

PROPULSION PAUL LEWIS / WASHINGTON DC

R-R Trent 800 comes under fire

Emirates pushes Rolls-Royce to improve reliability and support of 777 engines as the airline considers alternatives

Emirates has expressed growing frustration with the Rolls-Royce Trent 800 engine's reliability and support issues, and what the carrier regards as the slowness of the manufacturer to respond. The recent complaints come at a difficult time for the engine company as it fights to maintain a position as the Middle East carrier's principal powerplant supplier in the face of strong competition from General Electric and Pratt & Whitney.

According to industry sources, on a recent visit to Dubai, outgoing R-R chairman Sir Ralph Robins faced strong criticism from within

the Emirates engineering community over the recent performance of the Trent 800 engine on the carrier's fleet of 18 Boeing 777-200/300s. Issues lie with the engine's high-pressure compressor first-stage rotor, and cracking in particular, say sources. During an earlier problem, Boeing had to ship a Trent 800 from its production floor as a replacement engine.

R-R describes Robins' trip as simply a "normal courtesy visit", adding that the Trent continues to display a good level of reliability, but the company is looking at ways to improve that.

The Trent 800 in Emirates service suffers from a below-average on-wing time, but a major contributing factor is the airline's operating requirements and environment that has put the engine at a constant level of stress, says Emirates chief director Tim Clark: "Any derate is virtually non-existent - the engines are always working flat out at heavy take-off weights in high temperatures on long missions."

He adds: "R-R has looked at all aspects of the engine - design, quality control and hardware - and we are confident that it has now

come up with a package that addresses the problems and will make the Trent 800 a robust, reliable engine."

Industry sources caution that Emirates' complaints come in the middle of a major engine competition and the airline is using this as leverage to extract the maximum concessions. The airline plans to order at least 25 more 777s and is trying to decide between the -300 version for shorter-haul flights powered by either the General Electric GE90, Pratt & Whitney PW4098 or Trent 895, or opting for the increased gross weight -300ER long-range derivative powered exclusively by the GE90-115B.

R-R is pushing the latest Trent 895C for the 777-300, which will have improved durability and take-off thrust, while the airline is also interested in the possibility of retrofitting it to its existing aircraft. Emirates earlier this year dealt R-R a massive blow by opting for the GE/P&W Engine Alliance GP7200 for its large planned fleet of A380s.



Emirates works the Trent 800s powering its 777 fleet flat out in demanding conditions

AIRCRAFT NOISE

Airports call for legislation

The UK's Airport Operators Association (AOA) is lobbying the government to implement drastic noise legislation backed by the Airports Council International Europe (ACI-E).

Speaking at the Royal Aeronautical Society in London last week, Mike Hodgkinson, chief executive of major UK airport operator BAA, said: "Through the AOA, we are calling for the phase-out of marginally compliant Chapter 3 aircraft by 2006, the complete phase-out of Chapter 3 aircraft by 2015, the introduction of a new Chapter 5 regime of at least 14db quieter than Chapter 3 by 2015, and by 2030 the introduction of a new Chapter 6 and the phase-out of Chapter 4 aircraft."

SECURITY AARON KARP / SALT LAKE CITY

USA admits it cannot meet 100% explosives screening deadline

The US government is continuing to work rapidly towards screening all checked airline baggage for explosives by a Congressionally imposed 31 December deadline, but concedes that 100% screening is not possible by year-end.

The US Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) plan to deploy thousands of explosive detection system (EDS) and explosive trace detection (ETD) machines to more than 420 US airports by 31 December has proved too ambitious. TSA acting head James Loy admitted to delegates last week at the Airports Council International - North America (ACI-NA) 2002 conference in Salt Lake City that 5-6% of US airports

will not meet the deadline and will instead operate under "interim" explosives screening plans.

"These temporary solutions may remain in place for months while we work towards a final solution," said Loy. While he declined to name airports, facilities not meeting the deadline could include several of the USA's largest hubs.

Airport directors attending the conference had feared the attempt to meet the deadline at large hubs would create debilitating congestion, including passenger queues spilling out of terminals.

At Miami Airport, for example, the TSA has said it intends to deploy 45 EDS machines along with 200 ETD devices by year-end.

But the airport has only nine EDS machines and 45 ETD devices. Miami officials have complained that installation of the new equipment requires terminal re-construction and will lead to chaos among passengers, so the airport appears to be a likely candidate for an interim solution.

"Airports have been saying all along that the [100% screening] goal Congress set was a stretch and was intended to be a goad to the TSA to move as fast as possible," says ACI-NA president David Plavin. "The head of the TSA has enough good sense to know that long queues out of the door into the winter cold are not good for business."