

News Release

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United Airlines, Guam’s Hometown Airline, Provides Critical Connections for Residents and Businesses

GUAM, Apr. 9, 2020 – As COVID-19 has disrupted life in Guam, it’s not business as usual for the tourism industry, the island’s top economic driver, nor for tourism around the globe. United Airlines, the proud hometown airline for Guam, has found a way to continue to serve its customers by providing lifeline and cargo transport services during the crisis.

United has announced that it will cut nearly 90 percent of its international routes and more than 50 percent of its domestic routes due to the global drop in demand, but the airline is trying hard to maintain the Guam route to ensure that the island receives lifeline and cargo services.

Travel during this pandemic has proven to be challenging, with many governments enacting strict quarantine requirements. Under current conditions, United operates a daily flight from Guam to Honolulu and three-times-weekly flights to Tokyo/Narita, Japan. These are the only commercial flights operating in and out of Guam and serve as dependable connections for Guamanians returning home from the continental U.S., the U.S. military, federal workers and contractors who work in Guam, Saipan and Micronesia.

Sam Shinohara, United’s managing director of Airport Operations for Asia-Pacific said, “United is proud to be Guam’s hometown airline with a longstanding commitment to the people of Guam for more than 50 years. We take our commitment seriously, which is why we have done everything possible to try to maintain these lifeline flights even when it doesn’t make economic sense.”

United Provides Cargo-Only Service for Guam

As residents stock up at the markets, United continues to do what it can to keep the flow of fresh foods and essentials coming into the island. In the past weeks, United used its Boeing 777-300 ER passenger aircraft to bring medical supplies and perishable foods directly from San Francisco to Guam.

“At a time like this, it makes perfect sense for us to utilize idle passenger aircraft to provide essential cargo service. Our Boeing 777s have been grounded due to the lack of passenger demand, and we repurposed some of our aircraft to transport goods and supplies for the island’s retailers so they can quickly replenish shelves,” he added.

Lifeline Flights

United also continues to do everything possible to provide lifeline flights for Guam. Flights are categorized as "lifeline" when the service remains in place to provide the connections during times of emergency, such as providing medical evacuations and transporting life-saving supplies and equipment.

Shinohara said, "United is the only airline on the island that provides medical evacuation services. Think of our aircraft as ambulances in the air that transport patients from home to receive critical care overseas. When necessary, we usually remove nine seats onboard and retrofit it with a stretcher and life-supporting equipment to properly support a patient's needs in air."

Shinohara added, "In this time of COVID-19, it may seem like the natural decision to close Guam's borders. Frankly, the flights have allowed health care authorities to conduct timely testing. From a lifeline perspective, maintaining flight service in and out of Guam will be important for the community. When an ill patient needs to seek care off-island, there is no time to waste."

Delivery of Important Goods and Services

United's Guam-Honolulu service also provides important courier services for the medical industry through the delivery of essential medicines, medical supplies, and equipment.

United also supports the U.S. Postal Service with daily mail service. All mail for Guam is routed through and transported from Honolulu. A daily flight helps to support the timeliness and efficiency of the local postal service.

"We are working hard to be here for the long-haul and to support our island, our employees, and our families the best way we know how. This is our home, and we are committed to getting through this together so we can eventually return to some normalcy," Shinohara concluded.

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