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is committed to flying all year round to Johannesburg and Sao Paulo - summer as well as winter - and will increase flights from three to five a week, while Mexico flights go up from two to five a week. All these are bellyhold flights but the aircraft used are typically A330s offering good payloads.

Construction of new infrastructure continues, meanwhile. Work has started on a 15,000sq m extension to the aircraft staging area that is due to be finished by the end of October and which will add capacity for future growth.

The plan for the 60,000sq m western expansion of the cargo area also continues and the airport is currently carrying the freight industry to assess likely uptake if that is positive, construction will start.

Munich Airport, in conjunction with Denver-based TractFare, is also testing autonomous cargo vehicles, which may well be their first deployment in Europe. Munich suffers from a labour shortage and this would be one way of alleviating it.

Coli keeps one step ahead of the field

Coli Group is a diversified, global business these days but its roots are firmly in Germany with offices in Hamburg and Bremen. The company is still very much involved in ship chartering and brokerage and also operates its own fleet of vessels, the former Beluga F Types on regular runs between Europe and the Far East as well as the charter market. However, it has moved into important new areas including logistics and freight forwarding, explains managing director, Felix Peinemann.

While Coli will handle anything from a small piece of LCL cargo or airfreight to a massive turbine blade, project shipping and logistics is one of its key specialities. Within that, Renewables is a core business and, Peinemann says, “we serve all the OEMs in the western hemisphere.” Another big area is power and LNG.

Coli has diversified geographically, too. While the company remains German-headquartered, it also has logistics hubs in Brazil, Turkey and China and is adding logistics expertise at its other offices around the world. “We’re offering door-to-door solutions worldwide,” explains managing director of Coli Logistics,

Patrick Zernikow.

He adds that within the last year, the group has also added a trucking division. It has hired an expert in that field with another due to join in October. Coli offers anything from container haulage to specialist transport such as low loaders, all over Europe and again allows it to offer a more complete service, as well as adding a profitable line of business.

Coli would never claim to be the biggest company but one that offers excellent service and that specialises in niche markets that other forwarders either neglect or ignore altogether. For example, one of the trucking services it offers is urgent or time-sensitive moves. Often, it will manage other entities on behalf of clients who prefer to deal with just one concern rather than manage three or four different entities. Coli Group is a member of the Cross Ocean Air & Sea Project Logistics Network so it has access to a range of partners in those parts of the world where it is not directly represented.

In Turkey, Coli offers a full turnkey solution, from shipping through to jobsite and positioning pieces onto their foundations, if required.

“We’re not trying to conquer the world,” explains Peinemann. “We don’t have plans for offices everywhere.” Rather, Coli sets up its own hubs and offices in locations where they will add value and allow it to service its customers most effectively.

Incidentally, says Peinemann, there is no obligation on one Coli office to use a Coli office in another part of the world if a third party can offer the more effective solution. “Trust is so important, and knowing what you can and cannot do. This is how we survive in such a competitive market.”

Times are perhaps tougher for German-based logistics companies than in other parts of the world. While the process of offshoring in other nations has been going on for some time, this is a relatively recent phenomenon in Germany where logistics companies could until comparatively recently count on a strong local business base. But now German firms are being forced to seek out lower cost locations for much of their manufacturing activity and their logistics suppliers must follow them to locations such as China or the Far East by setting up offices and operations there. For a major project, it’s now quite

normal for 85% of the material to come from the Far East or India, with only the more specialised items being made in Europe.

“Yes, the ‘Made in Germany’ tag still counts for something,” says Peinemann, “but prices are high so a lot of German production is now moving overseas with many of the bigger OEMs shifting to the Far East.”

However, even this is a moving target; costs in China, hitherto one of the most popular offshore locations, have started to rise so many firms are exploring the potential of other countries, such as Vietnam. It’s very likely that the next phase of Coli’s overseas expansion will be in south-east Asia.

There are issues closer to home to consider, too. A vital bridge in Hamburg has been closed to trucks weighing over 44 tonnes which makes it harder to move large project cargoes to and from the port there which, coupled with Germany’s slow permitting process for oversized road movements, means that a lot of project business has moved to alternative European gateways such as Antwerp or Rotterdam, Zernikow points out.

That said, Hamburg remains a



major centre for shipping and while shipping activity may ebb and flow, lots of experienced maritime people live there or in Bremen, Coli’s second headquarters.

