

Ostend bucks the traffic trends

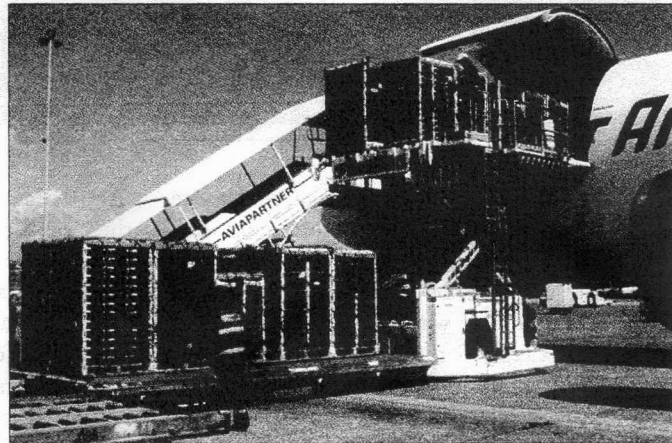
Ostend-Bruges International airport achieved something very few other logistic gateways did over the course of the first half of 2009 – its freight volumes rose on a year-by-year basis.

During the January - June period, Ostend handled a total of 40,059 tonnes of freight, up 3.9 percent on the first half-year of 2008. According to Gino Vanspauwen, CEO and managing director of the Belgian airport, ANA Aviation volumes were good, while EgyptAir traffic also held up well.

MK Airlines was slightly down on its 2008 volumes but Air Charter Express (ACE) – an Ostend-based airline registered in Ghana that is in the process of changing its name and expanding its fleet – has been going extremely well and a number of charters have added to the scheduled traffic through the gateway.

Vanspauwen remains wary, however. He believes that the bottom of the air freight market has not yet been reached. As such, he believes that Ostend's cargo volumes may slip into the negative in the second half of 2009 and, indeed, July's freight throughput was down on last year.

Ostend airport remains up for sale. Bids have been received and analysis of the offers is taking place, Vanspauwen confirmed.



While remaining loyal to the present airport management company, he notes that a new ownership for the Belgian gateway might provide more funding and more dynamism, leading to more growth. "Plus, I'm always open to new ideas," he added.



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