

ULD In 2011 Gets Respect



In 1970 air cargo marked the launch of the ULD (unit load device) aboard the first commercial 747 flights, changing forever the way in which airfreight and baggage is handled.

The first Pan Am Boeing 747 was put into service on January 15, 1970, although it seems the first flights regularly carrying fare-paying passengers only started on January 21.

Now in 2011 we have had 41 years of ULDs as an essential part of commercial wide body air travel, truly the link in the air cargo supply chain that changed everything.

We have come a long way in those four decades, with ULDs becoming ever lighter and stronger as well as becoming more versatile, specialized and indispensable for the proper handling of all types of cargo and baggage.

Many people have taken it for granted due to the ubiquitous nature of the lowly ULD.

Yet without ULDs, the passengers' baggage would end up being left behind with predictable customer service failures, or we would have baggage that is bulk loaded and unloaded, which negatively affects ground time and service.

No ULD, and that newly won hot account's first must-ride shipment is backlogged.

And so this relatively insignificant piece of equipment all of a sudden gets much attention, but no love.

The exception falls in one place and with a specific group of air cargo professionals.

The Interline ULD Control User Group (IULDUG) loves ULDs and is out to let the world know about it.



The Man Who Loves ULDs
Urs Wiesendanger
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IULDUG is a self-funded business unit formed partially to facilitate the interline movements of ULDs; interlining is the movement of ULD's between airlines.

Last September, a meeting of (IULDUG) in Oslo, Norway had a fresh feeling about it.

According to attendees, this was due in part to the IULDUG's independence and, therefore, provided an opportunity for the group to reassess its role within the ULD community.

The meeting was timely, with IATA committing to raise the profile of ULD across the industry, as IULDUG set out to embrace the theme "Designing the Future."

The meeting's agenda looked to bring in new ideas and perspectives from industry stakeholders who interface with ULD in the supply chain.

This included a shipper, two airport authorities and a ground handler as well as the regulars—IATA and the two main regulatory bodies, FAA and EASA.

"The presentations were high caliber and challenging, enlightening and thought provoking," reports Air Canada's all ULD pro, Toronto-based Urs Wiesendangers, Manager Cargo Network Control-ULD Logistics.

Urs is a man who loves the cans and he likes letting everybody know about it.

Actually, the passion of the groups' members could be seen and heard in the lively question and answer sessions that followed each presentation.

Passion for ULDs was nurtured following the presentations, as a guest panel was formed to stimulate debate and then the



attendees broke out into brainstorming action groups, resulting in new ideas and positive actions for the IULDUG Executive Committee to take away.

Urs Wiesendanger:

"With a high number of attendees from across the industry, the opportunities for networking and conducting business were high, with much being achieved during the breaks.

"Ultimately the conference was a huge success, there were a good number of energized attendees, active participation and some excellent ideas.

"However, the IULDUG

must now convert this into action and continue to confirm its importance to the wider aviation community," Urs said.

"Minutes from the meeting, including the recording of panel discussions, are available from IULDUG to you on demand," he added.

"Later in 2010, following the User Groups AGM, the IATA ULD Panel met back to back with the SAE AG-2A meeting, held November 4-7 in Scottsdale, Arizona," Mr. Wiesendanger reports.

"It was a good and constructive meeting.

"Apart from the usual technical discussions that are the base of what is published in the IATA ULD Technical Manual (UTM), the ULD Operational Task Force, led by Robert Rogers (Nordisk-Aviation-HKG), was formally introduced and renamed Operational Advisory Group (OAG) to align with the existing Technical Advisory Group (TAG)—both reporting to the ULD Panel with ultimate approval by the Cargo Service Council (CSC).

"Going forward, conferees agreed to expand to twice-yearly meetings (spring/fall) back-to-back with SAE meetings at the same location.

"Now with Santa Claus back again from his long journey and the new year turned over, IILDUG has many accomplishments to report in 2010.

"We have formed a ULD IATA steering committee and have created the ULD Road Map 2010-2012.

"As one of the first tangible results, we are excited to be able to offer a timely 'gift' to the ULD industry in the guise of a brand new IATA ULD e-Learning course created by Bob Rogers, with assistance from the ULD Operational."

Bob Rogers tells Flying Typers:

"The creation of the ULDOAG marks the first time that an IATA forum has involved representatives from across the ULD spectrum in a single working group.

"With four global webinars already completed and more scheduled at monthly intervals, the ULDOAG is currently embarked on a review/re-write/creation of 5 standards to cover storage/handling, transport (on and off airport), training standards for people using ULD, continuing airworthiness of ULD/loading and unloading of ULD.

"Once these standards are approved by the various IATA bodies, hopefully by mid 2011, they will put an effective foundation under today's global ULD operations supporting improvements in all aspects of ULD operations.

"The imminent launch of the first ever IATA ULD Self Study marks a milestone in the history of ULD.

"For the first time there exists a single globally available training suitable for anyone whose duties involve any aspect of ULD operations.

Using the IATA e-learning format, the course provides a simple introduction to the important safety function of ULD, provides an overview of ULD operations, covers the key issues that must always be observed and goes into detailed instructions of the use of containers and pallets & nets.

"Candidates scoring above 70 percent on a 50-question test will receive an official IATA certificate.

"In providing a common training that suits the entire industry, from small single location to large multi-location, service providers and forwarders, the training fills a long, empty gap.

"The training should also support airlines working to comply with the training requirements of FAA AC-120-85 Air Cargo Operations.

So in summary, 2010 was a momentous year for ULD; it started with celebrating 40 years of ULD at the YVR WCS and we are looking forward to the IATA WCS 2011 schedule in March in Istanbul to report progress on promises made.
Geoffrey /Ted/Flossie