

AIT's Road-Air-Sea Solution Delivers Sensitive Helicopter Blades to Remote Locations in Alaska

The Challenge

When maintenance facilities supporting military bases around the world need parts to make repairs to rotary-wing aircraft, AIT is called upon to deliver blades and other related components from manufacturing and distribution sites in the continental United States. Every month, rotary blade shipments are delivered to remote locations in Alaska. Each blade weighs at least 200 kilograms and the crates in which the blades are packed can be as long as 25 feet.



The Solution

AIT is qualified to handle highly sensitive shipments thanks in part to the company's Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) partnership agreement with Southwest Airlines Cargo. Participating in this strategic alliance between air carriers, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) gives AIT preferred status for shipping DoD-related commercial peacetime cargo.

Shipping oversized crates to far-flung locations presents unique challenges when it comes to securing air freight space. The cargo is too lengthy to fit on passenger aircraft, so the team relies on a select few airlines with cargo freighter routings to airports within a reasonable distance from the final destinations. Thanks to AIT's long-standing relationships with members of the company's core carrier network, the team is routinely able to book the required cargo space despite the short timeframes.

Did You Know?

Most projects handled by AIT Worldwide Logistics' government and aerospace team are time-sensitive and mission-critical. For example, the team is one of the few groups in the United States trusted by the U.S. government to move helicopter blades. This ongoing project presents unique challenges given the blades' oversize dimensions and delicate nature.



AIT provides full door-to-door service for helicopter blades and the journey is far from over once a commercial or chartered cargo freighter lands in Anchorage or Seattle/Tacoma. From there, the blades are carefully trucked in a dry van or on a flatbed to a seaport where they are loaded onto a barge. The barge service provides access to the remote locations where the helicopter maintenance facilities are located. Barge transit times can be five to seven calendar days depending on weather and sea conditions in the Gulf of Alaska. Once the barge arrives at the destination port, one last truck move provides final mile delivery to the maintenance facility. Like all the other drivers required for this multi-faceted project, these operators are highly vetted and cleared to access military bases on behalf of AIT.

The Result

The AIT government and aerospace team's performance with this ongoing project has established a high level of credibility with their U.S. government customer contacts. The team adds value to each shipment with operations excellence. In particular, government and aerospace operations team members have built strong relationships with their counterparts in the government by providing excellent communications with every delivery. Milestone updates are standard and when a challenge arises, the customer is notified immediately and kept informed of each step towards the resolution.

As a result, AIT has been trusted to move additional helicopter blades to facilities in Japan and the Middle East. The U.S. government has also called upon AIT to rapidly resolve emergency situations involving other sensitive cargo.

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