

SIA ponders A340-500 and 777-200X

PAUL LEWIS/SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA) says that it will need at least ten new ultra-long-range aircraft to open fresh routes and frequencies to the USA, after the recent signing of an open-skies bilateral air agreement between the two countries.

The airline is looking at the proposed Boeing 777-200X and rival Airbus A340-500, which would, for the first time, allow non-stop direct flights between Singapore and the USA. SIA would use the aircraft to launch services to new destinations and increase frequencies to other

points in the USA, says deputy managing director Michael Tan.

SIA now operates to Los Angeles and San Francisco in California, and Vancouver, in Canada, but, because of Boeing 747-400 payload-range limits, it is forced to fly via Hong Kong, Tokyo and Taipei. As a result, Singapore's open-skies agreement is of little benefit until similar agreements are reached with other countries in the region, or until new ultra-long-haul aircraft are introduced.

According to Tan, flights of up to 18h in endurance will probably require a new type of product, with

wider seat pitch, enlarged first and business classes (accounting for up to half the capacity of a 250-seat aircraft) and higher-cost economy seats. He adds that the airline has still to be convinced of the seat-kilometre costs of such aircraft.

SIA still has options on 31 777s and 20 A340s, either of which could be converted to the new ultra-long-range derivatives now being offered by Boeing and Airbus. The airline is also continuing to look at other types and size of aircraft for future requirements.

The airline is still keen on a high-capacity long-range aircraft,

despite Boeing's recent decision to put on hold the 747-500/600X. SIA's emphasis is on a higher-capacity aircraft, seating up to 600 or more passengers, rather than on extra range. It is continuing to be briefed on the Airbus A3XX.

SIA's other longer-term need is for a 200-seat-size widebody jet-powered aircraft, or so-called W-aircraft, to replace its remaining A310s used on short-range high-frequency regional routes, such as Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. There is not yet a twin-aisle aircraft on the market to meet this requirement, says Tan. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ TYROLEAN GETS UNS-1C

Austrian-based Tyrolean Airways is to retrofit 17 de Havilland Dash 8-300s with the Universal Avionics Systems UNS-1C global-positioning flight-management system. Three will be fitted with the system in Canada, while the balance will be retrofitted at Tyrolean's Innsbruck base by DAC International and Navair.

■ TAIWAN-US OPEN SKIES

Taiwan and the USA have agreed to end restrictions on flights between the two countries. The US Clinton Administration had previously hammered out similar "open-skies" pacts with Brunei and Singapore, putting it in a position to bring into force the three agreements reached so far. Talks are continuing with Malaysia and are also planned with New Zealand and South Korea.

■ IPTN CUTS

IPTN plans to cut its 16,000-strong workforce by 40% by hiving off non-core activities. Aside from the its ancillary support and security operations, the Indonesian manufacturer is seeking a buyer for its small-engine Universal Maintenance Centre.



Lufthansa Technik will expand Uzbekistan Airways maintenance work beyond the Airbus A310

Lufthansa signs partnership with Uzbekistan

ANDRZEJ JEZIORSKI/HAMBURG

LUFTHANSA TECHNIK (LHT) has signed a new contract to turn its co-operation with Uzbekistan Airways into a strategic partnership.

According to LHT regional sales director Peter Kamenz, the German company will now provide a total technical support package for two Boeing 767-300ERs and one VIP Boeing 757-200 in the airline's fleet, as well as continuing existing work on Uzbekistan's two Airbus A310-300s.

The German maintenance company will also transfer the necessary knowhow to help the carrier to set up its own maintenance base, allowing it to carry out its own maintenance up to C checks in the

future. Kamenz says that Uzbekistan Airways wants to become as independent as possible, pointing out that "...they are already performing all the line maintenance on their Airbuses on their own, and they intend later to perform C checks on their Airbuses in Tashkent".

There is a sizeable overhaul plant in Tashkent already, known as Plant Number 243, which has until now specialised in maintaining Ilyushin aircraft - particularly Il-62s. "This business is largely finished, so [the plant is] looking at alternative sources of work. It is expecting some workload from Uzbekistan Airways in performing C checks," says Kamenz.

LHT already has a similar deal, signed in December, with Aeroflot

Russian International Airlines (ARIA), which wants to set up a maintenance centre at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. The Russian airline is due to carry out its first C check at the Moscow site this year.

According to Kamenz, this could eventually lead to Aeroflot offering maintenance to other airlines in the CIS. "The strategy is that the customer will take over the [maintenance] package step by step," he says.

LHT services ARIA's eight A310-300s, and will maintain two more belonging to Diamond Sakha Airlines, but operated by ARIA, from April 1999. The company also plans to bid to provide support of ten Boeing 737-400s which ARIA intends to buy. □