

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

■ **ISRAELI EXPANSION**

Israeli regional airline Emek Wings is expanding its fleet to compete on domestic scheduled services with Arkia. The airline operates three Shorts 330/360s and is to acquire two ex-Continental Express ATR 42-300s in July. See feature, P35.

■ **MD-90 ORDERS**

EVA Air has converted options on four McDonnell Douglas MD-90s to firm orders for itself and two subsidiary Taiwanese domestic carriers. The first will be delivered to Great China Airlines in March 1997, two to EVA in April and July and the final aircraft to UNI Air, formerly Makung Airlines, in January 1998. The \$140 million order follows the 1995 purchase of six MD-90s, the first which will be delivered to EVA in October and the remainder to UNI Air by early 1997. EVA holds options on a further two aircraft.

■ **VIRGIN AIRBUSES**

Virgin has signed a contract for two additional Airbus A340-300s for delivery in the second quarter of 1997. The airline says that it will use the aircraft to develop further its network to destinations in Asia-Pacific, Australasia, South Africa and the USA. "Some exciting opportunities in the Caribbean are also being explored," says Virgin.

■ **MACAU ADDITION**

Start-up carrier Air Macau has added Bangkok to its growing network of Asian regional destinations. In addition to its new service to the Thai capital three times a week, Air Macau now operates 61 weekly frequencies to Beijing, Kaohsiung, Shanghai, Taipei and Xiamen. The airline has taken delivery of a final International Lease Finance aircraft, increasing its fleet to two Airbus A320s and two A321s.

# Transaero seeks new aircraft

RAMON LOPEZ/WASHINGTON DC  
ALEXANDER VELOVICH/MOSCOW

**R**USSIAN CARRIER Transaero is seeking bids for a potential \$1.26 billion-worth of orders for new narrowbody and widebody aircraft, some of which will be used on routes linking Moscow with US cities, says the airline's deputy chairman Grigory Gurtovoy.

Speaking in Washington DC, Gurtovoy said that bids from European, Russian and US aircraft-manufacturers will be considered. The Russian carrier is eventually seeking up to 40 new aircraft, including 12 widebodies for long-haul routes. The narrowbodies are being sought to serve points in Russia and the CIS.

"We are seeking new aircraft to handle the company's growth over the next ten years," says Gurtovoy. "Detailed aircraft requirements will be made available to bidders in the coming months, with deliveries to begin in the 1997/8 timeframe."

Transaero, which began charter flights in late 1991, owns one Ilyushin Il-86 and leases five Boeing 737s and five 757s.

It is about to introduce the first of three McDonnell Douglas DC-10-30s, taken on five-year lease from American Airlines, on services from Moscow's Sheremetyevo 1 Airport to the US destinations.



Transaero is about to introduce three DC-10-30s in transatlantic services

The airline operates more than 140 scheduled flights each week to nine Russian and 14 international destinations, including Berlin, Kiev, London, Paris and Tel Aviv. The DC-10s will begin operations on a weekly Moscow-Los Angeles service on 16 June, and US services will be expanded to include Orlando and Chicago.

Sources in Moscow are surprised by Transaero's announcement because, although the airline carried a total of 1.8 million passengers in 1995, rating it the fourth- or fifth-largest carrier in Russia, its own resources are not sufficient to fund the planned fleet expansion.

Transaero's 1995 revenues amounted to \$168 million, and the company is reported occasionally

to have financial difficulties, leading to delays in salary payments.

Other Russian carriers claim that Transaero enjoys a "privileged status" within the Russian airline industry. Alexander Pleshakov, Transaero's chairman, has strong connections in the Russian Government, with his mother, Tatiana Anodina, occupying the post of the chairman of the CIS Interstate Aviation Committee, and his stepfather, Yevgeniy Primakov, holding the position of Russian foreign minister.

It seems unlikely, however, that the Government would issue state guarantees for financing Transaero's purchase without attracting unanimous and strong opposition from other carriers. □

## AZZURRAair wants RJ85 fleet

MAX KINGSLEY-JONES/LONDON

**A**ZZURRAAIR, THE Italian start-up regional airline (*Flight International*, 1-7 May), in which Air Malta holds a 49% stake, is in advanced negotiations for three new Avro RJ85s. The airline claims that funding has been secured.

The carrier is being formed to operate regional services from the northern Italian city of Bergamo to other Italian cities, as well as to points in France, Germany and Switzerland. The carrier is applying for the necessary licences to enable it to start flying, including an air operator's certificate, and it expects to begin operations by the end of this year.

Despite suggestions that the airline is underfunded, the carrier says that the funding is in place, but that the lack of suitable equipment being immediately available has been the problem.

It says: "We have a stable financial base, which includes a powerful financial institution. The delayed start-up resulted from the unavailability of suitable regional jets, which prevented us from arranging interim leases to cover the originally planned start-date. By the end of this year we will be in operation."

Air Malta is an existing customer for the Avro RJ, with a fleet of four RJ70s, and would be able to provide training and maintenance services for the new airline. □

## Palestinian carrier launched with two used Fokker 50s

**T**HE PALESTINIAN Government has ordered two used Fokker 50s for the newly formed Palestinian Airlines. The contract was signed on 14 May by the Palestinian finance minister and Fokker Aviation.

The aircraft will be delivered in June and July, with Fokker Aviation providing training and support. The selection of the Fokker 50 was aided by the fact that the Palestinians have operated two F27s.

Palestine Airlines will operate the aircraft from the new Gaza Airport, due to be opened in June, to Amman, Cairo and Larnaca. □