

AIRBUS DEVELOPS SOLUTION TO USE WIDEBODY AIRCRAFT FOR PURE CARGO OPERATIONS DURING CORONA CRISIS

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Airbus is developing a modification for A330 and A350 family aircraft which will enable airlines to install freight pallets directly onto the cabin floor seat tracks, after removal of the economy-class seats.

This solution will help with the airlines' own business continuity, and also alleviate the global shortage of 'belly-freight' air cargo capacity due to the widespread grounding of long-haul aircraft in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it helps the industry to address the high demand for humanitarian flights to transport large quantities of medical equipment and other supplies rapidly over large distances to where they are needed.

Compared with loading cargo onto seats, this Airbus solution facilitates easier and quicker loading and unloading operations, as well as reduced ‘wear & tear’ to the seats themselves. Other important benefits include the added security of robust fire protection, and the 9g load restraint capability to prevent anything from shifting in flight.

The modification is packaged for operators as an Airbus Service Bulletin (SB). Under this arrangement Airbus defines the engineering workscope and also manages the process for obtaining the one-time certification from the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).

Its scope includes the removal of the seats & IFE (Inflight entertainment), installation of cargo pallets and associated safety equipment – and also the re-installation of the original passenger cabin elements for reverting back to passenger operations. The SB approach will also be valid beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

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