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KLM FREIGHTER JOINS ETIHAD CARGO FLEET

Etihad Airways has signed a wet-lease contract with KLM–Martinair Cargo to provide the UAE flag carrier with a Boeing 747-400ERF freighter.

The aircraft, with a payload capacity of 124 tons, will be used by Etihad Cargo to link the two cargo hubs of Abu Dhabi and Amsterdam, and to increase capacity to Frankfurt, Hong Kong and Dhaka.

This is one of the first milestones on a range of cooperation initiatives between the partners creating ample cargo opportunities and customer solutions. It follows last October's strategic partnership announcement in which Air France-KLM and Etihad Airways said they would work together to create value for each airline, which now also includes the cargo business.

The Boeing 747-400 ERF delivery and commencement of operations are scheduled for late March, taking Etihad Cargo's freighter fleet to seven aircraft. The airline already operates two Boeing B777F, one Boeing 747-400F, two Airbus A330-200F and one Airbus A300-600F.

Kevin Knight, Chief Strategy and Planning Officer at Etihad Airways, said: "Extending our cooperation agreement with Air France-KLM to cargo operations is an extraordinary opportunity and we look forward to leveraging our combined expertise and freighter fleets to grow cargo operations over our respective hubs."

Camiel Eurlings, Managing Director KLM, said: "This agreement forms an excellent basis for a fruitful and far-reaching partnership between Air France-KLM and Etihad Airways into cargo. More initiatives are to be developed to enhance cargo cooperation aiming to offer our customers a wide-ranging and high quality service."

Etihad Cargo has an additional three freighters scheduled for delivery in 2013 and 2014: one Boeing B777F and two Airbus A330-200F.