



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Issued by the Department of Transportation on May 8, 2020

NOTICE OF ACTION TAKEN -- DOCKET DOT-OST-2020-0043

This serves as notice to the public of the action described below, taken by the Department official indicated (no additional confirming order will be issued in this matter).

Applicant: **VOLGA-DNEPR AIRLINES LLC (Volga-Dnepr)**

Date Filed: April 13, 2020

Relief requested: Exemption under 49 USC § 40109(g) to permit the applicant to operate one, one-way, all-cargo charter flight, using its AN-124-100 aircraft, carrying outsized cargo on behalf of United Launch Alliance (ULA), from Huntsville, Alabama, to NASA Shuttle Landing Facility, Titusville, Florida or Cape Canaveral Skid Strip, Cocoa Beach, Florida, on or about May 17-21, 2020. The applicant states that the flight would carry an Atlas V Booster tank with support equipment. The applicant asserts that ULA needs the subject lift to complete Lockheed Martin's aggressive fabrication schedules associated with mission integration and launch activities; that the cargo is too large for transportation on commercially available U.S.-carrier aircraft; and that surface transportation is not feasible because of the size, delicate nature, and high value of the cargo.

Applicant representative: Jane Hamm, 832-791-8371

DOT analyst: David R. Christofano, 202-366-0584

Responsive pleadings: Volga-Dnepr served its application on those U.S. carriers operating large all-cargo aircraft. Each carrier indicated that it did not have aircraft available to conduct the proposed operation and that it had no comment or did not oppose grant of the requested authority.

Statutory Standards: Under 49 USC § 40109(g), we may authorize a foreign air carrier to carry commercial traffic between U.S. points (*i.e.*, cabotage traffic) under limited circumstances. Specifically, we must find that the authority is required in the public interest; that because of an emergency created by unusual circumstances not arising in the normal course of business the traffic cannot be accommodated by U.S. carriers holding certificates under 49 USC § 41102; that all possible efforts have been made to place the traffic on U.S. carriers; and that the transportation is necessary to avoid unreasonable hardship to the traffic involved (an additional required finding, concerning emergency transportation during labor disputes, was not relevant here).

DISPOSITION

Action: Approved.

Action date: May 8, 2020

Effective dates of authority granted: May 17-21, 2020.

Basis for approval: We are granting Volga-Dnepr's request to operate the proposed one-way flight (described above), on behalf of ULA. We found that its request met all the relevant criteria of 49 USC § 40109(g) for the grant of an exemption of this type, and that the grant was required in the public interest. Specifically, we were persuaded that the need to move the cargo to complete Lockheed Martin's aggressive fabrication schedules associated with mission integration and launch activities; the fact that the cargo could not be transported by surface transportation because of its delicate nature and high value; and the unique, outsized nature of the cargo, constituted an emergency not arising in the normal course of business. Moreover, based on the representations of the U.S. carriers, we concluded that no U.S. carrier had aircraft available that could be used to conduct the operation at issue here. We also found that grant of this authority would prevent unreasonable hardship to ULA and Lockheed Martin. Finally, we found that the applicant was qualified to perform its proposed operation.

We may amend, modify, or revoke the authority granted in this Notice at any time without hearing at our discretion.

Action taken by:

Joel Szabat
Assistant Secretary
Aviation and International Affairs

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<http://www.regulations.gov>

Foreign Air Carrier Exemption Conditions

In the conduct of the operations authorized, the foreign carrier applicant shall:

- (1) Not conduct any operations unless it holds a currently effective authorization from its homeland for such operations, and it has filed a copy of such authorization with the Department;
- (2) Comply with all applicable requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration, the Transportation Security Administration, and with all applicable U.S. Government requirements concerning security, including, but not limited to, 14 CFR Parts 129, 91, and 36 and 49 CFR Part 1546 or 1550, as applicable. To assure compliance with all applicable U.S. Government requirements concerning security, the holder shall, before commencing any new service (including charter flights) from a foreign airport that would be the holder's last point of departure for the United States, contact its International Industry Representative (IIR) (formerly referred to as International Principal Security Inspector) to advise the IIR of its plans and to find out whether the Transportation Security Administration has determined that security is adequate to allow such airport(s) to be served;
- (3) Comply with the requirements for minimum insurance coverage contained in 14 CFR Part 205, and, prior to the commencement of any operations under this authority, file evidence of such coverage, in the form of a completed OST Form 6411, with the Federal Aviation Administration's Program Management Branch (AFS-260), Flight Standards Service (any changes to, or termination of, insurance also shall be filed with that office);
- (4) Not operate aircraft under this authority unless it complies with operational safety requirements at least equivalent to Annex 6 of the Chicago Convention;
- (5) Conform to the airworthiness and airman competency requirements of its Government for international air services;
- (6) Except as specifically exempted or otherwise provided for in a Department Order, comply with the requirements of 14 CFR Part 203, concerning waiver of Warsaw Convention liability limits and defenses;
- (7) Agree that operations under this authority constitute a waiver of sovereign immunity, for the purposes of 28 U.S.C. 1605(a), but only with respect to those actions or proceedings instituted against it in any court or other tribunal in the United States that are: (a) based on its operations in international air transportation that, according to the contract of carriage, include a point in the United States as a point of origin, point of destination, or agreed stopping place, or for which the contract of carriage was purchased in the United States; or (b) based on a claim under any international agreement or treaty cognizable in any court or other tribunal of the United States. In this condition, the term "international air transportation" means "international transportation" as defined by the Warsaw Convention, except that all States shall be considered to be High Contracting Parties for the purpose of this definition;
- (8) Except as specifically authorized by the Department, originate or terminate all flights to/from the United States in its homeland;
- (9) Comply with the requirements of 14 CFR Part 217, concerning the reporting of scheduled, nonscheduled, and charter data;
- (10) If charter operations are authorized, except as otherwise provided in the applicable aviation agreement, comply with the Department's rules governing charters (including 14 CFR Parts 212 and 380);
- (11) Comply with such other reasonable terms, conditions, and limitations required by the public interest as may be prescribed by the Department, with all applicable orders or regulations of other U.S. agencies and courts, and with all applicable laws of the United States; and
- (12) Be subject to all applicable provisions of any treaty, convention or agreement affecting international air transportation now in effect, or that may become effective during the period this exemption remains in effect, to which the United States and the holder's homeland are or shall become parties.

This authority shall not be effective during any period when the holder is not in compliance with the conditions imposed above. Moreover, this authority cannot be sold or otherwise transferred without explicit Department approval under Title 49 of the U.S. Code.