

THE WORLD'S FIRST A380 CARGO PLANE TAKES OFF



While most A380s are parked in different parts of the world, idle due to reduced commercial flights, one of them has found a new job, becoming the world's first cargo plane of its kind.

Hi Fly, a Portuguese charter removed 300 seats from its A380 and adapted it to transport up to 60 tons of goods and offers this four-engine jet to airlines urgently in need of a plane.

In the first weeks of March, Hi Fly actively participated in repatriation operations of western citizens from Wuhan and other parts of China. But later, the company realized they were overlooking the business of cargo transportation, especially medical equipment such as ventilators and face masks.

A radical change

Like many other airlines that have retrofitted their B777s for freighting goods, Hi Fly removed all-economy class seats and modified the aircraft to offer 300 cubic meters for this purpose, which can transport up to 60 tons of cargo.

Of the 471 seats this aircraft has, the company only left 171 seats in premium, business and first-class, which have more components and are more difficult to remove.

Likewise, sinks and galleys for preparing meals have also been left intact, revealing the company's intention to reuse the aircraft for commercial flights once the market recovers.

The plane was not intended for merchandise

Since the airplane was not meant to be used for freight, other permits are required as well as the installation of security systems, such as fire alarms, that commercial flights do not have.

In fact, the A380 was never designed to transport goods. Despite being the largest passenger aircraft in the world, its cargo section is relatively small and the upper floor doesn't have enough space to store pallets and containers used on cargo planes.

In addition, the upper doors are too small to be able to operate the goods comfortably. And as if that were not enough, the weight of the ship does not allow its interior structure to be fully loaded.

The failed A380 cargo project

In 2007, Airbus was involved in the A380F project, with which it tried to conquer the goods transportation market. The idea was to transform the plane into a freighter that could travel up to 10,400 kilometres, with a load capacity of 150 tons and a volume capable of holding 71 large pallets on three floors.

However, the rejection from the main shipping companies, especially UPS and FedEx, ended any interest in the project. With the imminent cessation of the manufacturing of this four-engine aircraft, the option was completely ruled out.

Two months ago, Lufthansa Technik announced that it was working on redesigning the A380 to adapt it for cargo transportation. The German group's subsidiary never mentioned who the customer was, but merely said that it was a company that owned an A380. Apparently, the mysterious airline was most likely Hi Fly.

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