

Case

Proud to be part of the largest vaccine supply operation in history

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@UNICEF/Liege Airport/Belgium/2021 The first flight facilitated by the United Arab Emirates' HOPE Consortium touches down in Liege Airport as part of a new agreement with UNICEF to provide logistics support to transport essential COVAX supplies to countries battling the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the worldwide shipping and logistics network for the COVAX distribution, we were asked to arrange a flight from China to Belgium loaded with ultra-cold freezers headed for 21 African destinations. Facing the week-long shutdown of business due to China's Golden

Due to their size and height (215 cm), ultra-cold freezers can't travel on regular commercial cargo flights. Special cargo aircraft is the only option. Furthermore, the freezers must reach their final destinations before the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines to avoid potentially devastating consequences in breaking the cold chain. Coupled with the lack of freighter solutions from China, the current lack of capacity, and the fast-approaching Golden Week in China, we faced a set of complex challenges with an almost impossible deadline.

Reaching final destination within a week

Freight flights from China to Africa are limited; thus, the most efficient option is to route the cargo via Europe. Though capacity is currently a scarce resource, the urgent delivery was secured. In a combined effort between our Aid & Development specialists and our team in Belgium, we managed to charter a Boeing 747 cargo plane to move the critical shipment.

During the early morning hours of October 7, 2021, the flight touched down in Liège, Belgium carrying 65 ultra-cold chain freezers for vaccine storage (capable of maintaining temperatures below -70°C), 60,000 boxes of syringes, safety boxes, and other equipment used in the fight against COVID. Within a week, through our extensive distribution network, the freezers and other equipment found their way to 15 of the 21 recipient countries, such as Tunisia, Mali, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Benin.

Goods must still be moved

The pressure on the shipping and transport industries is immense, yet, goods must still be moved, and humanitarian aid still has to reach persons in need in time.

Ive Van Nuffelen, Managing Director, Benelux, explains:

"We are proud to be part of the largest vaccine supply operation in history. To ensure deliveries reach their destination on time requires navigating a complex web of logistics. Due to our more than 45 years of experience serving the United Nations and NGOs, we know how to handle any obstacles. It's a great privilege for us to help ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and auxiliary supplies around the world".

Ready for more

Earlier this year, SGL Belgium was awarded the BRUcure Readiness Label provided by Air Cargo Belgium and Brussels Airport, acknowledging that we are eligible to transport, handle, or store the COVID-19 vaccine.

We are indeed ready.

No matter a currently challenged shipping industry, we deliver.

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Get in touch

Ive Van Nuffelen
Managing Director
☎ +32 15 703031

EMAIL ME

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