 777X will fly twice a week from Doha to Kigali with a scheduled onward service to Entebbe, Nairobi and Liège then back to Doha via either Oslo/Lyon. Since 13 March, Qatar Airways Cargo has created intra-Africa services between Kigali and Lagos (three times per week), Kigali and Johannesburg (three times a week), and a weekly service from Istanbul via Doha to Kigali, all operated by a single wet-leased A310-200 freighter.

The launch of Qatar Airways Cargo’s first cargo hub outside Qatar, in collaboration with RwandAir, creates a strong foundation on which to expand a future-oriented African air cargo network and meet the 3-5% annual economic growth forecast for the continent over the next decade. More African destinations are due to be added to the joint airline network at a later stage.

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