

# Cathay will launch FANS 747 flights by year's end

PAUL LEWIS/HONG KONG

CATHAY PACIFIC Airways plans to finish equipping its entire fleet of Boeing 747-400s with future-air-navigation system (FANS-1) equipment by March and hopes to be operating on the first communications, navigation and surveillance/air-traffic-management (CNS/ATM) route across the northern Pacific Ocean by the end of the year.

The Hong Kong airline has so far retrofitted 18 of its 21 747-400s with the Boeing FANS-1 package, including two freighter aircraft. All of the carrier's 747-400 crews have already completed a simulator and audio-visual training session and are now FANS-1-qualified.

Work includes equipping the aircraft with Rockwell-Collins SAT 906 satellite-communications equipment, dual global-positioning system avionics, an airborne-communications addressing and reporting system (ACARS) and printer, as well as modifying the 747's display and flight-management software.

"We have the aircraft equipped and ready to go and hope to operate on the first transpacific route this year," says Cathay Pacific international operations manager Paul Horsting.

The Informal South Pacific Air-Traffic-Services Co-ordinating



FANS will ease Cathay Pacific's route to destinations like Los Angeles

Group is due to meet shortly to discuss reducing lateral and longitudinal separation on route R220 across the northern Pacific, from 185km to 95km (100nm to 50nm), and opening up flexi-routes to the south for FANS-1-equipped aircraft. The move is intended to reduce existing traffic congestion for aircraft which are to join R220 from Los Angeles and San Francisco in California.

Cathay is among other airlines pushing for the opening of route B330 from Hong Kong to Europe for CNS/ATM traffic via north-west China and Russia. A second CNS/ATM route from Bangkok would join B330 over Urumqi.

The opening of the transpacific and European routes "...could run in parallel," says International Air

Transport Association regional technical director Tony Laven, who adds: "We're probably looking at nine months from here."

Cathay, in the meantime, plans to begin using the ACARS for routine data-transmission position reports to Hong Kong from over the South China Sea. The move coincides with the planned opening of two new routes from Singapore.

Hong Kong's Civil Aviation Department has been operating an interim automatic-dependent-surveillance system from CAE and conducting tracking and controller pilot datalink communication trials since July 1996. Tests have extended beyond Hong Kong's flight-information region to a distance of some 4,320km. □

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### VIETNAMESE FOKKERS

Vietnam Airlines is scheduled to take delivery of its two new Fokker 70s in early February and its final two leased Airbus A320s by the end of the month. The airline is not now expected to make any decision on a new long-range aircraft until the end of the year. It is looking at acquiring either the Airbus A340 or Boeing 777 for flights to the US West Coast and Europe.

### TAAG'S FIRST 747

TAAG Angola is reported to be acquiring its first Boeing 747, a 1986-build 747-300 combi from Singapore Airlines. The aircraft will soon join the carrier's fleet, which includes Boeing 707s and 737s, and Fokker F27s. The Angolan national carrier has also been operating a Lockheed L-1011 TriStar 500 leased from TAP.

### A310 ORDERS DROPPED

The order placed in August 1996 by an undisclosed customer for ten Airbus A310-300s has been removed from the consortium's order backlog. The customer is believed to be Brazilian carrier VASP (*Flight International*, 2-8 October, 1996), and the deal is understood to be awaiting final ratification. If completed, the order will be the largest placed for the aircraft in the past four years.

## Flightwest and MBA prepare to begin new Australia-PNG services

FLIGHTWEST AIRLINES of Brisbane is preparing to fly between Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG), using capacity to be released by Australia's International Air Services Commission (IASC) following agreement late in 1996 on a new Australia/PNG bilateral (*Flight International*, 6-12 November, 1996).

The IASC says that the Flightwest submission, which "...will be treated as an uncontested applica-

tion", sought approval for four weekly return flights between Townsville and Port Moresby, using a Fokker F28, Fokker 70, or AI(R) Avro RJ70, with two services extending beyond Port Moresby to Mount Hagen. Later, it wants two extensions to Lae, subject to a new bilateral proposal which is now under consideration.

Flightwest is owned by Sir Dennis Buchanan, previously the owner of PNG's now-defunct

third-level operator, Talair. It operates Queensland regional services using a fleet of eight Embraer EMB-120 Brasilias, two Bombardier de Havilland Dash 8s and five Raytheon Beech King Airs. The airline, which has applied for an international airline licence, says that all three types are available, and that it will decide during the 60-day application period.

Port Moresby, PNG-based Milne Bay Air (MBA), meanwhile,

says that it will also contest the Townsville-Port Moresby route and will seek other routes, using the new capacity gained by PNG under the bilateral. MBA would use one of its two new Dash 8s, along with four de Havilland DHC-6 Twin Otters, as part of its purchase of the assets of Canadian regional carrier NorOntair. MBA has also applied to operate from Cairns to Port Moresby via Gurney, in south-eastern PNG. □