

# Hanover to Become European Gateway for China Post

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The local press is rejoicing: Starting in September, Hanover Airport (HAJ) will become the European gateway for the China Post Group with first shipments to be processed and dispatched there. Airport boss Raoul Hille even spoke of up to five freighter flights per week.

Wishful thinking? Fact is that China Post has signed an agreement with the government of the state of German Lower Saxony to use Hanover Airport as a gateway for the throughput of air mail, express shipments and standard freight. To manage and coordinate this project, a subsidiary named China Express Germany (CEG), headed by HAJ cargo manager Udo Sass has been established by Beijing's postal service.

In a release, CEG states that Hanover was selected as the future hub due to the airport's 24/7 operation, favourable local business conditions, sufficient ground capacity and the multi-modality of transports, be it air, road, rail or even sea. Another decisive factor for China Post to pick HAJ as future European gateway, emphasizes CEG Director Sass, was the trust in the "Made in Germany" label, renowned for high quality and efficiency.

## Preliminary activities will start in September

Asked about the current state of the project, the manager told CargoForwarder Global, that first test runs will commence in September, with shipments being consolidated in major hubs like Frankfurt or Vienna, not in Hanover. "We are starting from scratch with only small volumes. Therefore, during the initial phase we'll utilize the lower deck capacity of commercial carriers serving alike big gateways to fly the consignments."



Udo Sass is Director China Express Germany - photo: hs



Passenger aircraft at Hanover Airport – courtesy: HAJ

Should all work well and tonnage rise, phase two will follow sometime in 2018, with direct cargo flights taking from China to Hannover. When touching the issue of the future operator, Udo remains vague. "We are in negotiations with a number of commercial capacity providers but haven't taken a decision yet." In the same breath he makes very clear that it won't be freighters belonging to the fleet of China Post. Besides, their largest aircraft are Boeing 757Fs, unable to cover distances of 10,000 kilometers or even more that separate China and Germany.

## Could charter flights be a temporary option?

In the months ahead, major issues will have to be solved before the project gets off the ground. Firstly, the German Federal Network Agency, responsible for telecommunication, railroads, power supply and postal matters, has to officially recognize GEC as postal operator. Secondly, the future carrier picked by the duo China Post and GEC needs traffic rights to operate commercial flights between Chinese destinations and Hanover. A permit that won't be obtainable overnight in view of the existing balanced air traffic framework between the EU and China. To circumvent these hurdles, a charter chain might be the most feasible temporary solution to bypass major regulatory obstacles.

## Smart lobbying work

When looking at the German airport landscape it is perhaps surprising that China Post has opted for establishing their European hub at Hanover. This, because the airport at Schwerin-Parchim which is situated only 150 km northeast of Hanover, is owned by Chinese national Jonathan Pang. And only recently, the Chinese HNA Group has acquired Frankfurt-Hahn airport. Both Parchim and Hahn offer 24/7/365 accessibility, comparable to Hanover. So obviously, HAJ had the better cards in their sleeves or – more likely – was lobbied more successfully by Lower Saxony's state's government.

China Express Germany's majority stakeholder (85%) is Hong Kong's China Courier Services. Other proprietors, each holding 5 percent, are Aviation Network Consultants based in Hanover and owned by Udo Sass, Frankfurt GSA Aircargonet belonging to Klaus Lederer and Beijing-headquartered China International Travel Air (CITA).



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