

# Shuttle war gathers pace

RAMON LOPEZ/WASHINGTON DC

**T**HE AIR WAR over Washington DC has escalated with US Airways announcing plans to introduce new Airbus A320s. The move comes as it expands its lucrative shuttle operation in competition with Delta Air Lines and United Airlines.

US Airways will replace 12 Boeing 727-200s operated by US Airways Shuttle with single-class 154-seat A320s from October. US Airways says it hopes the new aircraft, "with its wider cabin and more space between rows", will attract additional passengers.

The expansion of the shuttle services and the A320 introduction follows US Airways' tentative pilot deal to merge the US Airways

mainline and Shuttle seniority rankings. It enables the noisy, inefficient 727s to be phased out before the end of the year deadline.

US Airways holds commitments for 400 A320 family aircraft, including 120 firm orders. Eleven A319s and A320s have been delivered to the airline so far and another 27 are due this year. The carrier says it has not yet decided how many A320s will be dedicated to the expanding Shuttle operation.

The US Airways Shuttle flies 15 round trips daily between Washington Reagan National Airport and New York LaGuardia, and 17 round trips between LaGuardia and Boston Logan. From July, the hourly US Airways service between Boston and Reagan National will become part of the

Shuttle system. Before the end of the year, US Airways' current hourly services between Washington Dulles and Boston Logan and LaGuardia will also become part of the US Airways Shuttle.

The US Airways Shuttle operates on the hour, while Delta flies every half-hour, also using 727-200s. Delta says no plans have been announced to change aircraft.

Meanwhile, Delta plans to use Comair's 50-seat Canadair Regional Jets (CRJs) on its new Boston-Washington shuttle from June, unless prohibited by a court injunction. In May, United and its regional affiliate, Atlantic Coast Airlines, began offering Dulles-LaGuardia shuttle service, also using 50-seat CRJs. □

## Government blocks UK safety extension

**T**HE UK Civil Aviation Authority has been given the go-ahead to conduct more spot checks of foreign airlines operating into the UK.

But there are no plans to extend formally the monitoring of foreign aircraft safety. The move follows further investigation of Malaysia Airlines (MAS), which has flouted fuel safety regulations at London Heathrow Airport for years (*Flight International*, 19-25 May).

The CAA says it has no powers to require reporting outside the mandatory occurrence reporting system, which applies to UK-registered aircraft only. Any such requirement would have to be initiated by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), says the CAA.

The DETR, which handles all issues concerning foreign operators, repeats that the safety practices of an airline are the responsibility of the state of registration, and "that's not about to change". Although the DETR has provided the CAA with the resources to carry out more spot checks on foreign airlines, it has not confirmed whether this is a temporary or permanent arrangement. The CAA reports any malpractices to the DETR, whose task it is to liaise with the state concerned.

No reports about the MAS fuel shortage problem reached the CAA until a Confidential Human Factors Incident Report was filed in February, says its group director safety regulation, Richard Profit. But British Airways, MAS' London Heathrow engineering service provider, claims to have given the CAA at least six reports detailing MAS Boeing 747-400 arrivals with dangerously low fuel levels. It was from BA's engineering records that the CAA was able to uncover the extent of the MAS fuel policy malpractice.

Malaysian transport minister Seri Ling Liong has admitted through the state news agency that the confidentially reported incident was accurate, but insists that the 3.6t fuel remaining met International Civil Aviation Organisation minimum requirements, if not UK CAA ones. □

## Airbus Trent 500 prepared for first test runs

**R**OLLS-ROYCE'S Trent 500 turbofan for the Airbus Industrie A340-500/600 was expected to begin runs at the company's test site at Derby, UK, as *Flight International* went to press. The run marks the start of a test and certification programme involving seven test engines, which is due to be completed in December 2000.

To ensure a smooth introduction into service and high reliability, Rolls-Royce plans to run 2,000 simulated extended range twin engine operations (ETOPS) cycles. The tests are still being conducted, despite the fact that the A340 is a four-engine application, and therefore does not require ETOPS qualification.

"We are doing it because the Trent 800 has been doing really well in terms of disruptive reliability related delays," says Trent 500 head of marketing Robert Nuttall.

The engine has a 2.46m (97in) diameter wide-chord fan and an eight-stage intermediate pressure compressor with three-dimensional (3D) aerodynamic design. It also incorporates a six-stage high-pressure (HP) compressor with 3D design, an annular tiled combustor



R-R is a big fan of ETOPS testing, despite the four-engine application

and a single-stage HP turbine. The Trent 500 features a five-stage low-pressure turbine section.

The fan combines aerodynamic refinements of both the Trent 700 and 800 designs, but does not feature the Trent 8104's swept blade design. The compressor system is a 20% scaled version of the Trent 892, while the combustor is scaled for the airflow of the Trent 500 from the 800 version. The turbines are also scaled from the Trent 800, generating an "advantage in terms of aerodynamic loading", says

Nuttall, which increases overall efficiency and "gives us about a 1.5% improvement in specific fuel consumption", he adds.

The engine is due to be certificated at a thrust rating of 60,000lb (267kN), but will enter service at 56,000lb. "Most operators will derate from that level," says Nuttall, to increase temperature margin and life on-wing. The powerplant will be flight tested on the A340-300 development aircraft next year, and will enter service on the A340-600 in March 2002. □