

Albany's Airport 2nd in cargo

Albany's UPS cargo center makes Southwest Georgia Regional Airport Georgia's second-largest cargo airport.

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ALBANY — Albanians sleeping between 11:30 p.m. and 5:30 a.m. may be unaware that Southwest Georgia Regional Airport is Georgia's second-largest cargo airport, behind only Atlanta.

That's because the brown-and-white Airbus 300s and Boeing 757s arrive at UPS' cargo sort center in Albany long after dark, and depart before dawn, Airport Director Yvette Aehle said.

"They are the largest airplanes that we have at this airport," Aehle said. "If you took the A300 and converted it to a passenger airplane, it would carry more than 275 people."

UPS' cargo sort center in Albany is the airport's largest tenant, and all UPS cargo destined for Southwest Georgia and the Florida panhandle passes through the center, Aehle said.

Freight carrier DHL also has a sort center at Southwest Georgia Regional, and the carriers' combined cargo activity is so great, the airport is able to earn millions in Federal Aviation Administration cargo entitlement grants each year, she said.

"This year, we rehabilitated taxiways B, C and S. The over \$2.3 million that we're spending on that, 90 percent of that money came from the FAA," Aehle said.

Air carriers like Albany because it's accessible to destinations in every direction within a wide, 100-mile radius.

"We're really convenient, have good weather, good runways and taxiways, and we're not busy in the middle of the night like some airports are," Aehle said.

The sort center is a transfer station for air cargo and not where customers pick up packages.

From an economic development standpoint, the airport's cargo capacity is a great marketing tool, said Andrea Schruijer, vice president of the Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission.

"Especially with the growth that's happening in Savannah, with the ports, it's good for us to be able to show we have the infrastructure and capability to handle it," Schruijer said.

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