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DHL Group expands Airfreight Cold Chain Network to advance global health logistics

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Expanded, dedicated pharma airfreight network ensures fast, reliable, temperature-controlled transport for critical healthcare products.

Bonn - DHL Group today announced major steps to strengthen its Life Sciences & Healthcare (LSH) logistics capabilities with an expanded dedicated Airfreight Cold Chain Network - a move designed to reshape how temperature-sensitive medicines, vaccines, pharmaceutical products and cell & gene therapies move across the world. The global network, another core element of DHL's EUR2 billion strategic investment in DHL Health Logistics gives customers full end-to-end visibility for highly sensitive healthcare products and supports the evolving logistics requirements of the world's largest healthcare and pharmaceutical companies.

"Life sciences and healthcare companies expect cold chain solutions that are reliable, compliant, and transparent from end to end - and those expectations are rising fast," said Oscar de Bok, CEO of DHL Global Forwarding, Freight. "At the same time, they're looking for ways to simplify supply chains and reduce costs. Our expanded network brings together DHL Aviation's global air connectivity, our GDP-compliant station network, and our major investments in modern, temperature-controlled facilities. The result is a more resilient, more efficient logistics backbone for customers who depend on flawless quality to deliver critical therapies to patients."

By reducing reliance on third-party carriers and commercial airlines, DHL improves product integrity and temperature control throughout the journey while increasing supply chain resilience amid geopolitical tensions, capacity shortages, and growing regulatory complexity. The expansion adds capacity for temperature-sensitive pharmaceutical and medical shipments and connects key markets through more than 30 GDP-compliant aviation hubs and gateways.

Boeing 777 freighter by night
The network will first connect major DHL hubs, including Brussels (BRU) - Cincinnati (CVG), with additional routes in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America to follow. The BRU-CVG corridor connects the U.S. Midwest, home to leading pharma companies, directly to one of Europe's most advanced life sciences ecosystems. By

avoiding coastal congestion, the lane provides a seamless, temperature-controlled pathway for high-value biologics and time-critical cell and gene therapies. At the Brussels end, the route is supported by 45,000 square meters of pharma-only zones at BRUcargo, delivering clinical-grade integrity end to end. Together, this infrastructure establishes a resilient connection between two of the world's most important healthcare markets.

The expanded network supports DHL's mission to strengthen global health logistics and meet rising demand for fast, reliable, temperature-controlled transport of pharmaceutical products and medical supplies. Patient safety remains central to the service. Combined with significant investments in temperature-controlled infrastructure, the network reduces reliance on heavy, costly packaging and refrigerated air freight containers, offering an economical service focused on quality and minimizing temperature excursions.

To support the expanded network, DHL has introduced a dedicated Boeing 777 freighter operating between Brussels and Cincinnati. The aircraft, which features the new "DHL Health Logistics" livery, serves as a visible marker of the company's strategic focus on healthcare logistics. More importantly, its dedicated routing provides consistent, controllable capacity on one of the most critical pharma lanes, reinforcing the reliability and temperature management standards required for sensitive shipments. While the branding highlights the sector's importance, the aircraft's operational role strengthens the backbone of DHL's growing health logistics network.

Source: DHL Group

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