



News & Videos World recognizes humanitarian airlift potential of GA

WORLD RECOGNIZES HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFT POTENTIAL OF GA

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By Chris Eads

Using general aviation aircraft in humanitarian relief efforts is a longstanding and well-received practice in the United States. Many other nations are now also realizing the value of GA to help move medical supplies and personnel during the coronavirus pandemic.

“GA is being warmly received for the first time in many of these nations,” said Craig Spence, secretary general of the International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations (IAOPA). He also noted that the outpouring of volunteers supporting humanitarian missions in these nations has been “fantastic.”

Airlines worldwide have seen a drastic decline in passengers and have been forced to cancel the majority of flights. The result has been a gap in transportation capabilities in certain areas that typically depend on those commercial operators to move critical supplies and personnel.

Pilots have volunteered to fly their GA aircraft to deliver medical equipment and

personnel responding to the crisis in Australia, Austria, Brazil, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Panama, South Africa, and many other countries.

“Here in Panama, we have been working hand-in-hand with the Panamanian government to help the different communities which have been affected by the coronavirus,” said Jaime Fabrega, vice president of IAOPA Central and South American region, and board member of AOPA Panama. In recent weeks, members of AOPA Panama have flown 20




Truckloads of supplies have been carried by general aviation pilots to remote airfields throughout the world during the COVID-19 crisis. On Pedro Gonzalez Island in Panama, volunteers unload a Piper Saratoga that brought food for distribution to the local community. Image courtesy of AOPA Panama.

hours of missions carrying government personnel, medicine, food, and water. The GA aircraft utilized have carried over 12,000 pounds of supplies, and more missions are planned by the end of April.

In France, a cooperative initiative between Aviation Without Borders and AOPA France is flying more than 15 missions per day throughout Europe.

“It shows how the whole of general aviation has rallied to allow for transportation of medical personnel that need to go from one place to another in Europe,” said Emmanuel Davidson, president of AOPA France. He said the types of aircraft used range “from Falcons operated by Dassault, TBMs from Daher, PC12s from Jetfly, to more than 500 pilots and owners that have volunteered their time and aircraft for free. Even aircraft such as C182, C206, Bonanzas and Barons are put into service for these missions.”

IAOPA has offered resources to affiliate organizations to assist them in developing



guidelines for safe and efficient humanitarian airlift flights, establishing aircraft maintenance protocols during operational shutdowns, and making requests to government agencies for regulatory relief.

IAOPA represents the interests of AOPA affiliates in 82 countries around the world, comprising more than 400,000 pilots who fly GA aircraft for personal or business needs. The council was formed in 1962 to provide a voice for GA in world aviation forums. GA encompasses four-fifths of all civil aircraft and two-thirds of all pilots worldwide.

IAOPA affiliates work to bring regulatory relief to GA

In many countries around the world, general aviation has been grounded with restrictions or prohibitions on recreational flying as governments impose strict limits on public and social activities in an attempt to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Even solo recreational flight is banned in many locations.

The International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations is working on multiple fronts to address difficulties presented by the wide variety of restrictions imposed during the crisis. Similar to AOPA's efforts with the FAA in the United States, IAOPA affiliates are working with their civil aviation authorities to mitigate concerns related to the timing of pilot currency, medical certificate, and aircraft airworthiness requirements. Highlighting the potential for GA to bring much-needed relief to transportation challenges is helping IAOPA affiliates make the case to their governments to look carefully at emergency provisions related to these issues.

The council is also working with the International Civil Aviation Organization to develop a database to track what each nation-state is authorizing regarding extensions or waivers for certain regulatory

compliance issues impacted by the restrictions. In places like Europe where international boundaries are in close proximity to one another, it is important to provide pilots with an understanding of what regulatory extensions are in effect, and which extensions offered by other nations are being accepted in the nation the pilot is entering.

As aircraft are parked for long periods of time, difficulties may also arise regarding compliance with aircraft manufacturers' published guidance on frequency of engine operation. Many pilot operating handbooks call for at least a monthly flight to keep engines free of corrosion. AOPA's Pilot Information Center has lent a hand to international affiliates in publishing guidance on how to store aircraft, similar to winterization, to ensure the best airframe and engine health.



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Chris began working for AOPA in 2013, but has been a private pilot and AOPA member since 2001. He flies VFR all over the country both for fun and as a part of his role leading AOPA events and regional fly-ins.

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