

ROUTES

++ US Airways has applied to the US Department of Transportation (DoT) to serve four new Caribbean routes: New York LaGuardia-Nassau, Bahamas; Pittsburgh-Cancun, Mexico; Philadelphia-Aruba, Netherlands, Antilles; and Philadelphia-Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. **++** An air services agreement has been signed between India and Bahrain under which each side can designate up to two airlines. The designated Indian carriers – **Air India** and **Indian Airlines** – are permitted to operate to Bahrain via any point in Asia, excluding the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman and Qatar. These flights can go on from Bahrain to anywhere in Europe and North America and Asia (excluding the UAE, Oman and Qatar). The designated airline of Bahrain, **Gulf Air**, can operate to Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai and Trivendrum via Doha, Muscat and points in the UAE. **++ United Airlines** has filed with the **DoT** for slots to operate two daily non-stop roundtrip flights between Los Angeles and Washington National. **++ British Airways** will drop its loss-making daily services between London Heathrow and Jersey, in the Channel Islands, from October. Meanwhile, BA will upgrade services from London Gatwick, operated by its **CityFlyer Express** subsidiary, to an all-Avro RJ100 jet operation. **++ Delta Air Lines** has begun daily codeshare services on **Aeromexico** flights between Mexico City and Campeche, Mexico. Delta has also applied to codeshare between Los Angeles and Durango this summer and Atlanta and Merida starting in the autumn. **++ AirTran Airways** has applied to the US DoT requesting eight slots at Washington National Airport to fly five daily roundtrips between Washington and Atlanta. **++ Aeromexico** will launch scheduled daily services between Las Vegas and Mexico on 15 June. **++ Air Canada** regional affiliate **Air Alliance** has launched daily cross-border services from Toronto to Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Louisville, Kentucky.

TACA targets partnerships with members of oneworld

PAUL LEWIS/ORLANDO

GRUPO TACA has opened partnership discussions with other oneworld Alliance members as the Central American carrier seeks to strengthen its relationship with American Airlines.

"We're planning alliances with other oneworld partners in the Far East, Asia-Pacific and Europe. Talks have started and the intent is to eventually participate with all of them," says Federico Bloch, Grupo TACA chief executive.

Grupo TACA would complement LanChile, which is shortly to be admitted formally to one oneworld. It would provide members from those regions – British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Iberia, and Qantas – with improved access to Central and South America.

In the meantime, the El Salvador-based group has applied to the US Government for anti-trust immunity for its alliance with oneworld member American. The four-year old alliance has been limited until now to the co-ordination of services and marketing.

"Requesting anti-trust immunity makes sense so we can create the sort of alliance that we need...it will allow us to have integrated networks, services and pricing," says Bloch.

The move is likely to meet with

the opposition of competing US carriers. Last October TACA filed a complaint with the US authorities, accusing Continental Airlines of "predatory pricing" on flights to the region. TACA's home nations, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, have had open skies deals with the USA since 1997.

"Anti-trust immunity has been granted to every single open skies country that has requested it, so there is no reason why the USA should act differently in this case," argues Bloch. Chile made immunity for the LanChile/American Alliance a condition for its recent approval of an open skies deal with the USA.

Not included in the application is the carrier's recently launched

affiliate TACA Peru. Lima is embroiled in a dispute with Washington over its failure to grant Peruvian carriers unlimited access to the USA, despite the existence of an open skies agreement and its current Category one Federal Aviation Administration safety rating.

Instead, Peruvian carriers Aero Continente and LanPeru are forced to use wet-leased Boeing 757s and 767s on services to Miami, while TACA Peru is delaying plans to fly to the USA until the end of the year. "There is nothing legally that should be in the way," says Lorenzo Sousa, LanPeru president.

TACA will lease four Airbus A319s to its Peruvian arm in July, with two more following by the end of the year. □



TACA is heading in the direction of the oneworld partners for overseas allies

Low-cost runway incursion system under test

THE US AIR Force and Federal Aviation Administration are testing a new all-weather low-cost safety device that could be installed at US military airbases and the nation's less-congested airports to reduce runway incursion problems.

The Ground Safety Tracking and Reporting System (GSTARS) uses inductive loop technology coupled with advanced signal processing and predictive networking techniques to classify and keep track of aircraft and ground vehi-

cles. The system has been installed at MacDill AFB, Florida, and at Long Beach Municipal Airport.

As an aircraft passes over sensors embedded in the runway, GSTARS notes the direction and classifies the vehicle based on its electronic signature.

Speed and location are transmitted to a host computer which processes the data for tower controllers. Visual and aural alerts of potential incursions are offered.

GSTARS is an inexpensive alternative to the Northrop Grumman

Airport Surface Detection Equipment ground-mapping radar system and companion airport movement area safety system to be installed at 34 major US airports.

A USAF report says GSTARS "is very useful" in low-visibility conditions and for monitoring visually obstructed runways. It says the safety device would be useful during peak hours. The FAA is completing a GSTARS demonstration at Long Beach, where the system is integrated to the approach radar. □