

Bravia hits Tu-204 delays

KEVIN O'TOOLE/LONDON

PROSPECTS OF a Russian launch order for two re-engined Tupolev Tu-204C cargo aircraft are in the balance, as continuing delays in certification and funding increase friction between the Bravia joint-venture partners.

If the order materialises, it would be the first for the Rolls-Royce RB.211-535-powered version of the Tu-204 being marketed by the Bravia venture, which brings together the Tupolev design bureau, the Russian investment arm of UK merchant bank Flemings, Avia-export and the Aviastar Ulyanovsk production plant.

The Flemings Russian Investment (FRIC) office in Moscow confirms that Tupolev indicated earlier this year that it might have an order for two cargo versions from Aeroflot - Russian International Airlines, possibly backed by Government funding.

FRIC is cautious however. "We haven't yet met with the airline or seen the purchase order. We are not very optimistic," says Oleg Afanasyev, office manager at FRIC.

A key problem is the continuing delay in certification, which is already two years late. Before there is any movement on the Bravia airliner, Tupolev first has to certificate the initial Tu-204-100



Continuing certification delays to Tu-204C cause problems for Bravia

version with Russian-built Aviadvigatel PS-90AT engines. Tupolev says that certification should be completed by the end of this month, but other reports suggest that it could slip again until the end of the year.

CIS certification of the Bravia Tu-204-220 would take another six to nine months on a realistic estimate, believes Mark Jarvis, FRIC vice-president who heads the Moscow operation. Western approval could take until 1999, he adds, although few of the envisaged 150 deliveries were ever expected to go to US or European airlines.

The partners are pressing ahead with the programme, but Jarvis acknowledges that tensions have arisen between the partners, with cash-strapped Aviastar and Tupolev making public complaints over the lack of funding being put into the venture by Flemings.

FRIC has so far invested around \$2 million, mostly on promoting the test aircraft at air shows around the world, but told its Russian partners at a recent meeting that it would not inject fresh funds until Tupolev secures certification. R-R is understood to have contributed a similar amount.

Meanwhile, FRIC has switched attention to Russia's burgeoning airline industry, taking out a small stake in Vnukovo Airlines, when it came up for sale as part of the Aeroflot privatisation. Vnukovo has three Tu-204s, which it received as part of the aircraft's flight-test programme.

The aim is for FRIC and Hunting Aviation to carry out Western refurbishment of these aircraft as showcases for potential re-engined Tu-204 customers in the region. □

French clamp down on Paris Orly slots

THE FRENCH transport ministry is limiting movements at Paris Orly to 200,000 per annum in a move ostensibly to reduce noise nuisances, but widely viewed as a measure to ward off domestic and international competition for Air France.

Periods close to the curfew hours of 2200-0700 will also have half the normal-hours slot capacity.

The Ministry's new ruling will give it a fresh tactic in refusing to grant Lufthansa, Lauda Air and other European companies' traffic rights at Orly, which handled 204,000 flight movements in 1993.

Transport minister Bernard Bosson has announced his intention to bar Orly to European companies before April 1996 in defiance of a European Union ruling.

Furthermore, Aeroports de Paris (ADP) has decided to re-organise Orly within the next 12 months, putting Air France and Air Inter at Orly-Ouest, the western terminal, and all other carriers at Orly-Sud, the southern terminal.

Air France and Air Inter are planning to form a joint European company to operate from Orly-Sud as its main hub. ADP's latest decision has aroused protests from French private airlines AOM and Air Liberte, as well as other carriers which have invested heavily in Orly-Ouest and now have to move to Orly-Sud. □

SAA links up with African carriers

SOUTH AFRICAN Airways (SAA) is planning to link with Uganda Airlines and Air Tanzania, to form an airline called AJAS (Africa Joint Aviation Services). A go-ahead decision from the Ugandan and Tanzanian Governments is expected by the end of this month, says SAA.

Based in Entebbe, Uganda, AJAS would start with one wet-leased SAA Boeing 747 serving Johannesburg, Dar-es-Salaam, Dubai, Bombay and, eventually, Europe. SAA says that, at first, the plan is to use the existing resources of the partner airlines. □

Lufthansa eyes India

ATHREE-MEMBER management team from Lufthansa has taken over the management of Modiluft, India's leading private domestic airline, and the German flag carrier confirms that it is examining the possibility of taking an equity stake.

Warner Heesen, Bernd Hiderbrand and Peter Kling have joined ModiLuft as senior vice-presidents to control finance, operations and maintenance. On 7 October, Lufthansa initiated negotiations in Germany with Satish Kumar Modi, the Indian promoter, about the extent of the partnership. □

Meanwhile, Lufthansa's cargo division is looking for an Indian partner to float a cargo company there. A majority stake in the proposed \$100 million company would be held by the local partner.

Michael Semsch of Lufthansa's Cargo division said recently in New Delhi that the new venture will serve smaller cities such as Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Coimbatore. Initially five centres will be connected, with further expansion possible. Lufthansa has already invested heavily in a cargo terminal at Sharjah in the Persian Gulf, to serve the Middle East and Indian subcontinent. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ FAR EASTERN TIE-UP

EVA Air and Air Nippon, a subsidiary of All Nippon Airways, are to launch a joint daily service between Taipei and Fukuoka in southern Japan, using a Boeing 767-300. EVA Air also inaugurated its first domestic service on 11 October between Taipei and Kaohsiung, Taiwan, using a 767-200. The decision to allow EVA Air to operate domestic services has provoked strong response from second-level carriers demanding access to scheduled international routes.