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# ANZ tilts towards V2500 choice

Carrier expected to opt for IAE engine to power A320s even though leased aircraft will use CFMI rival

Air New Zealand (ANZ) is leaning heavily towards an order for International Aero Engines (IAE) V2500s to power its planned fleet of Airbus A320s in preference to the rival CFM International (CFMI) offering.

Industry sources say ANZ has made a tentative internal V2500 selection for 10 firm-ordered aircraft, plus 20 options, but no contracts have been signed and CFMI could still be in play with its CFM56 engine. The manufacturer plans to make a final offer shortly.

In July, ANZ announced the acquisition of 15 A320s and long-term purchase rights on 20 more. Five of the narrowbodies will be on

operating lease from General Electric Capital Aviation Services (GECAS). The sources say these will be powered by CFM56 engines. CFMI is a joint venture between GECAS parent GE and Snecma of France. ANZ already operates CFM56-powered Boeing 737s.

But the sources add that ANZ is willing to operate a mixed fleet, with the V2500 powering the aircraft ordered direct from Airbus, as this will allow it to develop an overhaul capability for the engine at its Christchurch engineering base. In April last year ANZ agreed to establish an engine repair and maintenance joint venture with Pratt & Whitney, a

major shareholder in IAE alongside Rolls-Royce.

ANZ said at the time that the Christchurch operation would be based around its existing engineering facility, which primarily focuses on P&W JT8D work. Demand for JT8D maintenance is dwindling, however.

"In particular, the introduction of a new V2500 engine product and the latest engine repair technology will support the future of the business, provide ongoing employment for the region, and meet the demands of a growing customer base in North America and the Asia-Pacific region," ANZ said last year. "The V2500 engine

will replace the volumes of work from [R-R] Dart and JT8D engines, as their operational fleets decline."

CFMI has been at a disadvantage in the A320 engine contest as it is not able to offer overhaul work to ANZ in New Zealand. CFM56 overhaul facilities are already established in Australia.

ANZ's A320s are due for delivery between October next year and late 2006, replacing four Boeing 767-200s and nine 737-300s. GECAS agreed some time ago to acquire 767s from ANZ in return for leases on new aircraft.

The airline refuses to comment on when an engine selection may be announced.

## FIRST FLIGHT

# CFM56-5-powered Airbus A318 follows PW6000 version into air

Airbus flew the first CFM International CFM56-5 powered A318 on its maiden flight on 29 August from its Finkenwerder, Hamburg, site to its Toulouse flight-test facility. The 4h 2min flight was captained by Airbus experimental test pilot Philippe Pellerin with Airbus chief pilot Bernd Schäfer as first officer.

The CFM56-powered aircraft follows the Pratt & Whitney PW6000 version into the air, but will be the first variant to enter service following development problems with the PW6000.

Pellerin says the aircraft "met Airbus's expectations" in terms of performance, adding that the aircraft and engine were already well understood, with the aircraft-engine combination the subject of the test. The crew tested the aircraft's performance in direct and normal flight control laws, explored airspeeds from 103kt (191km/h) to Mach 0.82, and reached an altitude of 39,000ft (11,900m).

The low-speed tests were performed using normal flight-control



The first A318s in service will be powered by the CFM56 engine

laws, says Pellerin. The CFM56-5s were rated at 23,000lb-thrust (102kN), which allowed a take-off weight of 60,000kg (132,160lb). The baseline A318 maximum take-off weight is 59,000kg with engines rated at 21,600lb. "The thrust variation is achieved by an adjustment of the [digital engine control] only," says Stuart Mann, Airbus product marketing director A320 family.

The CFM56-5 powered A318 will enter service late in the third quarter of next year, according to Airbus, with Denver, Colorado-based Frontier Airlines.

The A318 programme has slipped for six months due to the 30-month delay in the PW6000 programme. The PW6000-powered version, which flew in January, will now enter service in mid-2005.

## FLEET DEVELOPMENT

# Virgin seals Classic lease

Virgin Atlantic is removing a Boeing 747-200 from storage and recalling aircrew from unpaid leave to begin its new services to the Caribbean. The aircraft is due to re-enter service in May under a complex lease agreement with Air Atlanta Icelandic, serving Grenada via Tobago from London Gatwick.

Many of the flightdeck crew will come from 74 pilots offered unpaid leave last October when Virgin withdrew its 747 Classics. Of these, 35 took voluntary redundancy, while others transferred to the Airbus A340-600.

Reykjavik-based Air Atlanta has leased one and purchased one of the 747s, and will lease them back to Virgin. The aircraft will fly on the Icelandic carrier's air operator's certificate. Air Atlanta operates Virgin's Lagos, Nigeria, route from London Heathrow and transatlantic routes from Manchester. Virgin has six more stored 747-200s, while Air Atlanta has increased its fleet to 10.

Air Atlanta will provide line maintenance and C checks at London Manston Airport.