

## EL AL ISRAEL AIRLINES . . .

special relationship with Boeing will ensure early delivery. Boeing recently offered the 737 to both El Al and Arkia Israel Inland Airlines for joint operation on internal routes and to Cyprus and Turkey. It appears that El Al and its subsidiary will not go ahead with this plan.

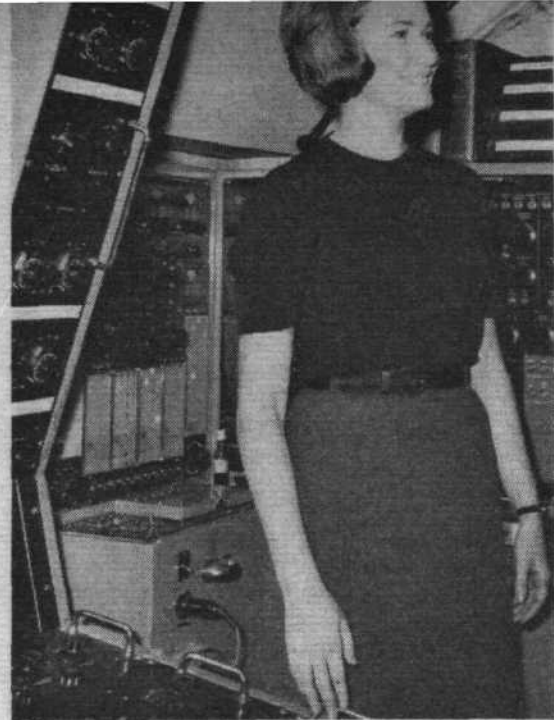
Two American SSTs are on order. These will fly New York-Tel Aviv in about 4½ hours. By making deposits in 1964, El Al gained delivery positions 10 and 14. The carrier was among a number of others participating in the recent FAA evaluation of the types. The findings are confidential, but it is known that both Boeing and Lockheed projects offer less range than El Al would like. This is among the reasons why the airline rejected the Concorde.

The new capacity will satisfy El Al's high growth rate: last year's passenger-miles jumped 35 per cent over the previous year, and freight ton-miles over 30 per cent. Annual passenger-miles are now passing the 1,000 million mark. With the number of passengers about 300,000 a year, the average stage per passenger is about 3,000 miles. The average flight stage is half this. El Al is therefore very firmly a long-haul airline with consequent low costs. Well over half the total revenue is earned on the North Atlantic, where last year's load factor rose from 55.6 to 60.8 per cent, and El Al's share of the traffic from 2.3 to 2.9 per cent.

Vice-president, economics, is Mr Gideon Elrom, former Air Force fighter pilot and today something of an air transport intellectual. "What is the future for small airlines? It depends on what grows faster: traffic or aircraft size and complexity." Mr Elrom is at present awaiting the installation of the airline's new IBM 360 computer. Besides handling matters like personnel records, accounts and inventory control, it will perform important operational research, such as in discovering whether rising fuel consumption on the 707 is a result of ageing engines or longer hold times over New York. Route-analysis and scheduling, even for a small airline, are also ideal problems for the computer.

El Al's engineering is carried out largely at Lod Airport on an "equalized maintenance" basis. The route structure makes it convenient for most aircraft to fly outbound in the morning and homeward in the afternoon. The maintenance can then be carried out at night. This makes for high utilisations and, despite the 60 days lost each year for religious reasons, average daily hours flown are nearly 11 in winter and well over 12 in summer. The long-haul networks helps utilisation, but other contributory factors are tight scheduling—and a relative absence, because of the small fleet size, of back-up aircraft. To cover itself, El Al has the normal agreements with other carriers to supply spares or replacement services. The airline also has its own spares stocks at Paris and New York.

Major engine overhaul is not done by El Al. The Pratt and Whitney engines go to SNECMA via Paris, and at present the Rolls-Royce Conways go to Derby. However, Rolls-Royce is about to discontinue Conway overhaul because of pressure of other business. This is a headache for Mr Benjamin Davidai, El Al's vice-president, operations, who is also disappointed



Miss Aviva Glezer, chief simulator instructor and holder of an honorary captain's licence. Among other accomplishments she speaks eight languages

that the Conway's time between overhaul of 4,700 hours appears to be its present ceiling. Transport of these engines for overhaul—or as a spare for another unserviceable aircraft—is in El Al's "fifth pod." Unlike the fifth pod which a number of other airlines occasionally use, those of El Al never introduce timetable delays. Attachment or removal is in half an hour instead of three hours.

Mr Davidai is a busy man, and I was grateful for the opportunity to accompany him from Tel Aviv to Nairobi to learn about El Al operations in general, and this route in particular. Probably the most extraordinary scheduled service in the world, the route covers 4,400 n.m. compared with a direct distance of about 2,000. To navigators, the service must be a nightmare come true. Over 25 heading changes are required. Radio aids are sparse. Surrounding territories are hostile.

El Al do not risk a route down the Red Sea—preferring a safer but more complicated circuit of several Arab states. In 1955, El Al's only "accident" occurred when Bulgarian Air Force fighters shot down a Constellation that had strayed across their border. The "compensation" of £70,000 did not pay for the aircraft, let alone its 58 lives. The lesson was not so much in the inadequate compensation as in the care El Al must take not to overfly hostile states. From Tel Aviv, the route goes west to Cyprus and here El Al suffers from Cypriot politics in being required, like all airlines since the recent Cyprus troubles, to overfly Nicosia instead of cutting a corner to the east. Until recently, Turkey has required a dog's leg to Ankara to prevent overflying of Turkish military areas. Now, sometimes, they allow a small short cut to the east. Next, the route must avoid Iraq's northern border before going east to Teheran. Normally Teheran is a stop. El Al's recent acquisition of traffic rights between Nairobi and Teheran is important because many passengers are finding this a useful link between Africa and points east of Iran. There is no direct service, for example, between South Africa and Japan. Further, El Al's East African representative, Sydney Cohen, points out that, within the normal Europe-Africa fare, it is possible to stop-over at a place as "different" as Teheran; this will draw traffic.

Our flight was a performance evaluation for the 320B, soon to take this route over from the 720B. We did not land at Teheran but continued to Nairobi. We travelled south-east, following air lanes through Iran. Like Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the North African territories, Saudi Arabia is hostile, and so are Kuwait, Yemen and Oman. So we may not turn fully south until we are near the border of Pakistan, which is itself only neutral. Bahrain is friendly, and so is Aden until the British leave.

There is no contact—official or unofficial—with unfriendly

The headquarters of El Al at Lod