Coli is still expanding its headcount in Germany, though its operations in Turkey, Brazil and China are growing too. Part of the art of being a successful logistics company is deciding where the next major growth area will be and not to discount places simply because they are unpromising at the moment. For example, the US market has seen a downturn lately because President Trump is unenthusiastic about wind power, but presidents only serve four years and he is halfway through his term. A new incumbent in the White House, and a change of policy could completely revive the market there.

Likewise, there could come a point when a peace deal of some sort is signed between Russia

and Ukraine, which would, one imagines, spark a massive rebuilding in the latter country. Japan has been a depressed market for ten years or more, but lately has shown signs of a revival.

And there is always the chance of something completely new. Ten years ago, nobody gave much thought to data centres but these have become a big focus of activity for the logistics industry, particularly in the US though also in Europe to some extent, especially the Baltic region. A large data centre project means shipping in dozens of batteries, transformers and racking.

The needs of the defence industry should not be ignored either, if countries like Germany are to increase their proportion of GDP devoted to this area. Rebuilding the Germany rail system, could also generate project business such as bridges or new rolling stock.

Nippon Express and Cargo-partner join forces

NEX Nippon Express now has over 25 operational branches across the UK, Germany and Austria, including its recently acquired Cargo-partner locations, giving it the ability to offer a variety of services to and from these countries, says managing director UK & Ireland, Steve Williams.

The forwarder carries a diverse range of cargo, with a strong focus on industrial manufacturing goods, automotive parts, electronics and pharmaceuticals.

He explains “We run a robust

European groupage network. UK and Irish road freight routes run directly into our central gateway hub in Austria for seamless consolidation and distribution across Germany, Switzerland, and Central/Eastern Europe.”

The recent acquisition of Cargo-partner has significantly strengthened NEX’s Western to Eastern European road footprint, he adds “We are currently aligning our networks under the ONE Road initiative to run a single, unified road product on one IT system,

aiming to have full trail within the next 12 months. We are rolling this out in phases, starting with lead lanes to the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Italy (which aligns with our Lifestyle product), followed closely by Germany and Eastern Europe, so there’s continued development across these lanes at the moment.”

Plugging Nippon Express’ established commercial strength in Western Europe into Cargo-partner’s Central and Eastern European road network has

created a powerful, competitive routing option, Williams adds “The integrated footprint gives us better control over capacity and allows us to offer highly stable, competitive pricing.”

For air freight, NEX holds consolidations at London Heathrow, routing Irish cargo through there to secure optimal direct or EU-hub rates, says Williams “The time-critical UK/Ireland-Germany trade lanes, we specialise in high-frequency rapid transit for urgent, time-restricted

shipments such as aerospace/CCO and manufacturing components.”

NEX is also investing in advanced handling equipment at Heathrow to increase its consolidation capabilities. There is a dedicated Gateway team based there managing all UK and Ireland inbound and outbound air freight, Williams explains “By consolidating the volumes through Heathrow, we’re able to increase our buying power with the airlines and manage the cargo flow more efficiently offering more competitive solutions to our customers.”

He adds that the group has

operated exceptionally well with Brexit-related changes to customs procedures “What sets us apart is that we have fully in-house, dedicated customs clearance departments. Our teams are certified customs experts who are highly experienced in navigating the complex and constantly shifting regulations post-Brexit. Because both Nippon Express and cargo-partner have established, physical operations in the UK, Ireland, Germany and Austria, we manage customs seamlessly end-to-end without borders causing unnecessary delays.”

Raising the bar in Europe’s largest home delivery market

ATF Home Delivery says its decision to focus on Germany for its two-person next day delivery service on the Continent has months ago was the right one.

ATF Home Delivery - a wholly owned subsidiary of Chicago-

based forwarder ATF Worldwide Logistics - has secured a number of significant customer contracts and established a warehousing and distribution operation in Hannover. It offers next day coverage to 94% of Germany’s key

population centres, creating one of the most comprehensive two-person home delivery networks in the country, it says.

The company believes that its UK home delivery service has given customers greater

control with flexible delivery options including nominated day delivery, next-of-choice delivery, installation, assembly and packaging removal.

Germany’s economic strength, infrastructure and consumer

demand made it the standard choice when ATF evaluated a number of potential European expansion markets.

Gary McElaney, vice president, global home delivery, explains “We assessed the opportunities

across Europe and Germany emerged as the clear frontrunner. The country offers an excellent road network, highly concentrated population centres, and the largest economy in Europe.”

Germany’s rapidly expanding e-commerce market was