

AIR TRANSPORT MAX KINGSLEY-JONES / LONDON

TNT doubles volumes with 747 deal

Atlas tie-up will see the Liège-based European carrier developing US lessor's long-haul fractional partnership scheme

TNT is finalising a massive expansion plan which will see the European express package carrier develop its base in Belgium into an intercontinental freight hub and double its cargo volumes over the next year. The airline will acquire up to five Boeing 747-400 Freighters from Atlas Air as part of the US cargo lessor's European "fractional lease" air-freight programme.

"We want to benefit from long-haul cargo volumes via the Atlas joint-venture," says TNT Airways managing director Niky Terzakis. He adds talks are under way with several airlines about joining Atlas's Liège-based, long-haul partnership scheme, which TNT will develop. Alitalia, British Airways, Cargolux and Garuda are lined up for the programme.

TNT Airways operates a 747-400F wet-leased from Atlas Air from Liège to Johannesburg and Lagos. TNT's core work is its nightly network to 54 European destinations from Liège, supporting its logistics/express parcels business. This is flown by 20 of its own aircraft and

additional wet-leased freighters.

Applications have been filed to serve 14 destinations outside Europe - mainly in Africa and Asia. Terzakis says that if all goes to plan, TNT will have five 747-400Fs on dry lease from Atlas by the beginning of next year. "Belgian certifi-

cation of the 747-400F is under way, to enable us to put it on to the TNT AOC [air operators' certificate], and fly it with our own pilots," he adds. This process is due to be completed by April, and TNT will recruit 125 additional flightcrew.

The five 125t payload 747 freighters will see TNT Airways' cargo volumes expand from last year's 50,000t to over 90,000t over the next 12 months, says Terzakis.

Atlas already has one 747-400F based at Liège operating to North and South America, and Terzakis says Atlas plans to base two or three more 747s there as its programme expands, potentially increasing the two airlines' entire Liège based 747 fleet to nine.

**ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY
HERMAN DE WULF IN BRUSSELS**



TNT's Liège operations will be substantially bolstered by its 747-400F

DEFENCE

South Korea delays E-X AEW&C plans until 2005 at earliest

South Korea's ministry of national defence (MND) has shelved its long-standing E-X airborne early warning & control (AEW&C) requirement until 2005, while indefinitely postponing a decision on the AH-X attack helicopter.

In its latest five-year plan to the end of 2007, the MND says it does not expect to field a four-strong AEW&C fleet until 2011. MND sources suggest the first aircraft could be received by around 2008, with further deliveries at about one a year.

Work on the 1.8 trillion won (\$1.37 billion) E-X requirement was stepped up in late 2000 with plans for a selection this year, but the fall of the Korean won against the US dollar and defence budget cuts have forced the delay.

Participating in the most recent E-X tender were Boeing and Northrop Grumman, offering the 737 equipped with the MESA radar, Raytheon with an Airbus A321 equipped with the Elta Phalcon radar and Thales with a A320-based system.

The MND says it is "unknown" when South Korea will move forward with the AH-X, which pitched Boeing's AH-64D Apache Longbow against the Bell AH-1Z Cobra and Kamov Ka-52K. It emerged late last year that funding for the AH-X had already been removed from the 2002 budget, but the MND hinted the project could be resurrected in 2004.

Complicating the picture is the South Korean armed forces' longer-term need for around 400 multi-purpose helicopters. This is supposed to be satisfied by the proposed indigenous KMH, to be developed using technology transferred as offset against the AH-X purchase. "We will not stop the AH-X programme," stresses the MND. Surviving the cull is the flagship F-X multirole fighter. A decision is due in April between the Boeing F-15K, Dassault Rafale, Eurofighter Typhoon and Sukhoi Su-35.

AIR TRANSPORT DAVID LEARMOUNT / LONDON

Ministers meet to set ICAO's security agenda

Global action on aviation security resulting from research carried out in the wake of the 11 September attacks will be announced this week at the International Civil Aviation Organisation's high level ministerial conference on aviation security.

The most vital project to be launched at the 18-19 February meeting in Montreal, Canada, will be ICAO's universal security audit programme (USAP), which should become operational on 1 January 2002, says European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) executive secretary Raymond Benjamin.

The ECAC delegation, headed by president Alfredo Roma, will be presenting a "unified European position which is in full agreement with that of the USA", says Benjamin. Highlighting the unprecedented priority given to global aviation security, the transport ministers of almost every European state - the UK is only sending civil servants - will be among 136 states represented. Ministerial presence is

seen as vital because a major objective will be raising the \$15 million necessary to establish the USAP.

If the programme is to be launched within 10 months, Benjamin points out, ICAO has to move rapidly to recruit the necessary expertise, and develop and implement a system for certifying the inspectors for multinational audit teams.

On-board security programmes will also be agreed, including training programmes for flight deck and cabin crew in the event of hijack, and criteria for protecting cockpits from unauthorised entry or attack. The USA wants ICAO Annex 6, the standards for aircraft certification, to be amended to reflect the latter. Methods for protecting air-ground communications will also be finalised.

Providing practical assistance needed by third world countries to increase their security standards is crucial if effective aviation security is to be global, adds Benjamin.