

■ The **Brussels** airport authority BIAC has approved a strategic plan to increase passenger throughput from 21.5 million to 35 million a year by 2010. It also plans to double air freight handled from the present 650,000t. Centrepiece of the ambitious scheme is a major increase in transport infrastructure to improve access to the airport. The airport authority wants to see full use made of the high-speed train station at the airport basement by linking it to the European high-speed rail network and providing frequent express rail shuttles to Antwerp. Improvements to access roads are also called for. ■ A three-year, \$400 million plan to double the capacity of **São Paulo Airport**, Brazil, has been unveiled by the state government. The airport currently handles 15 million passengers annually, and will require a third runway and a third terminal to boost capacity. Contract bidding is expected to start before the end of the year. Meanwhile, there are also plans to double the capacity of **Viracopos Airport**, in Campinas, which also serves São Paulo, but is located 80km (50 miles) to the north. ■ **Miami International Airport** has embarked on the second stage of its \$2 billion renovation programme. Building work on the new 15-gate South Terminal was commissioned in July and is set for completion in early 2005. The airport authority has several other projects under construction including the Miami World Gateway renovation programme for the North Terminal and runway upgrades. The airport aims to double the terminal area by 2008. ■ The European Union has offered \$2 million in aid for the construction of a cargo terminal at **Arad Airport** in western Romania. The local government will contribute around \$700,000 to the project. The work is to be conducted by a Romanian construction consortium, and planners hope to achieve a 60% increase in cargo traffic once the terminal is completed.

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT JUSTIN WASTNAGE / LONDON

American Falcon in move to extend regional routes

Argentinian carrier is seeking authority to start eight new South American services

Argentinian carrier American Falcon is set to exploit a government plan to start regional services from Buenos Aires' city airport. The Argentine capital's Aeroparque Jorge Newbery airport currently only supports domestic flights and services to Uruguay, which has a customs union with Argentina.

American Falcon, which operates feeder services for European carriers from the capital's Ezeiza International airport, will start additional services via Montevideo, where it has fourth freedom rights. This is in advance of final Argentine transport ministry plans to open up the city centre airport to all destinations in the six-nation Mercosur trading bloc.

The airline, which operates a Boeing 737-200 and Fokker F28, has requested approval from the Argentine civil aviation authority to start eight new services to South American destinations, with Mercosur services starting temporarily from Ezeiza. If approval is granted, flights would start operat-



American Falcon is expanding its F28/737-200 fleet as its network grows

ing in October next year and transfer to Aeroparque Jorge Newbery as soon as the South American bloc clears plans for streamlined immigration controls.

American Falcon's president Fayed Chehab says that the airline is to start a service next week linking Iberia's daily Montevideo service with Buenos Aires. Two more 737-200s will join the fleet this month.

The airline has similar agreements with major US and European carriers and will start onward services to other South American

cities from Uruguay. Chehab says that the airline is "waiting for the Aerolíneas Argentinas poker game" to finish before it bets on the future of aviation in Argentina.

By the end of this month American Falcon expects to become the majority shareholder in Argentinian regional LAER, which operates services throughout the north of the country. This will see LAER's loss-making services to secondary Argentine cities terminated and its two F28s redeployed onto regional crossborder services from northern Argentina.

AIRLINE EXPANSION NICHOLAS IONIDES / SINGAPORE

SriLankan replaces Air Maldives in Male move

SriLankan Airlines is effectively to become the national carrier of the Maldives by launching services to three points from the capital Male.

The Colombo-based carrier says it will introduce non-stop services this month between Male and London, Tokyo and Zurich.

Tokyo services were due to begin on 2 September using Airbus A330-200s, while A340-operated London services begin on 5 September and A330-operated Zurich flights begin on 15 September.

The Maldives counts tourism as its biggest industry, but has been without a national airline since Air Maldives shut down last year after a disastrous expansion attempt.

Under the expansion, Air Maldives was to have added three

leased Airbus A310s for use on an ambitious network upgrade that was to have incorporated new routes to Bangkok, Johannesburg, Kuala Lumpur, London and Paris.

Only one of the aircraft was delivered and the airline, 51%-owned by the Maldivian Government and 49%-owned by Malaysia's Naluri, halted services early this year. A new carrier, Island Aviation Services, was later established by the government to operate domestic flights.

SriLankan Airlines says the Maldivian Government and tourist authority have "enthusiastically welcomed" the carrier's move to operate services through Male.

The carrier is seeking new markets for business following the

attack by the Tamil Tigers on 24 July which destroyed four of its 12 Airbus aircraft and damaged two others. SriLankan has since seen a sharp decline in business. An A340 damaged in the attack was due to have re-entered service on 1 September and a damaged A320 on 5 September (*Flight International*, 28 August-3 September).

Sri Lanka's Government has meanwhile waived landing charges for cargo aircraft or passenger aircraft carrying more than 150 passengers at Bandaranaik Airport in a bid to attract more foreign carriers. Charges had previously been waived only for aircraft carrying more than 200 passengers. The new scheme will apply until the end of the year.