FLIGHT International, S December 1974

Incidents were pointers to 747 accident
In the wake of the loss of the
Lufthansa 747 at Nairobi (Flight last
week, page 740) evidence has in-
creasingly come to light that airlines
had been told only a little of previous
incidents involving take-off, or attempted take-off, by 747s with leading-edge flaps incorrectly set. Following the British Airways incident of August 12, 1972, described last week, the British Civil Aviation Authority forwarded a full description of the event to the North-western regional office of the US Federal Aviation Administration. In its covering letter, dated November 1, 1972, the CAA observed: "Although we appreciate that there was a lack of co-ordination among the flight crew, nevertheless the incident could have had catastrophic consequences. Records show that at one stage the aircraft was only a few knots above the stall."

The FAA acknowledged the letter and commented that "we concur in your assessment of the potential serious consequences of such an inci-dent." The FAA letter added: "We sincerely appreciate your notifying the FAA of such significant events for analysis and possible integration into our airworthiness programme." Sub-sequently, the FAA reported back to the CAA on December 13, 1972, after evaluating the incident. "It is agreed," said the Administration, "that existing pre-take-off check lists, when used, are adequate to protect against a

recurrence of this type of incident. The feasibility of adding leading-edge flap position to the installed take-off warning system has been considered. However, since the basic 747 take-off configuration-warning system is not required by regulation, we are not in a position to mandate a modification based on a unique report of apparent crew error."

The BA incident was described in the corporation's Air Safety Review which is forwarded to other airlines under the lata incident exchange scheme, and it featured, anony-mously, in a Boeing service report during December 1972. British Air-ways asked Boeing for a modification to include leading-edge flap position in the take-off alert system but the Service Bulletin was not circulated to airlines other than BA and Irish International (whose 747s are main-tained by BA).

Lufthansa has stated that it was at no time informed of the BA modifi-cation, although, replying to a question in the British House of Commons on November 28, Mr Clinton Davis, Under-Secretary for Trade, said that British Airways had reported the incident immediately to the CAA, the manufacturer and the European section of the lata safety exchange group. KLM and Swissair both became aware of the incident through the lata exchange scheme.

Northwest Airlines, in reply to our

request for further information, said that it was told of the incident by Boeing. It uses challenge and response checks before take-off which include circuit breakers, lights and a visual check of leading edges. Northwest advised Flight on December 2 that it "does not have sufficient information with regard to the British Airways modification."

As a result of a repetition of the BA incident which occurred to a KLM 747 on take-off from Schiphol in March 1974, the KSSU group of airlines decided to adopt the British Airways modification; kits are now urgently awaited from Boeing. Luft-hansa is also to adopt the modification.

Lufthansa has suggested that it was not informed of the modification probably because Boeing had circu-lated a flight operational instruction calling for double checks on certain switches and warning lights as a result of the BA incident. "This measure was considered fully sufficient by the manufacturer and the US aviation authorities who have very carefully considered the pros and cons of additional warnings in the cock-pit," said the airline.

There has been no move to upgrade the British Airways modification to mandatory as a result of the Nairobi accident, but the investigation team has recommended that Boeing should introduce a positive visual check of leading-edge position before take-off.

Living with nationalisation
It is "a waste of adrenalin" to try to oppose nationalisation now that it is positively included in the Labour Government's legislative programme for the current session of Parliament. This is the opinion of Allen Green-wood, deputy chairman of British Aircraft Corporation, as reported in an interview with the Wall Street Journal.

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In "Flight" next week we fly the Robin Tiara and look at the American light fighter fly-off. Also we look at TAP—Portugal's airline—after the revolution.

But the interview, given on Novem-ber 8 and published on November 27, was concerned mainly with the cur-rent financial performance of BAC. Nationalisation was a secondary topic raised at the end. Mr Greenwood agreed with the interviewer that a combined BAC and Hawker Siddeley aviation group would be a powerful aerospace unit. He noted that the Government was taking over a profit-able industry rather than a financially ailing one. He apparently did not say that he "would be happy to work for a National Aircraft Corporation," as subsequently reported. He did say that the main problem now that nationalisation was inevitable was to ensure that the management structure was right. Ownership of the capital was not critical.

Meanwhile, the Government is con-tinuing informal discussions. The broad nationalisation options seem to be: (1) the formation of a National Aerospace Corporation directly own-

ing at least BAC and HSA (Rolls-Royce, Shorts and perhaps Westland might be added later); (2) a looser federation, in which a management board would run divisions specialising in airframes, engines, helicopters, and possibly equipment; or (3) a federa-tion in which the proposed National Enterprise Board would manage similar divisions.

Boeing Uttas flies
The first Boeing Vertol YUH-61A Uttas (Utility Tactical Transport Air-craft System) prototype made its maiden flight at Calverton, Long Island, on Friday, November 29 (see page 793 for pre-flight photographs and details). The helicopter's two T700 engines were started at 1213hr and lift-off took place at 1217hr. After a successful 42min flight in the hands of pilots Frank Duke and Les Friesner the aircraft was set down at 1302hr and taxied to the shut-down ramp, the engines being switched off at 1322hr.