

# Air Ukraine closes on Western fleet

AIR UKRAINE expects to introduce the first of at least five Western-built airliners later this year as it seeks to replace its fleet of ageing Soviet-built aircraft.

According to Sergey Goncharenko, corporate secretary of the Kiev-based airline, contracts are expected to be concluded soon with Airbus Industrie and Boeing which will lead to the introduction of three Airbus A320s and two Boeing 767-200ERs this year on interim leases, to be replaced within two years by firmly ordered aircraft.

"We requested tenders for the purchase of the aircraft and our selection of A320s and 767s was declared on 5 May," explains Goncharenko. He acknowledges,

however, that final negotiations have yet to be completed.

The original prices proposed by the manufacturers were "high", says Goncharenko, but a tendering process resulted in more-competitive pricing. He adds that Airbus and Boeing could not deliver new aircraft until 1999 and 1998, respectively, and so the airline requested that the two manufacturers source a similar number and type of aircraft for lease in the interim. A decision on expanding the fleet will be taken once the airline has built up operating experience.

Air Ukraine, which was formerly the Ukraine division of Aeroflot during the Communist era, operates one of the largest fleets of

Russian aircraft, with over 200 aircraft now in service. Goncharenko describes these ageing aircraft as "obsolete", with over 70% of their design life consumed. He considers that there is an urgent need for new aircraft, explaining that the sight of these 30-year old Russian "monsters" among Western airliners is like the "last of the Mohicans."

Despite the move towards the Western products, Goncharenko does not rule out the acquisition of new-generation Russian airliners such as the Tupolev Tu-204 and Ilyushin Il-96. He says that their pricing must be more competitive, and points out that to a Ukrainian airline, a Russian airliner is as "foreign" as a Western product. □

# FAA warns on joint Russian certification

THE US FEDERAL Aviation Administration has warned that progress towards a US-Russian bilateral on aircraft certification has been halted by confusion over which bodies will be responsible for airworthiness under the new Russian Air Code, and continuing problems with quality control at production plants.

"The FAA has been ready for the past year to complete its technical assessment, but the Russian resolution of the remaining obstacles to a bilateral agreement has taken a great deal of time," says Mary Cheston, FAA manager - international airworthiness programmes.

A key issue is over the failure of the new Russian Air Code to spell

out which body would have overall authority for airworthiness issues. Instead, the code refers to "special-authorised bodies".

The Aviation Register of the Interstate Aviation Committee (MAK) is now responsible for airworthiness, but the new Federal Aviation Service, formed in August 1996, also has rule-making powers for air operators.

The Air Code has also been criticised within Russia. "This is a very bad code," says Yuri Maleev, professor of aviation law at Moscow State University. He had been brought in as an advisor, but eventually walked out because of the lack of detail in the legislation.

The code will now be put before

a committee of Government experts, who have until September to draw up a commentary on its implementation. Maleev believes that, in practice, much of the detailed working of the code will lie in these amendments.

Valentin Sushko, chairman of the Aviation Register, concedes that blame for certification delays to the bilateral now lies with Russian industry, highlighting the failure by manufacturers to demonstrate to the FAA that the necessary quality-control systems were in place. He says that the FAA's "shadow" certification of the Ilyushin Il-103 could have been signed off in 1996, but for quality-control issues at MAPO Loukhovitsy. □

## Ilyushin Il-96T flies for first time

THE ILYUSHIN Il-96T freighter had its maiden flight on 16 May at the VASO Voronezh production plant. The aircraft, powered by Pratt & Whitney PW2337 engines and equipped with Rockwell-Collins avionics, was flown for 21min. It has now been ferried to the Zhukovsky flight-test centre where it will be flight-tested leading to type certification by the end of this year. Aeroflot-

Russian International Airlines is due to take delivery of the first aircraft in 1997, with the second freighter to follow in 1998, together with the first Il-96M passenger aircraft. The \$75 million aircraft are being part-funded using export-credit guarantees worth \$1 billion from the US Exim bank.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### ■ AVIAROSS IL-96

Russian domestic cargo charter airline Aviaross is planning to acquire three Ilyushin Il-96-300s using loan guarantees promised by the Russian Government. The Moscow-based airline operates two Antonov An-32s. The guarantees for roubles 4 trillion (\$695 million), which are due to be approved in mid-July, are intended to back the acquisition of 38 aircraft for Russian airlines.

### ■ QUIET TU-154

Tupolev is offering an upgrade and modernisation programme for its Tu-154. Rybinsk Motors, which makes the D-30KU engine powering the Tu-154M, has developed a modification which it claims reduces fuel consumption by 4-5%. The company is also developing a low-emission combustor, and a Stage 3 hushkit for the engine. Although it acknowledges that the silencer equipment adds weight and reduces economics, Rybinsk says that the kit will enable the maximum take-off weight and flap setting limitations to be removed.

### ■ CFM ON IL-76

CFM International's president Gerard Leviac says that the company is working with Ilyushin to re-engine the Il-76 with the CFM56 engine. Leviac says that the plan to re-engine the Il-86 with the CFM56 has foundered on the inability to arrange funding.

### ■ AN-38 DELIVERY

The first production Antonov An-38 regional turbo-prop is to be delivered to lead customer Vostok Aviation of Khabarovsk in June for operational proving trials. The airline is expected to take a further seven An-38s by the year 2000. The AlliedSignal Engines TPE331-powered aircraft recently received Russian certification.