

Ukraine International looks for European equity share

UKRAINE INTERNATIONAL Airlines (UIA) is in advanced talks with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and three foreign airlines over the possible sale of up to one-quarter of the carrier.

Deputy president Dick Creagh says that the airline, 11.3%-owned by lessor GPA, with the rest held by the Ukrainian Government, is seeking investors to take 24% of an expanded equity base.

Creagh declines to name the carriers talking to UIA, but "...wants to see cash flowing this year". Another source familiar with the Ukrainian situation, however, suggests that Austrian Airlines, which has a good relationship with UIA,



Creagh "...wants to see cash"

and Swissair, which already serves Kiev, are the most likely candidates. Tentative talks with Lufthansa are known to have led nowhere.

UIA has now swapped its two leased Boeing 737-400s for -200s

but, says Creagh, will take an additional -300 this month. It may even buy one aircraft.

The airline is discussing cooperation with Crimean carrier Crimavia, despite tension between Crimean authorities and the Central Government.

It may, however, have to cede its long-haul aspirations to 100% state-owned Air Ukraine. The flag carrier has undergone a management shake-up, and a delegation visited Boeing and General Electric early in February to discuss leasing a Boeing 767.

A new US/Ukraine bilateral agreement has opened up additional US cities to Ukrainian carriers. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

ORIENT EXPRESS GROWTH

The Orient Airlines Association has reported an 11% growth in average passenger traffic for its 15 member carriers in 1994. Average passenger-load factors were up by 1% on the previous year, to 69.44%, while freight traffic increased by nearly 17%. Passenger capacity rose by 9.18%.

GARUDA A300 PLANS

Garuda has cancelled plans to sell nine Airbus A300-B4s, following its failure to find a cash buyer for the aircraft. Under the original plan, the Indonesian flag carrier sought a buyer which would refurbish them and then lease them back to Garuda. Now the airline says that it will update the aircraft itself and put them back into service. □

GE90-powered 777 reaches Mach 0.96 in dive

THE GENERAL ELECTRIC GE90-powered Boeing 777 reached Mach 0.96 during a high-speed dive in February, as part of a faster-than-expected expansion of the aircraft/engine flight envelope.

"We are well into the test schedule. In fact we're already at the point that we'd normally be at six weeks into a programme like this," says Boeing. By the end of February, the GE90-powered 777 had amassed around 40h of flight time since its first flight on 2 February, and reached a maximum altitude of 43,000ft (13,000m).

More than 150h of ground running have also been achieved. "The aircraft is performing extremely well. We completed flutter testing in one day, which is much shorter than usual, and we did more engine tests on the same flight."

GE, meanwhile, is running new flight tests of a GE90 on its Boeing 747 testbed from Mojave, California, to pre-empt any possible performance anomalies which may crop up in the 777 tests.

GE CF6 and GE90 marketing development manager Vince DiGiovanni says that the flight tests include "...some deliberately

high angle-of-attack stalls to verify operability of the engine within the envelope". The engine has so far proved stall-resistant. "All the JT9Ds on the testbed were stalling, while the GE90 kept going," he says.

The supplemental 747 test programme is seen as GE's insurance against any further delays hindering the certification timetable. "We will certificate on schedule in August, with deliveries beginning immediately afterwards to British Airways," says DiGiovanni.

■ Meanwhile, US 777 engine rival Pratt & Whitney is awaiting a decision from the US Federal Aviation Administration on whether the PW4084/777 extended-range

twin-operations (ETOPS) effort will be affected by an unscheduled engine removal from test aircraft WA004. The engine was just 35 cycles short of the 500-cycle goal when it seized during aground run on the Boeing flight line.

Human error is blamed for the incident, which occurred after the engine oil had been drained for an oil change. Standard procedure is to "turn the motor" to scavenge the last of the oil out of the bearings, but a Boeing mechanic is believed to have run the dry engine for more than 3.5min, after which it seized. The engine has been returned to P&W's Hartford plant in Connecticut for an "analytical teardown, with the FAA looking

on", says the engine maker.

P&W is "quietly optimistic" that the incident will not cause the FAA to require any changes to the ETOPS programme. The affected engine had already amassed 2,000 cycles of ground running before being flown on WA004 and had run up "about 100 extra flight cycles" before the ETOPS programme officially began.

P&W says: "We don't know if the FAA will ask us to run another used engine, or maybe another [new] one." It adds that the engine was performing well until then and looked "...pretty good when we borescoped it". A new engine has, meanwhile, been sent to Everett, Washington, to allow WA004 to resume general test duties.

■ Fast progress in the flight-test programme means that one of the 777 test fleet, WA003, is to be pulled out of flight-test work for earlier-than-planned refurbishment. The aircraft has amassed more than 425 flight hours and 224 flights and will be fitted out with a complete interior over the next three months. Total time on the P&W-powered fleet now exceeds 2,230h and 2,620 flights. □



777: Mach 0.96 reached in faster-than-expected time