AIR TRANSPORT

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Air Pacific leads new co-operation attempt

South Pacific airline pool advocated
BY PAUL PHELAN
IN PORT MORESBY

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ir Pacific chief executive
Andrew Drysdale has started
work on proposals to pool the
resources of regional carriers in
the South Pacific.
Drysdale has raised the pro-
posal preliminarily with Air Pac-
ific's board, but it does not yet
have the ratification of either the
board or the Fiji Government. "I
do believe my board would see
some sense in a proposal like
ihat although it was not dis-
cussed and there was no deci-
sion taken on it," he says.
"The concept that I'm propos-
ing to them is that, rather than
every country operating its own
aircraft, we create a pool of
aircraft owned by a number of
different countries."
The concept will initially in-
clude Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu,
t,he Solomons and Fiji. Drysdale
says Papua New Guinea and the
Solomons could make a similar
deal between themselves for
services between the two coun-
tries. "I believe there is a chance
we could see a form of co-
operation emerging between the
carriers of the Pacific which
makes a lot of commercial
sense," says Drysdale.
Airlines involved could in-
clude Air Caledonie, Air
Marshall Islands, Air Niugini,
Air Pacific, Air Vanuatu and
Solomon Airlines.
Under Drysdale's proposal,
route capacity would be shared
by participating island nations
which would provide their own
cabin crew on relevant sectors
on a "damp lease" arrangement.
"If you do that between all the
major islands of the Pacific,
particularly those with aspira-
tions for tourism, then you
begin to make logical use of
resources because, at the end of

the day, the actual ownership
and operation of the aeroplane is
unimportant. What is important
is the marketing and distribu-
tion system," he says.
Drysdale hopes to begin dis-
cussions, probably in mid-
January next year, with his
counterparts in the other air-
lines. Previous attempts to form
joint airlines have foundered on
national priorities and sover-
eignty issues.
Drysdale's co-operation pro-
posals were supported indirectly
by International Air Transport
Association director-general
Gunter Eser. Speaking at the
Association of South Pacific Air-
lines meeting in Port Moresby,
Papua New Guinea, he said that
small national airlines will find
they can only survive by closer
interaction between carriers —
judicious swapping of routes,
co-ordination of timetables and
pooling of spares. •

Douglas slashes jobs and cuts production
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ouglas Aircraft has revealed
further drastic job cuts and
slashed production of its MD-80
and MD-11 aircraft at its Long
Beach factory in California.
Douglas president Robert
Hood says the cuts are needed
because: "Our financial perform-
ance compared to Boeing is still
poor and leaves us with a com-
petitive disadvantage".
Layoff notices have been sent
to 2,200 workers. "Overall, we
expect a reduction in force of an
additional 1,800 to 3,800 jobs
over the next 18 months, from
both commercial and govern-
ment programmes, through lay-
offs and normal attrition." The
layoffs are in addition to 1,000
job losses announce d by
Douglas earlier this year. The
latest round of redundancies will
begin to take effect at the start
of next year.
Douglas has also revealed the
exact numbers involved in the
cutback on production. MD-80
rates will drop by over a third
from 140 this year to 100 in
1992. For the MD-11, Hood
adds: "We plan to produce at a
40 aircraft per year rate from

1992 until 1994". The company
adds that "...although it was
known that we wanted to cut
back on MD-80 production, this
is the first time we have speci-
fied exactly what cuts we will be
making in 1992".
Although Hood says the tri-jet
rate cut is "...to improve our
predictability and increase per-
formance on the MD-11", the 40
a year rate is a significant with-
drawal from the company's orig-
inal plans to produce between
45 and 50 MD-ll s annually
from next year onwards.
The news comes at a bad time
for Douglas's aggressive MD-11
production acceleration pro-
gramme, led by vice-president
and general manager Joe Pirkle.
This was well on the way to
success, having virtually reached
the one aircraft per week rate,
(Flight International, 4-10 Sep-
tember), with expectations of 36
aircraft being delivered this year.
Confirmation of the Douglas
production cutbacks follows
similar action by Airbus Indus-
trie and Boeing following re-
quests from customers to slow
down deliveries. •

Chef Air employee held over bomb A

n employee of Chef Air, a
catering company which
supplies Air India's 747s, has
been arrested as Indian police
step -up their inquiries into a
possible conspiracy over the
failed attempt to blow up an
airliner on 1 December.
The fire bomb which con-
tained batteries, a 100ml bottle
with a petrol-like substance and
an aerosol container with liquid
propane gas, was found on flight
AI111 from New Delhi to New
York with 416 passengers and
crew on board.
Catering officer Balvinder
Singh Nigah's statement in the
judicial magistrate court says he
"...planted the crude device with
an intention to remove it on
board, in the presence of his
senior, in order to set an

award", for his action.
The chief -public prosecutor
(CPP), however, says that Balv-
inder made a detailed disclosure
saying "...if the bomb had ex-
ploded I would have become the
area commander of the Khalis-
tan Liberation Force".

According to the CPP, Balvin-
der said that he had been prom-
ised Rs500,000 ($19,310) to
plant the bomb.
The device was discovered by
a steward in a routine check of
flight containers before depar-
ture. The Indian Government
has called for an investigation
into the breach of security
procedures. •

Council voices BA Berlin fears

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n the latest twist in British
Airways' (BA's) attempts to set
up Deutsche BA (DBA), the air-
line has been accused of consid-
ering using a charter company as
the basis for its operation 'rather
than its own Internal German
Service (IGS).
The claim is being made by
the works council representing
the 500 IGS staff. It says: "BA is

trying to do this without our
staff, it is trying to use a charter
airline called Germania Flug."
BA says it had talked to Ger-
mania but only about the possib-
lity of leasing aircraft.
The airline's attempts to set
up a Berlin-based operation
using its IGS as the core, is now
running almost a year behind
the original plan. •

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