

AIT delivers customized air charter solution for oversized military training system

Summary

When a long-standing Foreign Military Sales (FMS) client required the secure and timely transport of a massive military training system from North America to Oceania, AIT Worldwide Logistics' government team rose to the challenge. Calling upon decades of expertise in defense logistics, AIT delivered a customized air charter solution that exceeded the client's expectations, ensuring safe, on-time delivery for a shipment so complex that it represented the company's largest invoice ever issued for a single air freight move.

The Challenge: Managing complex logistics for long-distance, out-of-gauge freight

The mission involved transporting 23 enormous components of the critical training system with imposing dimensions: the largest piece measured more than 23 feet long, 14 feet wide, and 12 feet high, weighing nearly 10,000 kilograms. Auxiliary materials also needed to be delivered from multiple origins, including Tampa, Fla., and St. Louis.

In addition to the already complex logistics, the team encountered several unforeseen hurdles.

- **Customs clearance complications:** Despite the Antonov crew having cleared customs in Canada, a miscommunication required all 19 crew members to report in person to U.S. Customs in Tampa, delaying operations.
- **Delayed shipment release:** The equipment manufacturer had to hold back six truckloads of cargo by several hours, extending Antonov loading until 2:45 a.m.
- **Tarmac access constraints:** Due to TSA restrictions allowing a one-time gate opening to the tarmac, AIT sourced a seventh power unit/tractor at the last minute to ensure all cargo could enter simultaneously.
- **Crane failure and recovery:** The original drivable crane suffered a transmission failure en route to the airport. AIT swiftly secured a replacement crane, complete with new ballast and spreader bar, to maintain the loading schedule.

These challenges were compounded by a volatile charter market driven by shifting U.S. tariff policies and the need to coordinate across multiple time zones and regulatory environments.

The Solution: Comprehensive logistics planning, execution

AIT's government logistics experts collaborated closely with the FMS client, the equipment manufacturer, and other key stakeholders to deliver a seamless logistics strategy. Their approach combined advanced planning and meticulous execution.

More than 100 crates of support materials weighing nearly 75,000 kilograms were trucked from St. Louis and Tampa to AIT-Chicago for pallet builds. Meanwhile, the 23 massive system components from Tampa, totaling over 55,000 kilograms, were loaded onto an Antonov AN-124—the only aircraft capable of accommodating their size.

Case Study: Government and Defense Logistics



- **Critical carrier coordination:** AIT worked closely with charter operators to maintain flight schedules despite market volatility and operational delays.
- **Specialized security measures:** Custom crates with open slats enabled TSA canine inspection, and armed guards were deployed during loading to safeguard sensitive cargo.
- **Stakeholder coordination:** Daily communications with government officials, agent partners, carriers, and the equipment manufacturer ensured real-time updates and smooth operations.
- **Route and customs management:** AIT managed all customs clearances, permits, and police escort requirements.
- **On-site adaptability:** AIT's team responded rapidly to equipment setbacks, including sourcing a new crane and an additional tractor to overcome TSA access constraints.
- **Value-added services:** AIT also provided the crane used to load the Antonov, further demonstrating the team's commitment to comprehensive support.

The AIT Difference Makers

- ✓ **Flexibility:** Adapting flight plans to accommodate daily cargo schematics changes.
- ✓ **Security expertise:** Implementing stringent measures to protect sensitive cargo.
- ✓ **Carrier partnerships:** Ensuring timely execution by closely collaborating with carriers during a volatile charter market.
- ✓ **Seamless coordination:** Leveraging integrated IT and operational systems for real-time tracking and auditing.

The Antonov's multi-leg flight plan included stops in San Francisco and the South Pacific for mandatory crew rest and refueling before reaching the final destination for unloading.

The Result: Successful delivery strengthens a multiyear partnership

AIT's fully customized solution led to the successful, on-time delivery of the gigantic military training system, within budget and exceeding client expectations.

The team's adaptability was evident as they navigated frequent updates to cargo specifications throughout the last two weeks before the heavy-lift AN-124 flight.

The success of this project has solidified AIT's reputation with the FMS client, extending the partnership into its sixth year.

Discover what AIT can do for you

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