



ACMI in Africa as a strategy to scale airline operations

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ACMI – a solution gaining traction

With Africa's young and rapidly growing population seeking more opportunities for travel, air traffic in the region is expected to rise by an average of 6.4 percent annually, more than tripling by 2043. At the same time, African airlines are facing rising costs and supply chain disruptions that demand flexibility and adaptability to changing market conditions.

ACMI leasing emerges as a strategic response to this surging demand, offering airlines the flexibility to scale operations without the financial burden of aircraft ownership. This wet-leasing model provides airlines with aircraft and crew to handle seasonal peaks or bridge service gaps caused by aircraft maintenance.

There are over 1,500 aircraft available globally for ACMI leasing, with half operated solely under ACMI contracts. However, this capacity remains underutilized by African carriers, according to Linas Dovydenas, Chapman Freeborn IMEA President:

L'ACMI, un levier pour la croissance des compagnies africaines

La demande de transport aérien en Afrique devrait tripler d'ici 2043, avec une croissance annuelle estimée à 6,4 %. Mais cette dynamique se heurte à des contraintes majeures : hausse des coûts, difficultés de financement, retards de livraison d'avions et manque d'accès au leasing sec.

Dans ce contexte, la formule ACMI (Aircraft, Crew, Maintenance, Insurance), ou wet-lease, apparaît comme une solution stratégique. Elle offre aux compagnies aériennes la possibilité de renforcer rapidement leurs capacités, en couvrant les périodes de forte demande ou les interruptions liées à la maintenance, sans supporter les coûts fixes liés à la propriété d'appareils.

Aviation leaders gathered in Zanzibar in June for the AviaDev Africa 2025 conference to address the continent's mounting challenges and opportunities. Linas Dovydenas, Chapman Freeborn IMEA President, participated in the panel titled 'Beyond the headwinds: Navigating rising costs, finance hurdles and supply chain challenges. His insights shed light on how ACMI (Aircraft, Crew, Maintenance and Insurance) solutions can transform African aviation.

"ACMI leasing is gaining traction in Africa – African carriers are increasingly reaching out due to growing demand and passenger numbers, supply chain bottlenecks, and a shortage of aircraft for dry leasing. However, it is still often seen as a short-term or emergency solution, which in turn drives up costs."

This perception creates broader trends, with African airlines approaching ACMI providers just weeks before peak season,





leading to inflated prices. Such procurement strategies ultimately undermine the cost-effectiveness that makes ACMI attractive in the first place.

Planning ahead pays off

While African airlines are increasingly adopting ACMI, they still need to shift from last-minute decisions to strategic forward planning. Dovydenas advocates embracing ACMI not as an emergency fix, but as a long-term strategic tool that can help generate profit:

“Proper planning allows airlines to scale flexibly during peak seasons without committing to year-round fixed costs. We recommend signing ACMI agreements one to three years in advance to secure better pricing and availability.”

Chapman Freeborn is actively working with African airlines and authorities to position ACMI solutions as components of long-term capacity planning. Encouragingly, the company is beginning to see early-stage discussions around multi-year ACMI partnerships, which Dovydenas views as a positive shift.

Addressing African aviation needs

The panelists addressed a critical market constraint: the availability of aircraft remains extremely tight. Global OEM delivery delays are pushing even mature markets toward ACMI solutions, which reduces the availability of second-hand aircraft flowing into African markets. This creates a complex supply dynamic where traditional acquisition models become increasingly challenging, making ACMI’s on-demand availability particularly valuable for African carriers.



Lors du salon AviaDev Africa 2025 à Zanzibar, Linas Dovydenas, président de Chapman Freeborn IMEA, a rappelé que l’ACMI est encore trop souvent perçu comme une mesure d’urgence, sollicitée à la dernière minute, ce qui renchérit son coût. Il plaide pour une approche proactive, avec des accords négociés un à trois ans en amont, permettant de sécuriser prix et disponibilité.

Chapman Freeborn, filiale d’Avia Solutions Group – premier fournisseur mondial d’ACMI – collabore déjà avec plusieurs compagnies africaines. Dans un marché mondial tendu, l’ACMI pourrait devenir un outil clé pour accompagner la croissance du transport aérien africain.

Chapman Freeborn currently supports African airlines with ACMI and cargo services. As part of the world’s largest ACMI group, the company provides African airlines with additional aircraft capacity when needed – for busy travel seasons, operational gaps, or unexpected demand surges.

The company also plays a significant role in moving cargo across the continent, particularly humanitarian aid and urgent relief supplies to hard-to-reach areas.

“We are working with both airlines and aviation authorities to make it easier and faster for foreign aircraft to get approval to operate in Africa,” Dovydenas explains. *“Our local office in Johannesburg helps us stay close to the market, respond quickly, and build strong relationships across the region. Africa remains a key focus for Chapman Freeborn, and we continue to*

explore ways to strengthen our partnerships and presence across the continent.”

About Chapman Freeborn

The Chapman Freeborn Group was established in the UK in 1973. The company has offices worldwide including North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. In the cargo market, Chapman Freeborn Airchartering specialises in the charter and lease of aircraft for a wide-ranging customer base, including freight forwarders, multinational corporations, governments, humanitarian agencies and a host of industries around the globe.

In addition to freight services, Chapman Freeborn offers specialist passenger services including private jet charters for executive travel and large aircraft for crew rotations and international group travel, as well as on board courier services.

About Avia Solutions Group

Chapman Freeborn is part of Avia Solutions Group, the world’s largest ACMI (Aircraft, Crew, Maintenance, and Insurance) provider, operating a fleet of 209 aircraft on 6 continents. The group also provides a range of aviation services: MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul), pilot and crew training, ground handling, as well as a variety of associated aviation services. Supported by 14,000 highly skilled aviation professionals, the group is parent company to over 250+ subsidiaries.



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