

STRATEGY JUSTIN WASTNAGE / NEW YORK

Lufthansa set to expand on Big Apple success

German flag-carrier will launch up to four routes with major order for ACJs or BBJs

Lufthansa is to increase its point-to-point business jet services from secondary airports, following the success of its trial service to New York Newark from Düsseldorf.

The carrier is to launch up to four new routes, using wet-leased airliner-class business jets in a deal being finalised with Swiss corporate aviation company PrivatAir, which will underwrite the deal with a major order for Airbus or Boeing aircraft.

The German flag carrier launched the service between Düsseldorf and New York in June, using an all-business class 48-seat Boeing Business Jet (BBJ) operated by PrivatAir. Load factors have, so far, been 10 percentage points above the 60% target.

Carsten Schaeffer, Lufthansa's North American alliances director, says that a formal evaluation of the 12-month lease is likely to be com-

pleted by mid-December, but that "looking at the results so far, the deal is likely to be extended". Other routes are being discussed with PrivatAir for next year, he adds.

PrivatAir's chief operating officer Greg Thomas says that it has discussed "half a dozen" new routes with Lufthansa, operating from Düsseldorf, Hamburg and Stuttgart to points in the Middle East, Russia and the USA.

According to airline sources at Düsseldorf Airport, Lufthansa has signed a deal with PrivatAir for a service to Washington DC, to replace Continental Airlines' service being phased out in January.

The BBJ used in the trial is in PrivatAir's livery, but Schaeffer says that for future contracts, the aircraft would be brought "closer in line with standard Lufthansa business class, in terms of livery, seats and in-

flight entertainment".

PrivatAir has negotiated "extremely competitive indicative offers" for the delivery of 10 new aircraft over the next five years, and requires confirmation this month from Lufthansa to place orders for either additional BBJs or Airbus A319 Corporate Jetliners, says Thomas.

PrivatAir, which has also had preliminary talks with Alitalia, British Airways, SN Brussels Airlines and Virgin Atlantic, says it has received an assurance from Airbus that it would match Boeing Business Jets' offer of white-tailed NetJets aircraft by delaying other customers' aircraft if necessary.

The hitherto all-Boeing operator has just been awarded the contract to operate Airbus's own corporate shuttle using an A319 (*Flight International*, 12-18 November).

SAFETY

FAA sets more Boeing fuel limits

Boeing 747, 757 and Next Generation 737 operators have been set more fuel handling rules by a US Federal Aviation Administration emergency airworthiness directive (EAD). This follows the discovery of serious pump overheating evidence in three 747s.

The EAD says that parts of the pumps showed signs of having heated to more than 550°C (1,000°F). The new requirements mainly reinforce earlier directives to ensure no dry-running of pumps by raising minimum fuel quantities that must remain in tanks. The published EAD at first banned the use of the 747-400 stabiliser tanks, but on consultation with Boeing, the FAA agreed to their use providing a minimum 590kg (1,300lb) fuel remains in them. An additional measure for older 747 models places an outright ban on the use of the centre auxiliary fuel tanks and auxiliary tanks 1 and 4.

AIR NAVIGATION NICHOLAS IONIDES / SINGAPORE

Route revamp slashes Asia-Europe flying times

A sweeping overhaul of the air route network between Asia and Europe was implemented on 28 November after more than two years of work.

The goal is to ease congestion and lead to fuel savings for airlines by reducing flying times. Gary Dennison, IATA Asia-Pacific assistant regional director for safety, operations and infrastructure, says congestion has now been "eliminated" for flights to Europe from key South-East Asian departure points Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, meaning "airlines can now take off when they want".

The Europe, Middle East, Asia Route Structure South of the Himalayas project has been more than two years in the making. IATA describes the changes as "the largest ever route overhaul in civil aviation...Passengers can expect flight times to be shortened by up to

30min, with an estimated 1,720h of ground delays eliminated for departures to Europe from Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore," says the association. "For air-

lines, the benefits of more efficient routes in fuel savings alone will show cost reductions by a conservative estimate of \$55 million a year," it adds.

IATA was tasked by member airlines after a meeting in Singapore in February 2000 to start the process of reforming the regularly congested "kangaroo routes" between Australia and Europe. ICAO was later approached to take over the project, and eventually over 20 states, airlines and military agencies became involved, along with air navigation chart-maker Jeppesen, says IATA.

David Behrens, IATA Asia-Pacific regional director for safety, operations and infrastructure, says that, in the past, flights departing from the three South-East Asian points suffered major delays every evening "as about 50 aircraft crammed onto the Bay of Bengal routes". He adds that 1h ground delays were common, and many aircraft electing to depart and fly at low altitudes, such as flight level 240 (24,000ft [7,320m]) or 260, were "stuck for 3-4 hours at these low altitudes".

