

1997 ends badly for world airline safety

FIVE TIMES as many people died in air-transport accidents during the second half of 1997 as in the first six months, and there were half as many again fatal accidents. Preliminary figures, however, show that overall, 1997 was close to the annual average for the decade.

Airline fatalities for 1997 totalled about 1,270 and the number of fatal accidents was around 45. The full analysis of 1997 world airline safety, will appear in *Flight International's* 21-27 January issue.

December has been particularly bad. Following the AeroSwit Yakovlev Yak-42 crash in Greece, and the Tajik Air Tupolev Tu-154 accident in Sharjah (*Flight International*, 24 December, 1997-6 January), on 19 December a Silk Air Boeing 737-300 (9V-TRF) disappeared, without an emergency call, in the cruise phase of its flight from Jakarta, Indonesia, to Singapore. The main wreckage has been located in the Musi river north of Palembang, Sumatra. All 104 people on board died. Wreckage is spread over some 25km² (10 miles²). The flight-data recorder has been recovered.

■ All 89 people on board a Bangladesh Biman Fokker F28 escaped when it hit level ground 3km short of the runway at Sylhet on a 22 December night approach in fog. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ QANTAS SELECTS IFE

Qantas is set to complete a deal with Rockwell-Collins (Hughes Avicom) to equip its 32 Boeing 747s and 28 Boeing 767s with the US manufacturer's interactive inflight-entertainment (IFE) system.

■ HGS WINS ON RJ145

Luxembourg-based Luxair is expected to be announced as the customer for the first Embraer RJ145 regional jets to be equipped with a head-up guidance (HGS) system. Flight Dynamics beat GEC-Marconi and Sextant Avionique to the contract.

IAI ends 1997 with first flight of the Galaxy

THE MAIDEN flight of Israel Aircraft Industries' (IAI) Galaxy business jet took place on 25 December. The flight from Ben-Gurion International Airport, Tel Aviv, lasted 2h and the aircraft reached an altitude of 10,000ft (3,000m). IAI plans to complete certification this year using two flying prototypes and two static test airframes. The second aircraft is due to begin flight tests in March. Deliveries are scheduled to begin in early 1999. There are four firm orders and 17 refundable deposits for the eight/19-seat Galaxy. □



IAI's Galaxy: new star in the Middle Eastern sky

Boeing pushes service entry of 777-200X/300X back to 2001

GUY NORRIS/LOS ANGELES

BOEING HAS PUSHED back the planned in-service date of the 777-200X/300X until at least the first quarter of 2001, largely because of its inability to secure a major launch customer.

The company has confirmed that it is "decreasing effort" on development of the 777 derivatives, but insists that the transfer of staff to assist the 757-300 and 767-400 programmes does not mean that the project is dead.

The company says that the ultra-

long-range and higher-capacity derivatives are "...not cancelled", but admits that "...the entry-into-service date is extending further to the right". The original in-service target date for the 777-200X was September 2000, but this is now thought to have been pushed back until at least the first quarter of 2001.

Boeing's decision to delay the -200X was driven largely by airline uncertainty. "None of our customers has given us a critical entry-into-service date, and we will slow development until they do," it says.

The move comes despite recent

warnings from Malaysia Airlines (MAS), which has urged Boeing to speed up the programme, rather than slow it down. MAS signed a memorandum of understanding in March 1997 covering the purchase of up to 15 -200X twinjets as part of a wider deal, but no other potential launch airlines (including key 777 customer Singapore Airlines) have come close to committing to either the -200X or -300X.

Many have preferred instead to opt for the rival Airbus A340-500/600 (*Flight International*, 17-23 December, 1997). □

Jet-airliner sales stagnate but shipments rise

JET-AIRLINER SALES were flat in 1997, according to provisional order and delivery figures, with the two major manufacturers together taking a total of around 1,000 orders, a similar tally to that recorded in 1996.

The number of shipments was up considerably on the previous year, however, despite Boeing's recent production problems at its plants in Seattle, Washington.

Airbus Industrie stole considerable ground from Boeing in 1997, with its 451 orders representing a

45% share of sales, compared to 30% in 1996. The gain resulted from an improved sales performance by Airbus in 1997 - its order tally was up by more than 100 units on that of 1996 - as well as a poorer performance by Boeing.

Sales of the Seattle-built aircraft and Long Beach-built ex-McDonnell Douglas models were down compared to 1996 figures.

Deliveries in 1997 were up some 40% on those of 1996, to around 570, with Airbus taking its traditional one-third share. The actual

number of shipments will be dependent on Boeing's end-of-year push to return the Seattle-built models to the original delivery schedule.

Boeing said in mid-December that it would tender around 53 aircraft for delivery during the final month of the year, which would bring its annual tally to 335 (Seattle-built types only). The manufacturer warns, however, that it does not expect customers to take final delivery of all 53 aircraft. □

See feature, P24.